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Issues in Literature and Culture

Krishanu Maiti *Editor*

Posthumanist Perspectives on Literary and Cultural Animals

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Posthumanist Perspectives on Literary and Cultural Animals

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Foreword

"Literature of animals" can seem like an oxymoron. After all, literature is arguably the most refined manifestation of language, which a long tradition going back at least to Aristotle and continuing with Descartes has considered the distinguishing accomplishment of humankind. Human speech is, in a slightly ironic way, extended to animals in the tradition associated with Aesop, a half-legendary storyteller who reportedly lived in the island of Samos in the seventh century BCE. In his tales, animals—for that matter, even plants and streams—converse like men and women. In many well-known examples, such as "The Grasshopper and the Ant," they are competing for survival. In several others, such as "The Tortoise and the Hare," they are, like modern people, competing more for status, though with such intensity that it almost seems as though their survival was at stake.

The tradition of these stories is actually far older than its alleged founder. The fables go back to Sumer–Akkadian animal proverbs, some of the oldest pieces of literature that we have. Beyond that, they surely go back to prehistoric legends with their animal tricksters, sages, and demons. We might call Aesop "the Walt Disney of the ancient world." Like the American showman, he adapted primeval materials to a rationalistic age, making them far simpler and less frightening. The animal characters in Aesop are one-dimensional such as the clever fox, the foolish donkey, and the majestic lion. But, as the stories were retold over millennia, their magical foundation, which has never been entirely obscured, reemerges from time to time.

Subsequent authors have adapted the fables to their own values, era, and circumstances. Avianus, for example, used them to preserve pagan culture in an increasingly Christian age. Berechiah Na-Nakdan used them to teach Jewish lessons, and Luqman did the same for Islamic ones. Marie de France adapted them to the late medieval culture of chivalry. Jean de la Fontaine set them amid the intrigues of the seventeenth-century French court. In the fairy tales of Grimm and other romantics, the animal characters seemed depart from the highly structured world of traditional fables, to have adventures in an enchanted realm.

There are analogous traditions of animal fables throughout much of the world, which may be distantly related to that of Aesop. One that merits special mention is the Hindu–Persian, which produced the *Jatakas*, tales about the previous incarnations of Buddha in animal form. As a rabbit, the Buddha sacrifices his life to feed a sage.

As a monkey, he uses his body as a bridge to help others of his tribe cross a stream to escape danger. As in Aesop and many other traditions, a veneer of moralism and rationality seems to overlay preternatural materials.

Having animals speak like human beings has always seemed a bit artificial, and that is not necessarily a bad thing. It reminds us that the story is only a story, an inevitably edited version of very complicated events. But what if we let animals communicate in something closer to their own languages. Bees communicate by dancing, and chameleons do the same by changing color. Bird and mammal calls may, on one level, often convey relatively simple messages such as warnings, but they also, depending on the context, convey subsidiary information and emotional nuances. Birdsong, which has no very tangible purpose, communicates in ways close to human art or literature. Acknowledging this highly fluid, contextual, nature of interspecies communication is, in my opinion, a large part of posthumanist literature. It is a literature that aspires to let animals be themselves rather than courtiers or even Buddhas. It endeavors to liberate the hierarchies which have placed animals below, or occasionally above, human beings.

The major challenge here is to accomplish that through human language, which encodes so much of thought, history, and, inevitably, domination. Language itself must be liberated, brought back to its primeval foundation amid that songs, colors, signs, scents, and electric impulses with which living things communicate within a wood. To an extent at least, this is what poets have always done. What is relatively new is the systematic ways in which posthumanist theory pushes words to their limits in order to move beyond them. Language must bend, turn, fall, ascend, divide, and rejoin, much like a stream passing through a rocky, undulating terrain.

Posthumanist Perspectives on Literary and Cultural Animals, edited by Krishanu Maiti, presents us with a wonderful variety of subjects and perspectives, generated as writers search for the animals that have lain hidden for centuries in verbal landscapes where the names are as likely to conceal a distraction as to show the location of another creature. The essays have an exuberance that one is only likely to find at liminal times such as the close of the humanistic movement. The reader who approaches them in a spirit of adventure will not be disappointed.

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Boria Sax holds a doctorate in German and intellectual history from SUNY Buffalo. He currently teaches in the graduate literature program of Mercy College and at Sing Sing Correctional Facility. He has written many books on human-animal relations, which have been widely translated, including Dinomania, Crow, Animals in the Third Reich, City of Ravens, Imaginary Animals, and Forthcoming shortly, Avian Illuminations.

Acknowledgements

An edited volume of this scope, exploring issues this intricate and urgent, requires time and effort of a great number of good-willed persons, if it needs to be completed successfully. All the authors played significant roles in shaping the book by contributing papers that touch core topics within posthumanist rubric of animal studies. It is a pleasure to express my deep gratitude to all of them. I fondly recall the affection and warmth I have received from Prof. Boria Sax who writes a Foreword to this volume and provides suggestions for further improvement. I am also deeply indebted to the beautiful minds of Springer Nature—Mirosław Pawlak, Christian Witschel, Agata Weissmann, Arulmurugan Venkatasalam, and others. Needless to say, responsibility for the final text including any errors rests entirely with me.

I cannot thank my parents and wife enough for their patience and understanding. It has been my good fortune to have such inspiring family members, teachers, friends, and colleagues who encourage me all the time to flourish in the academic field. I dedicate this humble project to my furry friends.

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Kanakpur, India Dr. Krishanu Maiti

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Editor and Contributors

About the Editor

Krishanu Maiti teaches English language and literature in the Department of English, Panskura Banamali College (Autonomous), W.B., India. He wrote a dissertation on the topic of Literary Animal Studies and Posthumanism, and earned Ph.D. degree from Vidyasagar University in 2019. His areas of interest include animal studies, posthumanism and environmental humanities. He wrote numerous articles, essays, and chapters on literary animal studies. He co-edited a book titled *Global Perspectives on Eco-Aesthetics and Eco-Ethics: A Green Critique* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2020). His article on "Buddhism and Veganism" appears in *The Routledge Handbook of Vegan Studies* (Routledge, 2021).

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Animals in Posthumanist Thought: An Introduction

Krishanu Maiti

1 Introduction

This book brings together well-researched essays by established scholars as well as forward-thinking aspiring researchers to study how literary and non-literary texts highlight 'animal presence' and explore non-anthropocentric relationships between human and animals. To be precise, it offers Posthumanist readings of animal-centric Literary and Cultural texts. The contributors take positions that put the precepts and premises of humanism into question by considering the animal presence in texts seriously. The essays collected here focus primarily on literary and cultural texts from varied interdisciplinary and theoretically-informed perspectives advanced by critical approaches such as Critical Animal Studies and Posthumanism. Contributors select texts beyond geographical and period boundaries, and demonstrate how practices of close reading give rise to new ways of thinking about animals. By implicating the "Animal turn" for the field of literary and cultural studies, this book urges us to problematize the separation of the human from other animals and rethink the hierarchical order of beings through close readings of select texts. It offers some fresh perspectives of Posthumanist theory, so that we can revisit those criteria that created species' difference from the early ages of human civilization. This book will constitute a rich and thorough scholarly resource on the politics of representation of animals in literature and culture. The essays in this book are empirically and theoretically informed; and they explore a range of dynamic, captivating and highly relevant topics. This book does more than simply decentering the 'human' by bringing animals onto the center of critical discourse and challenging the anthropocentric hierarchical relationship, which are the basis of Posthumanist readings. It also highlights the theoretical intersections between Animal Theory and other relevant cultural theories, that is the latest advancement in this field. The volume is divided into four main sections

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on the basis of the scope and content of the essays and how they appropriate the Posthumanist parameters of Critical Animal Studies. Before moving to the individual essays, I would like to put forward some basic concepts related to genealogy and methodology of Critical Animal Studies within Posthumanism.

2 The State of Animal Studies

As an interdisciplinary study of human-animal relationships, Animal Studies is an emerging and growing field of research in the humanities and social sciences. Contemporary debates on the 'animal question' began in the 1970s, especially after the publication of Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* (1975) and Tom Regan's *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983). Over the last four decades, the status of animals has been rethought, and, thus, the human-animal relationship has undergone a reevaluation. In the age of the Anthropocene, species extinction, habitat loss due to deforestation, hunting, poaching, zoo entertainment, laboratory testing and so many other issues compel us to rethink their importance.

In his famous book *About Looking* (1980), John Berger offers the pertinent question "Why Look at Animals?" and remarks that the real animals have begun to disappear from human lives due to commercial exploitation and mechanization. His writing is one of the earliest to force us to rethink animals and reevaluate the human-animal relationship. As recent scholarly interest in animal issues has proliferated, it has produced a plethora of theories, methods and topics. Scholars employ various research methodologies to address diverse issues, as animals appear before us in the wild, as companions, on farms and in laboratories. Scholars from different disciplines name their fields in many ways. Some of them might be considered sub-fields, while others are general names used to refer to the entire field. Thus, we have Critical Animal Studies (CAS), Human-Animal Studies (HAS), Animal and Society Studies (ASS), Anthrozoology and so on. Scholars from different disciplines provide names that fit the languages and methodologies typical of those primary fields. The rise of Animal Studies is a response to the emergence of the animal rights movement, so the scholarship should be directly influenced by ethical concerns regarding the treatment of animals. That influence varies by discipline, but humanities subjects are probably the most comfortable in terms of animal ethics advocacy.

In one of the earliest journals on Animal Studies, *Society and Animals* (1993), the chief editor, Kenneth Shapiro, argues that the main purpose of the field is "to understand our varied relations to them, and to assess the costs—economic, ethical, and most broadly, cultural—of these relations" (p. 1).[1] Later in the same journal, in their article titled "The State of Human-Animal Studies" (2010),[2] Shapiro and DeMello

[1] See Shapiro, K. (1993). Editor's introduction to Society and Animals. *Society and Animals, 1*(1), 1–4. https://brill.com/abstract/journals/soan/1/1/article-p1_1.xml.

[2] See Shapiro, K., & DeMello, M. (2010). The state of human-animal studies. *Society & Animals*, *18*(3), 307–318.

identify more than 23 colleges that are running programmes on Animal Studies throughout the world, and they also refer to journals like *Anthrozoos*, *Journal of Critical Animal Studies* and *Humanimalia*[3] that are continuously providing scholarly contribution to this field. In 2009, *PMLA* (*Publication of the Modern Language Association*) featured a special issue devoted to "Animal Studies: Theories and Methodologies," where leading scholars like Cary Wolfe, Bruce Boehrer, Rosi Braidotti, Ursula K. Heise, Susan McHugh and others contributed articles and discussed various methodologies. Scholars trigger debate over the word 'animal' and raise questions on what/how we should call animals. They object to referring to all species except humans as 'animals' because the lumping of all animals into the singular word 'animal' obscures the diversity of animal lives. Therefore, they include the 'nonhuman' before the word 'animal' in order to remind us that humans are animals too. Interestingly, the editors of leading journals on Animal Studies instruct contributors to use 'nonhuman animal' instead of only 'animal.' Some scholars prefer to use 'other animals' in order to highlight the politics of 'othering.' However, the use of 'non' and 'other' reinforces the Western dualism of human-animal relations. To avoid the politics of othering and to uphold verbal activism, Kemmerer (2006) coined the term "anymal" to refer to an animal of *any* species— "*Anymal* offers a one-word alternative for the referent, "any animal who does not happen to be the same species that I am" (p. 13).[4] Though there are several books and journals in the field of Animal Studies, the editorial note by Shapiro and Copeland (2005) is an early article that provides substantial ideas regarding animal-centric literary criticism. In their observation, "a literary criticism perspective on animal issues is a point of view, a form of consciousness, a way to read any work…" (p. 343).[5] Literary animal studies seems to carry two motives: firstly, to analyze the politics of representation of animals in given texts and, secondly, to study how literary texts respond to the issues of animal ethics, rights and welfare.

Literary animal studies lack consistency; though animals are abundant in literature over the ages, they have never been the focus of systematic literary study. Recently, however, critics have shown that there are multiple ways of reading animals in literature, and their theoretical approaches are going to be the methodological frameworks of the emerging field. A handful of books have tried to study animals in a specific period. For example, Christine Kenyon-Jones's monograph, *Kindred Brutes: Animals in Romantic-Period Writing* (2001), examines the rise of literary animals as primarily noteworthy in terms of metaphor and symbol. Jennifer Mason's *Civilized Creatures: Urban Animals, Sentimental Culture, and American Literature, 1850–1900* (2005) offers a sentimental approach to animals. In *Perceiving Animals: Humans and Beasts in Early Modern English Culture* (2000), Erica Fudge employs

[3] *Anthrozoos*—https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rfan20.
Humanimalia—https://www.depauw.edu/humanimalia/index.html.
Journal for Critical Animal Studies—http://journalforcriticalanimalstudies.org/.

[4] See Kemmerer, L. (2006). Verbal activism: "anymal". *Society & Animals, 14*(1), 9–14. https://doi.org/10.1163/156853006776137186.

[5] Shapiro, K., & Copeland, M. (2005). Toward a critical theory of animal issues in fiction. *Society & Animals, 13*(4), 343–46.

a new-historicist method in her study of animals in early modern culture and shows how questions of authorship and authority trouble the interpretation of animal lives. In his well-known book, *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (2002), John Simons shows how literature can offer 'pro-animal' sympathies and "invoke the model of narrative as a way of understanding how power operates and how we might strive against its pressures" (p. 193). These are ways through which we can 'unthink' animals (already co-opted as pet, zoo-animal, farm-animal and so forth) in order to rethink them and re-evaluate our relationship with them. Recently, in *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (2012), Kari Weil connects animal theory, various philosophical thoughts, and ethics together with select important modernist and postmodernist literatures that represent human-animal relations.

3 The 'Animal Turn'

The question of the animal in our time invites theoretical convergences between Animal Studies and Posthumanism. Though Animal Studies is an interdisciplinary area of enquiry, I focus only on the theories pertaining to the humanities and social sciences. After introducing the genealogy and development of the term 'Posthumanism', I explore the Posthumanist thinkers who take particular interest in the question of animals. The renowned postmodernist theorist, Ihab Hassan, offers a definition of the term in his article "Prometheus as Performer: Towards a Posthumanist Culture?" (1977)[6] in which he questions the traditional boundaries between the human, the animal and the technological.

In general, posthumanism is a critique of enlightenment humanism, particularly its perpetuation of anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism, which is the notion that humans are uniquely gifted with cognitive faculties that justify their supremacy over nature, including all other animals. Posthumanist theory is less concerned with deconstructing socially constructed boundaries between humans and other animals. The effort to break down these categories can be considered as a challenge to the processes through which the category of the human historically claims its supremacy over the nonhuman other. The category of the nonhuman other includes not only other animals but also other human beings, with narrow boundaries of the human subject restricted along the lines of race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class and able-bodiedness, among others. Posthumanism critiques the processes of other-making that have radically shaped human-animal relations in certain cultures over the centuries. In terms of Animal Studies, posthumanism is particularly relevant to theories of animal rights.

Cary Wolfe triggered the 'Animal Turn' in posthumanism in his three books: *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species, and Posthumanist Theory* (2003), *Zoontologies: The Question of the Animal* (2003) and *What is Posthumanism?* (2010). In the last book, he claims that "the 'animal question' is part

[6] Hassan, I. (1977). Prometheus as performer: toward a Posthumanist culture?. *The Georgia. Review, 31*(4),830–850. www.jstor.org/stable/41397536.

of the larger question of posthumanism" (2010, p. xxii). To him, Posthumanism is neither a rejection nor a transcendence of humanism.[7] As there are many things in humanism that are admirable, he only wants to critique certain aspects of it. Animal Studies does not necessarily imply a posthumanist approach. As Cary Wolfe notes in *What is Posthumanism?* (2010), "Just because we direct our attention to the study of nonhuman animals, and even if we do so with the aim of exposing how they have been misunderstood and exploited, that does not mean that we are not continuing to be humanist—and therefore, by definition, anthropocentric" (p. 99). His main contribution to posthumanist animal studies is to differentiate between 'Humanist Posthumanism' and 'Posthumanist Posthumanism.' According to Wolfe, the 'Humanist Posthumanism' argues for the defence and rights of animals, garners respect for them and points to the similarities between humans and animals. This postion holds human beings as the measuring stick and benchmark for defining and categorizing nonhuman animals. Human beings become the norm for considering and appraising other-than-human life forms. Wolfe provides examples of two renowned ethical thinkers, Peter Singer and Tom Regan, to elaborate the point:

> Animal rights philosophy as articulated by its two most important founding philosophers – Tom Regan and Peter Singer – is certainly posthumanist in the sense that it opposes the ontological hierarchy just outlined. It is posthumanist, that is to say, in its opposition to anthropocentrism and to the assumption that the subject is worthy of ethical recognition (…) But it is humanist, and in a debilitating way, in how it mounts this argument philosophically. Whether in Regan's neo-Kantian version or Singer's utilitarian version, what secures ethical standing for the animal is a set of characteristics, qualities and potentialities that ends up looking an awful lot like us. (Braidotti, et al. Posthuman Glossary, 357)

Posthumanism, according to Wolfe, disregards the human way of measuring the animal. This premise never looks for similarity between humans and animals; rather, it emphasises difference.[8] It appreciates the ethical value of different, non-human ways of being. Wolfe argues that humans share three main features with animals: mortality, finitude and vulnerability. In such a context, we can consider animal ethics. Thus, Posthumanism converges with animal studies in several ways.

4 Different Ways of Thinking of Animals

Derrida's *The Animal that Therefore I Am* has established itself as a prominent and even canonical text within animal studies. Chapter 1 of Derrida's book, which was delivered in the form of a lecture on the 'autobiographical animal' in 1997, examines the way we established differences between ourselves, humans, and that which we call the animal. In making this connection, he identifies the notions of 'nudity,' the

[7] See the interview here- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NN427KBZlI.

[8] Wolfe thinks that 'Systems Theory' puts emphasis on the differences, as it speaks of the autonomy of a species, differentiation and complexity within a species. According to 'Systems Theory', animal species and their systems are not inferior to the human species and its systems.

'animal gaze', the 'singularity' of animal lives, animal ethics, and other fundamental concepts. In doing so, he finds fault with the anthropocentric Western philosophical orientations regarding the animal, and most importantly, he plays with the word 'Animal', which homogenizes all nonhuman living beings without accounting for the heterogeneous multiplicity of their lives.

Donna Haraway's *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness* (2003) and *When Species Meet* (2008) critique human exceptionalism and state that it is both foolish and harmful to prioritize human centrality. She thinks that when we all live in a 'cyborg culture,' the binaries of human/nonhuman and nature/culture are continually transgressed and the boundaries between them are confused. She also reminds us that we are all entangled[9] by our natural interconnections with other beings. Human beings cannot live separately, without any interaction with nonhuman animals, who are integral to our survival; they are what Haraway calls our "companion species." Haraway's concept of "significant otherness" is fundamental, especially in the field of Animal Studies. According to her, the concept of "significant otherness" implies "taking the difference seriously" (p. 7) and taking the human-animal relationship thoughtfully. Haraway suggests that the "significant otherness" of our "companion species" should always be respected, which is similar to Derrida's concept. If we cannot perceive and value the otherness of animals, we cannot imagine our moral relationship with them. On the basis of that, we can only consider our ethical responsibility. She further says that we devalue our companionship if we treat our companion animals (to her, dogs) as humans. What she proposes is that there should be no sense of hierarchical relationships in the "entanglement." Later, just like Derrida, Haraway emphasises the singularity of animals. What is a cat to Derrida is a dog to Haraway. In *When Species Meet*, she departs from Derrida's theoretical approaches. While Derrida shifts to the use of language and signification, Haraway focuses on the everyday "contact zone" between human and animal. On the one hand, she intends to break the boundary between human/animal; on the other hand, she extends Derrida's thought, emphasising otherness, diversity and heterogeneity. Summarily, the notion of "significant otherness" acknowledges our vital connections with other animals while also appreciating their alterity.

In the field of animal studies, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of 'becoming-animal' in *A Thousand Plateaus* is very important in relation to Haraway's emphasis on 'difference.' They develop this concept to capture the idea of human-animal relationships based on affinity rather than identity or imitation. Deleuze and Guattari's concept of becoming-animal provides significant insights to help break the barriers between human and nonhuman, particularly that becoming is only possible through artistic representations and the act of writing.

Animal Studies includes various ways to evaluate our moral relationship with animals. Theorists account for our responsibilities and ethical responses to animal lives. There are various arguments on animal ethics by welfarists, ethicists and activists who question how we should treat animals in husbandry, zoos and other

[9] Haraway used the term 'entanglement' in her 2008 book to suggest the inseparability of the human and animal worlds.

places where we encounter them every day. This volume focuses on those texts that tend to be post-anthropocentric, biocentric, anti-anthropomorphic, post-dualistic, anti-speciesist and welfarist. Essays here indulge in the tradition of thought through which the human has been centred in culture and, in the end, question that kind of tradition. They also challenge the opinion that animals are not only an oppositional but also an inferior other to human beings. Contributors here select literary, cultural and religious texts to challenge the human-constructed criteria that institutionalize the hierarchy of being between humans and animals.

5 On this Collected Volume: Conclusion

The essays collected in this book concentrate on divergent literary/cultural texts; they do so from varied interdisciplinary, theoretically-informed perspectives advanced by approaches of Critical Animal Studies and Posthumanism. The selected texts cross geographical and period boundaries, and they demonstrate how close reading practices manifest new ways of thinking about animals. This volume ultimately showcases an "Animal Turn," questioning the ethical and philosophical grounds/criteria of human exceptionalism by taking seriously nonhuman animal 'presences.' This book comprises four sections that meet Posthumanist parameters/ways of reading animal-centric texts. Authors take post-anthropocentric positions and hold topics of animal subjectivity, human-animal co-existence/entanglements, fragile species boundary, animalized other, ethics and compassion. Though essays are clustered into disparate sections, they sometimes share similar concerns and issues.

Part I critiques the hierarchical nature of beings and questions how we generally categorize animals in our own ways. Peter Ellis challenges one of the cornerstones of the humanist concept that humans are distinct from other animals and that we have dominion over them by right, to be found in the biblical account of the creation in Genesis Chap. 1. Monica Sousa engages with two examples of literary journalism to examine how commonly labelled 'predator' mammals are represented in nonfiction genre, and she argues that the concept of the 'predator' is an anthropocentric reflection of the fear towards the collapse of human exceptionalism. Josh Hayes in his essay aims to interrogate an important conceptual distinction between the 'feral' and the 'liminal' in contemporary animal studies. This essay contests the application of the normative category of 'feral' to introduce exotic animals, particularly wild parrots in urban centers throughout the globe, as a symptom of humanism.

Part II focuses on representations and figurations of posthuman animals who possess agency, speech and intelligence. Adrian Tait's paper explores three short stories by H. G. Wells in which nonhuman animals possess levels of intelligence and intentionality that transcend the humanistic conception of the animal as a creature that (by definition) lacks reason. Aaron McMullan's chapter challenges the anthropocentric understanding of the Levinasian ethical encounter, whilst exploring how Mondo cinema disrupts the balance of power between the offscreen human spectator and the onscreen non-human other. He also hints at the possibility of animal 'face'

that can both speak and command. Cynthia Porter Rosenfeld explores the agency of nonhuman animals to create displays of visual rhetoric. This essay weaves observations from BBC documentary footage of the Vogelkop bowerbird with critical tools and frameworks, while continuously embedding research from natural sciences. Sam Allen Wright analyzes Derrida's concept of the autobiographical animal by examining two human-written animal autobiographies (or life writings from an animal perspective), Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone*, and Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World*. She argues that these stories give readers a glimpse of a world in which animals are no longer denied stories, language, and life.

Part III throws light on different shades of human-animal relationships in literary and cultural texts. James Cochran argues that the Netflix show *BoJack Horseman* uses posthuman and interspecies relationships to reject heteronormativity and speciesism and asks us to think more deeply about what it means to live alongside human and non-human beings. Iona Wynter's paper leaves a message that authors should not use animals as an emblem to illustrate unconsidered peoples, but rather show humans and nonhumans in mutual belonging and exchange in their stories. Ninette Rothmueller's chapter examines the human-animal relationship through the lens of a contemporary artistic interpretation of bestiaries. This contribution investigates contemporary visual storytelling at the human-animal interface, through an extended, posthumanist reading of questions of identity, power, and human-animal relationality. Lauren E. Perry's essay examines how late 19th-century nonfiction literature interrogates narratives about both wild and domestic animals within American culture and authors intervene with different ideas about human-animal relationships.

Part IV concentrates on the burgeoning topic of intersectionality between Animal Studies and Gender Studies. Daniel Lanza Rivers in his chapter analyzes intertextual representations of white American masculinity and its human and nonhuman others as they arise across a referential chain of three 20th Century hunting novels such as William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses*, Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?*, and James Dickey's *Deliverance.* Taking the concepts of animality, femininity and madness as its departing points, Katarzyna Nowak-McNeice's essay interrogates animal studies with respect to the discipline's engagement and dialogue with gender studies and disability studies, looking at how the categories of animality and humanity are reshaped and renegotiated in response to the debates within the wider scope of posthumanism. She studies Olga Tokarczuk's novel *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* and Agnieszka Holland's film adaptation of the text in *Spoor* with focus on overlapping of speciesism with carnism, sexism and ableism. Keri R Stevenson's essay extends a posthumanist subjectivity to birds in George Meredith's novel *The Egoist*. It argues that attention to the subjectivity of birds is what enables Clara Middleton to grow beyond her own egoism and learn a new proto-ecofeminist perspective, as well as achieving an escape from her unwanted engagement to a man who despises both animals and women.

At end, I strongly believe that this book will be of interest to specialist as well as non-specialist readers across a variety of disciplines. It is also intended to be appropriate for use as a classroom casebook in graduate-level and research-oriented

courses taught in departments such as English Studies, Comparative Literature, Environmental Humanities, History, Philosophy, and Film studies.

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Contestation Over Species Hierarchy and Categorization

Can Natural Theology Rethink Its Relationship with Non-human Animals?

Peter Ellis

Abstract Verses 26 and 28 in the creation account of Genesis 1 give human animals a special role in regard to other animals. Verse 26 tells how man is created in God's image and given domination over non-human animals, who are by implication not in God's image, while verse 28 tasks humans to subdue the earth. These two verses are no longer tenable given human damage to the environment. One suggestion on how to transcend texts such as these has been to 'radicalize their contexts.' This chapter attempts to do this by widening the scope of the Biblical account, written in the mid first millennium BCE following the domestication of animals, to include what is known today about earlier relationships between human and non-human animals. In the deep prehistory preceding Genesis, humans would have found the concept of a stark difference between animal species, or the dominance of any one over the other, as impossibilities. This was because there were no clear boundaries between the species, any creature might represent elements of any other creature, including humans. Deliberate damage by humans was not conceivable, since the 'other' being was the primary element in experience. The chapter explores the implications of this truer 'human nature' for natural theology.

1 Introduction: Animals in the Biblical Creation Account

> Genesis 1:26 Then God said: 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and over cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth (…).'
>
> Genesis 1:28 '(…) God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it […].'

These two verses from Genesis restrict the relationship between human and non-human animals to being a very one-sided affair. They are no longer acceptable as

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any kind of guideline given that God's instructions in them have led to cruelty and destruction to non-human animals and to impossible justifications by human ones. However, this paper argues that the verses are an obstacle that can be overcome and suggests that there are older and wiser ways of living with other creatures.

Before engaging with the primary question posed at the head of this chapter, another question, that always looms in modernity, has to be addressed. That second question is whether any talk of human theology or religion is relevant to the new landscape that sees all animals including human ones as deserving of equal space in our lived bodily and intellectual experience. How, modernity asks, can agonising over a couple of verses from a two and a half millennia old religious text, as will be done here, expand this space? The answer is that one only has to look at the structure of the secular western debate about the animal to recognize its origins in the religions of the book (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) that lie behind western discourse.[1] This cannot be easily shaken off by ceasing to discuss theology. In the academic world, for example, it is quite illogical that the biological sciences are separate from the humanities unless one accepts a nature/culture divide as a given, and searching for the origin of that given sees that it comes far back from a theological origin. Why is it that the difference between humans and animals is so insisted on? If this were a simple division as between different subjects then why is there so much impassioned writing about it? Why need humans insist on their wearisome catalogue of language, writing, works of the imagination, conceptual analysis and so forth, as differing them from other animals? Why do people angrily dispute any suggestion that, for example, ants build cities or that chimpanzees love their young, rather than that they follow instincts which do not include human feelings? Why the grudging admission by scientists, only within this century, that animals feel pain? Why do our modern languages slip so easily into animalistic words like bestial or feral to indicate a moral distinction between us and them? Why are internalised thoughts so embedded that set animal and spiritual at different ends of a spectrum? The answer is easily given. It is because of the still inescapably present inheritance of religious thought.

Indeed more than that it could be argued that the modern secular world has simply taken over the role of the divine. Nietzsche argued that we had killed God by obliterating his horizon.[2] It could be said that we have expanded ourselves into that horizon so that there is nothing to see but human thought, human consciousness and human cognition, and that we have now possessed ourselves of the powers we formerly attributed to God. Much of the scientific paraphernalia of academic life is presented as dispassionate analysis from on high set far above the human fray below. In recent western history, colonialism, imperialism and the demand for a commitment to State and nation, are all decked out with the idols of divine power which have come to be taken for reality. The cruelty and destruction inflicted on non-human animals are sacrificial offerings on the altars of the new divinity of the human. It is necessary to search back within the pre-secular past to find the root of the problem if a real change in human/non-human relations is to be initiated.

[1] See Frye (1983).

[2] Nietzsche (1974), p. 125.

Any attempt to sketch out a natural theology[3] that brings human and non-human animals back into the frame as equal participants has to negotiate the much commented-on verses 26 and 28 in the first chapter of the first book of the Bible.[4] Here in Genesis is the first of two accounts of the creation of the world. The narrative tells of God's work over six days bringing light, vegetation, water creatures, birds and finally animals into being, and it tells of his judgement that the work is good or very good. This is the earlier account, written in the sixth century BCE, and it begins the Hebrew Scriptures, the founding texts of the Judaeo-Christian religions and central also to Islam. The problematic verses have played out very badly for animals. In the first place although the sixth day of God's creation (verses 24–31) sees living animals of every kind—including human ones—brought into being on the same day and so committed to by God as one group, verse 26 picks out humans as being especially privileged to be 'in our image and likeness' and verse 28 gives them 'dominion' over all the other living creatures. It is notable that dominion is translated from a very definite and very harsh Hebrew word—hope of a mistranslation will not help here.[5] The intention of this chapter is to bring non-human animals back into their place alongside us in a theologically imagined world, not in terms of their animal rights, or our having been entrusted with their stewardship, but quite simply to explore a natural theology which does not privilege humans. Without these verses theology could not read into the existence of humans a distinction from nature, and that seems a good starting point for radical change. The intention is also to dispute any idea of humans' position as representatives of God as is read from our being in his image and likeness. Verses 26 and 28 are the primary barriers in the way of these objectives.

It might look an impossible project to go against this opening or key text of the religions of the book. It will be said that the text puts animals inescapably on one side of the scales and religion on the other and it is impossible to bring the two together. Human animals being told by God in the founding text to subdue and dominate non-human animals leaves no room for dispute. However our accepting that logic introduces us to the instrumentalist way of thinking that appeared in the West at the time of the Renaissance and has continued and still continues to this day. This way of thinking, incidentally as bad for non-human animals as the verses, replaced in theology a far more open, poetic and paradoxical way of thinking that was common in the middle ages and earlier. What came into being in modernity was a reductive dismissiveness of the mind as an instrument of meditative thought, and its replacement with thinking as a matter of clarification and explanation. This is under major challenge today characterised by a general change in the climate of thought that rejects the certainties of the Enlightenment.[6] The theologian David Kelsey suggests the way out of so many of the dead-ends of modernity is to 'radicalize the contexts.'[7]

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[3] Natural theology is the study of the knowledge of God that derives from observation and experience rather than divine revelation.

[4] Summarised in Westermann (1994); Bible quotations are from the New Standard Revised Version.

[5] As noted by Kelsey (2009), p. 929.

[6] For examples see Massumi (2002) and Mignolo (2011).

[7] Kelsey (2009), p. 175.

Instrumentalist thinking closes down avenues by rejecting side issues and focusing on the main routes. Radicalizing the contexts means expanding into plurality and diversity, and, specifically in theology, avoiding 'all suggestions of limitation in scope or manner of God's creativity.'[8] The approach to Genesis Chap. 1 verses 26 and 28, utilised here, works on the idea of challenging stumbling blocks by altering their settings, and by refusing limitations on creativity from whatever source.

2 Animals Before Domestication

The occurrence of cattle in the first creation account and tillage as the occupation of the first man, Adam, in the second account, puts us inescapably in a world of domesticated animals and cultivated plants. This is a very recent occurrence in terms of human life on the planet, occupying about five per cent of the total presence of our species as physically the same as us today.[9] The viewpoint about the relationship of humans and non-humans in Genesis Chap. 1 is one that belongs firmly in the period of change toward the end of prehistory brought about by domestication. This need not result in rejecting the text but in reconceptualizing it on the grounds that these texts from the axial first millennium BCE (like early Hindu, Buddhist and Confucian texts as well as the classics of Greece) no longer offer any realistic evidence for a definition of an original human nature. They all belong in eras distorted by kings and servants, cities and armies, the eras of the State. Reconceptualization is also invited by the character of these great texts. The Hebrew Scriptures particularly are filled with multiple polysemous meanings that change with the age or gender or culture of the reader, so the text can be read and reread but never actually be finally read. It is not going to harm the Genesis account by going much further back into the deep past. There it is surprisingly possible to accommodate the growing refusal today to accept any conceptual difference between human and non-human animals.[10]

In this prehistoric world there was no stark division between the human person and other creatures or objects. A person was not so much an individual as a dividual[11] and would be unsure exactly where the limits of their being might lie. This has to be seen not as a lack, or as a failure to have reached mental maturity, but as representing a long-lived approach to reality, one that is intellectually seriously respectable in modern terms. Life lived intimately with other animal and plant species meant that they were seen as human persons with similar consciousnesses, language and culture, but differing in appearance and perspective.[12] Further all creatures were taking part in landscapes and cosmological worlds that were active participants in their affairs.[13]

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[8] Ibid.

[9] See the timeline and summary in Scott (2017), pp 2–4.

[10] For anthropological evidence see Descola (2014) and Viveiros de Castro (2014).

[11] See Strathern (1988) and, more generally, Raunig (2016).

[12] See Skafish (2014).

[13] The relationship with landscape is discussed in Ingold (2000), pp 189–208.

This is all very clear in the myths that, in orality, fashioned, in the shape of shared stories and experiences, the cement which bonded people together and formed a sense of commonalty through recognition. They tell of paradoxical metamorphoses of humans and non-humans, bodies and parts of bodies, spirits and 'real' creatures—the world in general.[14] It means that for humans there is no original single human nature but a multitude of natures. Non-human animals were seen in human terms as humans appearing in a different guise, or parts of a person or a group's totemic self. This perspectivism and multinaturalism meant a way of seeing that altered from moment to moment, not one dependent on a static representation of fixed concepts. What came first therefore was not the self, or consciousness or cognition, but the *other being* of whatever form. Perspectivism meant that everything could be seen from another point of view, specifically, for the argument here, from that of non-human animals. One could say that the words 'dominion' and 'subdue' could not have been conceptualized, could not have been brought into thought or related to any conceivable action. It is possible to add, too, that one being occurring in the image or likeness of another was so commonplace as to make any special notice of such a happening meaningless.

3 Creation

The reality of the deep prehistory preceding Genesis can be reinserted back into its first chapter. Doing so would be another way of radicalizing its context. It would require a challenge to the Genesis account of 'creation from nothing' which is spelled out in the opening two verses of Chap. 1. The nothing was in fact, paradoxically, named as being 'in the beginning,' 'a formless void' in which darkness covered the 'face of the deep' where 'a wind from God swept over the face of the waters'. Thus time ('in the beginning'), wind and water were already there in the nothing that the account says the creation sprang from. Modern theologians have disputed creation from nothing on many levels.[15] It puts us in an artificial world involving arrival, placement and accommodation to a non-existent nothingness, rather than emergence from whatever that nothingness might be. One argument is that this is 'his story'—the man's story—exposing a phallic fear of the watery womb and thus ridding the beginning of the world of nature itself and the possibility of a female God contained in the Hebrew name for the deep.[16] There is also the question why we need to be afraid of seeing our existence as deriving from the formless void, and that this too is an element of a wild untamed God who has been domesticated in the Bible. Such a derivation would diminish our common modern fantasies that the origins of control and order are insecure because they were wrested from anarchy and disorder, and hence are always under the threat of a reversion to chaos. Finally,

[14] For North American examples see Lévi-Strauss (1995).

[15] See Caputo (2006), pp. 56–8.

[16] See Keller (2003), pp. 28–31.

the existence of time and space as formless in the beginning can be argued to be the actual real existence of time and space from then to now. Time and space are not items to be classified, measured and controlled but circumstances that dominate us. All this gives more life to the Talmudic story of God's twenty-six attempts to create the world and his words 'Let's hope it works' which underscore the world's radical uncertainty.[17] It is in this context that verses 26 and 28 can be set—they can be seen as an aspect of creation attempt number twenty-seven that has not worked.

If instead of the formless void into which a ground-tilling and animal-domesticating dominant man is introduced, we look at the whole lifespan of humans on the planet we have a different picture. Genesis is then the beginning of *history*, the formless void is *prehistory*. Genesis is an artistic creation account to be paralleled by the myriad myths of orality. In the perspectivist world view that simply means that it is one story in a multiverse that accepts a plurality of stories and, like the formless deep, is free of hierarchy. The Genesis creation story is thus highly creative, awash with goodness and praise, and, apart from 'dominion' and 'subdue,' relatively non-violent. In the fallacious flaw of verses 26 and 28 it turns its back on the perspective of the formless deep and is mistaken about non-human animals. But what else could be expected from the early textual documents of the world of States, of vertical hierarchies both in thinking and in social reality, of lords and servants, warfare, city walls, taxes and kings? That at any rate is the best that can be said from the perspective of prehistory about the painful fact of the two verses. The early text writers in the first millennium BCE, pivotal for our culture, were late on a scene which had been dominated by a wholly different view of life, one that particularly involved an intimate relationship with animals.

4 'Animal' Nature

Rather than being dismissed as primitive this view has become of immense interest today as the potential collapse of the planet as supportive of animal life emerges as a reality from a possibility. Philosophically the concept of a multiplicity and pluriversality that does not derive from a single stem of important meaning but that spreads horizontally from one different domain to another, appears more attractive when one realizes how much what is regarded as important is to be associated with the concentrations of power.[18] In terms of lived experience a world in which one is not forced to be a separate singularity but is able to move more easily within an acceptance of otherness that includes sharing space and time with other species, is equally attractive. Instead of a conceptual world of named and defined creatures or named and defined landscapes and townscapes, the shape-shifting and more uncertain world of prehistory might be a welcoming one. Seeing creatures and landscapes as

[17] Quoted in Prigogine & Stengers (1985), p. 313.

[18] As argued by Deleuze & Guattari (2013).

living things in the mode of the 'dream-time' before the colonisation of Australia is more and more acceptable as a viable way of living, in contrast to modern reality.[19]

This requires a turnaround not just in natural theology but in many ways of thinking that function with the idea of 'human nature' defining us as distinctive from 'animal nature'. It is painful for natural theology because it requires a rethinking of the concept of 'animal' itself. There are many possible general views of Nature with a capital N, but the majority of Christian discourse has settled over the years, and particularly in recent centuries, on one of the most negative ones. This is that Nature is defined by predation as an amoral domain of cruelty where action is no more than an instinctive expression of immediate need. Instead of feeling a comradeship with animality it became something to turn one's back on as altogether lacking in spirituality and the civilized virtues. This view was given renewed life by, and today owes much to, Darwin's theory of evolution. But it is only by the trick of compressing the enormous time spans involved in this evolutionary premise that one can characterize his theory as 'survival of the fittest'. If one reduces millennia to the blink of an eye then dynamic change as the key might appear to be the case. A less scientific objective reason for the widespread adoption of 'survival of the fittest' as an explanation of existence was that it suited the nineteenth-century colonizing and imperializing expansionary economy, and also fitted into the Christian attitude that accompanied it. For with that attitude the missionary process could be justified by seeing it as one of rescuing human animals (indigenous peoples) from the ill-conceived delusion that they were indistinguishable from non-human animals. It will easily be seen that recognizing now, as is increasingly the case, that pre-State societies were right to live at one with animals, and that we are wrong to follow verses 26 and 28 and separate ourselves from them, deals terminal blows to a whole range of accepted norms surviving from coloniality.

5 Contingency and Paradox

Instead of drawing back from Darwin's picture one could instead see it as representing a vast commitment to contingency rather than purposiveness. This would be helped by abandoning the scientific detachment of Darwinism (which, as suggested above, actually derives in the end from verse 26 and our being in the image of God) and looking at the world from inside it, from where it should logically be seen by its inhabitants. This would be a sort of poesis where the creativity of all creatures is brought into action at the same level and involves all. Seeing the natural world as made up of numerous natural worlds, like the umwelts of the biologist Jakob von Uexküll, would provide a counterpoise to Darwinian predation, in particular in Uexküll's setting of them in a peaceable meadow rather than the red-in-tooth-and-claw jungle beloved of the Victorians.[20] Uexküll presents a picture of the goings-on

[19] For 'dream-time' see Descola (2014), p. 35; for the contemporary contrast see Chatwin (1998).

[20] Uexküll (2010); see also Buchanan (2008).

in nature, including us, that create not one but numberless intermeshed worlds. These are all served by radically different time schemes, and radically different needs and impulses, but co-exist in a sort of harmony that includes, but downplays, predation. This subjection to contingency, which can almost be raised, in a Hegelian way, to a teleology in itself, brings into question theology's insistence on looking at purpose rather than actuality.

How natural theology has read the text of Genesis Chap. 1 has not been helped by modern western hermeneutics. It is particularly clear when looking at the way animals are written about in secularity that there is a distinct division between the prosaic and the poetic, and that value and worth belong inordinately with the prosaic reading. Perhaps it is the case that in reading Genesis theologians and students are caught in the modern social imaginaries of our expectations of a text? These would tell us that something immediately clear is therefore by its very nature more important than something difficult to grasp or that is ungraspable, whereas instead more weight should be given to the subtlety of metaphor than the clarity of a statement.[21] The metaphorical is noticeably closer to the fluid and boundaryless outline of human relations to other animals which were noted above as typical of the pre-Biblical world. The metaphorical and paradoxical are also closer to our lived experience in modernity as is suggested in the aptly titled book *We Have Never Been Modern.*[22] In other words the whole carapace of dispassionate analysis from afar is just that—a carapace. Metaphor and paradox undermine logical statements and the damaging assumption that we live by actions that derive from rational decision-making and the weighing up of options.

The narratives of the Bible occur as metaphor and paradox, reflecting their role at the centre of religious thought. This is the presence in that thought of the recognition of another unthinkable way of thinking—as expressed in Isaiah's 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord'.[23] Nor can paradox function in orderly time schemes. There has to be discontinuity in time to match the discontinuity in formal consecutive thought. A contingent world is one that is open and accepting, while a purposive world is one that is closed and limiting. Contingency and paradox mean an openness to the possibility of the impossible as Caputo puts it.[24] Until the Enlightenment the idea of the world being radically dependent on the continued creativity of God was commonplace. In the medieval period it has been suggested that a deliberate 'strategy of disarrangement' of the normative was adopted as a key way of finding God.[25] This ambiguity is reflected in the title of David Kelsey's book *Eccentric Existence* where the human being's life is argued to be directed from elsewhere—an acceptable evolutionary and theological view. This is particularly reinforced by the metaphorical and poetic meaning of the Genesis creation account. Many prehistoric myths play with the idea of the insecure nature

[21] See the discussion in Green (1989), pp 127–34.

[22] Latour (1993).

[23] Isaiah Chap. 55, verse 8.

[24] Caputo (2006), pp 87–8.

[25] Turner (1995), p. 8.

of the world, with strange invisible realities underlying the visible appearances. It is a mistake to see this as something that cowed consciousness, as is shown by the ubiquity of the Trickster myths across the continents.[26] It is interesting that these are also essentially comic rather than tragic, an observation that undermines the privileging of the tragic in Western cultures as the ultimate expression of human creativity.

6 Conclusion: Being Animals

In a bitter irony, verses 26 and 28 have committed non-human animals to an animal species—the human—who have then defined them as lowly, affectless predators. However there is within Christian natural theology a different strand to the 'nature as predation' theme, best expressed in St Francis' sense of our brotherhood and sisterhood with all creatures. This Franciscan perception is radically committed to the horizontality and equality of the relationship, and is consciously turned against the view of vertical power in verses 26 and 28. It is well expressed in the present Pope's encyclical *Laudato Si'* from 2015. However the theme can be taken much further than ameliorating behaviours that stem from human animals toward non-human animals. Instead traffic in the other direction is just as important. The world we have lost is what the voices of other creatures have been telling us and we have stopped being able to hear. The poet and Trappist monk Thomas Merton captured the essence of modernity's sense of loss and damage from our conflicted relationship with the natural world in a journal entry written in 1965[27] which recorded seeing deer outside his hermitage in Kentucky:

> The thing that struck me most: one sees, looking at them directly in movement, just what the cave painters saw – something that I had never seen in a photograph. It is an awe-inspiring thing – the Muntu or 'spirit' shown in the running of the deer, the 'deerness' that sums up everything and is saved and marvelous. A contemplative intuition! Yet perfectly ordinary, everyday seeing. The deer reveals to me something essential in myself! Something beyond the trivialities of my everyday being, and my individuality.

Is it possible now to suggest ways of bringing non-human animals into natural theology? The way would be once again by radicalizing and expanding the contexts and allowing animal as a concept to escape from its human-imposed straitjacket. Merton's reaction to the deer opens up a modern perspectivism that is, as he says, 'perfectly ordinary'. Thus the final radicalization suggested here is opening a perspective that sees non-human animals as both the individual and the species. This perspective was well understood in prehistory in myths and totemic representation. It was also clear in the pre-modern period in the rapport between the animal and magic, where magic is a way of seeing the world so that each object, each creature, is also, in addition to its particularity, the essence of the species or type of which it forms a

[26] Radin (1972).

[27] Merton (1998), p. 291.

part.[28] In the medieval period theologians saw the one in the whole and the whole in each one, and thought that if the one did not contain the whole the whole could not be formed—Nicholas of Cusa's coincidence of opposites.[29]

In addition to this balance between individual and species, animals have a symbolic poetic presence which occasionally becomes startlingly visible. Like Merton's deer, Rilke's panther or Blake's tiger, or even those strange moment of eye contact with close companion animals, something else is there available and perhaps even dominant in the being of a creature that could be seen as the 'image of God.' These multiple roles are highly paradoxical because each one of them is not only very clear cut but can also make sudden and quite arbitrary appearances. It is not in any way that one sees one behind the other. It was this that made ill-treatment of other animals impossible for prehistoric humans (remembering the universal hunter-gatherer belief that the hunted creature gave itself as a gift). Modern humans have lost this inhibition. In prehistory being unclear about what it was one was in, and with whom, made other creatures and the world a place to be shared not a place to be dominated or to be rationally ordered to one's own individual satisfaction. We are very much organised today in favour of being individuals. It might be a measure, once again, of our desire to distinguish ourselves from non-human animals, that we find collectivity—accord and correspondence with others—such a philosophic and existential problem. It is at one and the same time a threat to our freedom and a burden of existential isolation and loss. Nevertheless the same triad of animal beings is present with us—individual, species, and simple ineffable presence—as indeed the creation stories and evolution would tell us. Though still normative from prehistory in non-State societies and in rural 'backward' pockets, we prefer to deny this triadic aspect of our past and see ourselves as the chosen ones of God, the inheritors of verses 26 and 28 in Genesis. A natural theology that abandoned this as an illusion and explored an expansion of ourselves into a deeper past might very well allow a kinder relationship with ourselves and with other creatures.

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[28] See Mauss (2001), pp 80 and 90–1.

[29] See Bond (1997), p. 22.

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Reassessing the Predator: Representations of Predatory Animals in John Vaillant's *The Tiger* and Nate Blakeslee's *The Wolf*

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Abstract In the chapter, "Reassessing the Predator: Representations of Predatory Animals in John Vaillant's *The Tiger* and Nate Blakeslee's *The Wolf*," Sousa engages with two examples of literary journalism to examine how commonly labeled "predator" mammals are represented in this creative nonfiction genre, and she argues that the concept of "the predator" is an anthropocentric reflection of the fear towards the collapse of human exceptionalism. Challenging notions of human exceptionalism/anthropocentrism is a significant tenet of posthumanism and animal studies, and arguing against anthropocentrism in these fields includes challenging specific notions that humans have established against specific animals (such as that of the tiger and the wolf, predator animals). This chapter builds on the argument by looking at the notions around the word "predator" and how they connect to both the animals as well as the humans in both texts, the empathetic humans that can be found in both texts, and discussions of language and communication, anthropomorphism, and embodiment.

1 Introduction

Literary journalism has a commitment to deliver the truth and provide a diverse presentation of pertinent voices. If journalists are to abide by this responsibility, the argument established by Carrie Packwood Freeman et al. on journalism and nonhuman animals is worth noting: "We take as our premise that as part of journalism's commitment to truth and justice by providing a multiplicity of relevant perspectives, journalists have an obligation to provide the perspective of nonhuman animals in stories that affect them" (Freeman, 2011, 2). Yet, humans are often more inclined to consider or sympathize with the stories and concerns of animals that are culturally seen as pets (dogs, cats, etc.). There is an unspoken but culturally accepted set of power relations between the owner and the pet where the former is the dominating actor in the relationship and the latter is the companion. It is the animals that

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are culturally labeled as predators (tigers, wolfs, sharks, etc.) that push humans to recognize the instability in categorizing humans as the most powerful species. The figure of the predator is often associated with the idea of monstrosity and with cold, ruthless killers. However, humans are still drawn to the predatory nonhuman animal *because* they are viewing them as symbols of monstrosity. In his work of literary journalism, *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival*, John Vaillant questions the human fascination with monstrosity, writing that the predator "or any other manifestation of the Beast (…) are objects of dark fascination in large part because of their capacity to consciously, willfully destroy us" (Vaillant, 2011, 191). Yet, in a fascination that establishes the idea of humans against monstrous figures in a simple "us-against-them" dichotomy, there is a disregard for moments where the "predator" can be seen as more than just monstrous and where the term can be regarded as one that is not exclusive to nonhuman animal species.

Two works of literary journalism that engage with the notion of the predator are John Vaillant's *The Tiger: A True Story of Vengeance and Survival* and Nate Blakeslee's *The Wolf: A True Story of Survival and Obsession in the West.* Vaillant writes about a hunt for the man-eating Siberian tiger that lurked a remote village in Russia, examining the connections between the tiger and the humans who lived in the community. Blakeslee discusses the reintroduction of wolves to Yellowstone Park, gives special focus to the rise, reign and fall of the wolf O-Six, and outlines the conflict between wolf and human. While these two works explore what it means to be a "predator," Jacques Derrida questions what it means to use the word "animal." In his work "The Animal that Therefore I Am (More to Follow)," Derrida considers the word "animal" as he explains, "[Humans] have given themselves the word in order to corral a large number of living beings within a single concept: 'The Animal' they say" (Derrida, 2002, 400).[1] With this statement, Derrida wishes to highlight the futility in believing that a single concept or a word such as "animal" can accurately capture the diversity found within nonhuman animal species. Vaillant and Blakeslee's works explore how the term "predator"—like the term "animal"—has been constructed by humans and treated in cultural narratives. These works demonstrate how humans have constructed nonhuman animals to be defined as "predator" in order to cement a notion of superiority in species and to cause a divide between humans and nonhuman predatory animals. The concept of the predator is thus an anthropocentric reflection of the fear of the collapse of human superiority. Yet, Vaillant and Blakeslee demonstrate not only that literary journalism *can* represent nonhuman animals, but they also accomplish ways for us to consider the nonhuman predatory animal in a perspective that genuinely tries to shed itself of anthropocentrism. As Rosi Braidotti explains, "Post-anthropocentrism displaces the notion of species hierarchy and of a single, common standard for 'Man' as the measure of all things. In the ontological gap thus opened, other species come galloping in" (Braidotti, 2013, 67). Both Vaillant and

[1] Derrida, Jacques and David Wills. "The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)." *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 28, No. 2, The University of Chicago Press, 2002, pp. 369–418.

Blakeslee's works argue that reconsidering the human perception of the predator involves compassion, rethinking hierarchies, and a willingness to understand the nonhuman without a human-centered agenda.

2 Nonhuman and Human Predators

Much like how Derrida deconstructs the word "animal" to reveal how it oppressively obscures diversity, this approach can be applied to the term "predator." The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) offers two definitions of the word. While humans more often use the word "predator" to describe nonhuman animals than they do when describing humans, the two definitions offered by the OED force us to consider species: "1. A person who plunders or pillages; a ruthlessly exploitative or rapacious individual" and "2. An animal that preys on other animals; an animal that kills and eats a prey; a carnivore" (OED).[2] When considering both definitions, there is a noticeable and jarring distinction established between the human ("A person") and nonhuman ("An animal"). The definition that applies to humans is one that equates predatory behavior with thievery ("plunders or pillages").[3] However, the definition of the word "predator" that applies to animals does *not* suggest a behavior of robbing. Rather, the animal "kills and eats a prey." Even though both definitions are given to the same word, there is an important difference between them. While the animal does not plunder material goods, these definitions may suggest that the animal attacking and eating another animal is the thievery of flesh and bodies. These definitions show the human robbing for greed and the nonhuman animal robbing for survival needs. This difference may arguably suggest that perhaps humans may be the true predators because of their selfish motives. Unlike the behavior of nonhuman animals, when humans rob it is not always for direct biological survival but may be for self-serving greed. Yet, despite these simultaneously contrasting and similar definitions, these definitions still show that the word "predator" is a human construct.

When considering the *The Tiger*, it is productive to consider the term 'predator" in relation to the character Markov, in order to understand the word's ties to the human. Vaillant believes that the tiger hunted and killed Markov out of vengeance because he had injured the tiger in his attempts to kill it. Yet, there are moments when Markov's behavior can especially be perceived as frightening and "predatory." Vaillant interviews Markov's widowed wife, Borisova, who recalls, "I would say [to Markov], 'You have to be more careful out there,' and he would say, 'Why should I be afraid of [the tiger]? She should be afraid of me!'" (Vaillant, 2011, 72). Markov's statement not only reveals a need to establish human superiority over nonhuman

[2] "Predator, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. www.oed.com/view/Entry/149783. Accessed 11 April 2018.

[3] Also, the OED defines the verb "plunder" as "To rob (a place or person) of goods or valuables forcibly" (OED). "plunder, n." *OED Online*, Oxford University Press, March 2018, www.oed.com/view/Entry/146166. Accessed 11 April 2018.

animals, but also a lack of willingness to *want* to understand nonhuman animals. This attitude is further established when Mikhail Dunkai, Markov's friend, recalls the last time he saw Markov: "He was angry with the tiger. He was swearing at him; he was saying that we should kill, destroy, and wipe out the tigers" (174). Rather than trying to understand tigers, Markov's assertion that they should be "wiped out" is in line with the common human perspective about any other predatory animal that is viewed as dangerous or as an inconvenience. Furthermore, Vaillant discusses the history between humans and tigers, writing,

> Relatively speaking, the tiger's appetite for us pales before our appetite for them. Humans have hunted tigers by various means for millennia, but not long ago there was a strange and heated moment in our venerable relationship with these animals that has been echoed repeatedly in our relations with other species. It bears some resemblance to what wolves do when they get into a sheep pen: they slaughter simply because they can, and in the case of humans, until a profit can no longer be turned. (94)

In linking human behavior to the behavior of wolves, Vaillant reveals how the category of predator has never been exclusive to nonhuman animals. When we recognize that the predatory tiger has been the prey and humans have been the predator, we can locate the instability of the term predator and can begin to feel compassion for nonhuman predatory animals.

Even though Markov tries to hunt and kill the tiger, the tiger is the one more consistently depicted as a killer. Vaillant suggests that the tiger, following his initial encounter with Markov, specifically sought him out to kill him. In considering the "sinister" attack on Markov, Vaillant writes, "It resembled something closer to first-degree murder: premeditated, with malice aforethought, and a clear intent to kill" (Vaillant, 2011, 128). While Markov too had intent to kill the tiger, the descriptors used to describe the tiger (such as "sinister," "murder," "premeditated" and "malice") are never used to describe Markov's intent. This difference reveals that humans have more authority; when humans kill animals it does not have to be marked as "sinister," but when an animal kills a human—even when humans are not fully aware of the animal's intent—the animal is marked as sinister and monstrous. Using these attributes to describe the predatory animal may be a projection and it reveals that humans do not want to come to terms with their own monstrosity and animality. This example also reveals a form of scapegoating—rather than Markov accepting responsibility and the possibility that his action could have been predatorily animalistic his response instead is to assign monstrosity to the tiger.

Regardless of monstrosity, believing that the tiger's act was premeditated also implies that the tiger possesses cognitive and planning abilities, which are skills and capabilities that humans often choose to believe that only *they* possess. This characterization connects human and nonhuman predator through their ability to plan their predation. Yet, while the belief is that the tiger killed Markov for vengeance, we also learn that the tiger, as he was hunting, "was being hunted, too, by his own hunger" (Vaillant, 2011, 203). Vaillant begins to deconstruct the image of the tiger as a powerful and unstoppable predator when he explains, "Tigers on the prowl may look like the embodiment of lethal competence, but looks are deceiving: in order to survive, they need to kill roughly one large animal each week, and they miss

their mark between 50 and 90 percent of the time" (130). Vaillant further explains, "Markov had succeeded in bringing the tiger down to his level: now, the tiger was a poacher, too. In order to feed himself, he was once again going to have to violate his own laws" (268). In this alignment between predatory human and predatory nonhuman, we see that regardless of intent or who is marked as "killer," the category of predator is unstable, and we can also acknowledge that the tiger was forced to turn into a kind of predator that he did not necessarily want to be.

In *The Wolf*, Blakeslee introduces the character Steven Turnbull who hunts and kills the text's main wolf character, O-Six. Turnbull can easily be compared to Markov. Both Turnbull and Markov use similar words and sentiments to turn the nonhuman animal predator into a monstrous murderer. When Turnbull overhears a father and his son expressing how lucky they felt about being able to see wolves in Yellowstone Park, Turnbull aggressively challenges the father: "'You weren't lucky!' … He found calves ripped apart by wolves every spring, Turnbull told him. Wolves weren't special … Wolves were killers" (Blakeslee, 2017, 88). In marking the wolves as "killers" because of their killing of the calves, there is an implication that the lives of calves—animals that are grown to serve humans—are more significant than the lives of predatory animals such as wolves. Turnbull's outburst conforms to the idea that predatory animals must be viewed as savage and murderous. When Blakeslee himself recalls interviewing Turnbull, he remembers Turnbull's words: "I shot her [O-Six], and I'm not ashamed! … I'd do it again!" (258). While Vaillant wonders whether Markov's predation could be empathized with because of his need for survival, Blakeslee's text does not make it easy to empathize with Turnbull. Rather than killing as a means of survival, Turnbull kills for the sport of hunting and for trophy hunting, indicated when Blakeslee explains that Turnbull initially did not want to meet with Blakeslee or give up the body of O-Six, for he had "no intention of giving up his trophy" (259). With this characterization, Turnbull is easily aligned with the definition of predator that links to humans, because he plunders for material goods.[4] Blakeslee also explains how Turnbull felt when witnessing other wolves howling over the dead body of O-Six, stating, "It was almost sad," [Turnbull] acknowledged. "I'm a hunter, but I'll admit that" (260). One reading of this confession would argue that Turnbull admitting that wolves' reactions was "almost sad" reveals a human ability to accept that nonhuman animal predators can still feel and express emotions. However, another reading of Turnbull's statement would focus on the *almost* in "almost sad," which indicates an apparent human refusal to accept their own compassion for the nonhuman predator. Thus, Turnbull cannot be viewed as a character who willing embraces compassion for the nonhuman predator; he does not actively make the choice to do so.

[4] Furthermore, while he plunders for material goods, he cannot be aligned with the definition of predator that links to nonhuman animals because he does not attack to acquire flesh for survival.

2.1 Empathizing and Learning with Predatory Animals

Nonetheless, Vaillant and Blakeslee do provide willingly empathetic human characters who do hold desires to try and understand the nonhuman animal predators. Vaillant offers the character Yuri Trush, the leader of Inspection Tiger who is tasked with hunting the tiger. Vaillant demonstrates Trush's compassion and benevolence, as he writes that Trush possesses "deep veins of mercy and compassion" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 44) and continues to explain that "life is hard in the taiga for man and beast alike, and Trush understands this. When he finds bear cubs orphaned by poachers (eight at last counts), he nurses them in his apartment" (44). It is also Trush near the end of the story who delivers the statement that genuinely tries to understand why the tiger killed Markov (and Pochepnya, a minor character): "It was men who were responsible for the aggression of this animal" (282). This statement suggests that the tiger's "monstrous" predation was not innate, but the work of humans.

Blakeslee also offers an empathetic character through Rick McIntyre, a biologist and wolf-watcher for the Yellowstone Wolf Project. Rick is described as having an attachment to the wolves and he refuses to let a day go by where he doesn't see a wolf. Rick is characterized as compassionate, seen for example when Blakeslee writes, "[Rick's] understanding of what motivated the people around him was shaped by an almost childlike optimism. He cried easily; any story in which an animal or a child got hurt might briefly bring him to tears, or close to them, though he was never ashamed" (Blakeslee, 2017, p. 107). Rick also admires the compassionate and caring personality traits that wolves themselves can possess. Blakeslee writes about Rick's admiration for O-Six's leadership qualities: "Good alphas, he felt, modeled wisdom and mercy … the most ruthless often failed to thrive once they got to the top, and their packs suffered commensurately" (139). Humans do not commonly apply the traits of wisdom and mercifulness to animal predators, but Rick's praising observation of O-Six allows us to consider this possibility. Blakeslee continues to capture Rick's compassion, writing, "Rick's dream … was to someday tell a story so good that the people who heard it simply wouldn't want to kill wolves anymore" (p. 107). In her work *The Carnivore Way: Coexisting with and Conserving North America's Predators*, Christina Eisenberg writes, "Since the 1995–96 wolf reintroduction, millions of people have visited the park to observe wolves. Here, as elsewhere, we're finding that wolf recovery is as much about people as about this apex predator's ecology" (Eisenberg, 2014, p. 135). Blakeslee outlines Rick's role in establishing this mindset: "And the wolves need [Rick] … It wasn't just that he had watched more wolves, as Smith put it, 'than anybody in the history of humanity.' It was the community he had helped build, a confederation of people who cared about wolves, one whose impact was felt far beyond Yellowstone" (p. 265). The inclusion, then, of representing compassionate characters such as Yuri Trush and Rick McIntyre is a part of literary journalism's responsibility to show the possibility of a world where we *can* compassionately explore the lives of nonhuman animal predators and see them as more than just killers. In exploring their lives, we need to remember also not to consistently attach our own metaphors and symbols onto animals.

In literary journalism that reports the lives of nonhuman animals, it is common to find a constant use of anthropomorphism.[5] One way that anthropomorphism is present in Vaillant's work is through the constant gendering of tigers, regardless of sex, as female. This feminization emphasizes tigers' motives and aligns tigers with a cultural stereotype of the vindictive or untamable woman. This characterization is emphasized, for example, when Vaillant writes, "'Will the tigress leave the area, having completed her revenge?' wondered the news commentator on a local television station. 'Or, God forbid, will she inflict more sorrow?'" (p. 153). The feminization of the tiger can also be connected to Julia Kristeva's theory of abjection in *Powers of Horror*. Kristeva links the abject to animality, writing that the abject reveals "those fragile states where man strays on the territories of animal" (Kristeva, 1982, 12). Kristeva also links animality with the feminine and the maternal entity, and she considers "the alterations, within subjectivity and within the very symbolic competence, implied by the *confrontation with the feminine* and the way in which societies code themselves in order to accompany as far as possible the speaking subject of that journey" (p. 58). According to Kristeva, the maternal body of the mother is a beastly body, an abject that the subject must cast themselves away from to secure their place in the Symbolic (the realm of cultural acceptance).[6] When Vaillant notes that Sokolov felt he was "being betrayed by [his] own mother" (p. 208) when he saw the tiger coming for him, this feeling is because the mother figure, while separated from man, is still expected to be nurturing and maternally protective. The anthropomorphism of the predatory tiger species through the role of the human mother demonstrates how Sokolov's confrontation with "the feminine" challenges notions of subjectivity, patriarchal authority, and the power of the subject (male, human) who is not supposed to be robbed of a voice. By projecting this beastly maternal body onto the figure of the monstrous tiger and the nonhuman predator rather than the human, man continues to build a hierarchy of anthropocentrism that is patriarchal and gendered as male. Simultaneously, Sokolov's feeling of being betrayed by a being who is *not* his mother, but a nonhuman predator, reveals him putting the animal on a pedestal, an act that neglects the animal's feelings and concerns. Ultimately, however, the act itself of comparing a nonhuman predator to a human mother indicates the human's reliance on nonhuman species and a lack of complete human independence. While gendering tigers (as a whole) as female reveals attempts at anthropocentrism, it also reveals the ways in which humans are dependent on nonhuman animals. Thus, in order to empathize with the animal predator, our methods should be focused less on anthropomorphizing them and more so on locating ways that we learn from them.

[5] Anthropomorphism is the act of giving nonhuman animals human-like traits and projecting human experiences onto them. Anthropomorphism can also easily be misunderstood. For example, to state that it would be "anthropomorphic" to state that that animal is in mourning, or that the animal seems to be envious of another animal, is to automatically imply that an animal cannot mourn or feel envious and that those attributes are only limited to the human. In some cases, then, overly accusing actions as "anthropomorphic" can be anthropocentric.

[6] The Symbolic can be understood as a language-mediated order of culture. It is the realm we are initiated into after language and cultural meaning is imprinted onto us. For more information on the Symbolic, see the psychoanalytic work of Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva.

Thinking of predatory animals only as a threat can neglect the influence that predatory animals have had in shaping ideas in language, communication, and culture. These ideas have been key to how humans distinguish themselves from nonhumans. In Vaillant's discussion of written language, he reveals that storytelling does not originate with humans: "before we learned to tell stories, we learned how to read them" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 236). He further states that,

> The first letter of the first word of the first recorded story was written—'printed'—not by us, but by an animal. These signs and symbols left in mud, sand, leaves, and snow represent proto-alphabets. This skill, the reading of tracks in order to procure food, or identify the presence of a dangerous animal, may in fact be 'the oldest profession.' (236)

In his work *The Practice of the Wild,* Gary Snyder also shows the connection between human and nonhuman with regards to language: "It would be a mistake to think that human beings got 'smarter' at some point and invented first language and then society. Language and culture emerge from our biological-social natural existence, animals that we were/are" (Snyder, 1990, p. 17). Much like how the human hunter unconsciously aligns himself with the predatory animal by hunting his/her prey and listening for sounds and knowing their prey's environment, Vaillant discusses the tiger's relationship with language, suggesting that "the tiger could have been nearby, reading them, deciding how or when to work them into the plot" (237). In alluding to how a human ability to read and decipher comes from adapting the behavior of nonhuman animals, Vaillant and Snyder also suggest that if humans learned something from nonhuman animals as culturally essential as language, humans can then continue to learn from predatory animals.

Additionally, while Vaillant draws an explicit connection between tigers and language, Blakeslee alludes to Gordon Haber, "Alaska's best-known wolf biologist" (Blakeslee, 2017, p. 102), in outlining a link between wolves and culture: "He was among the first to argue that wolf packs developed their own sets of habits and customs, a constellation of behaviors that changed over time as pack members came and went and that could best be understood, according to Haber, as a kind of culture" (102). Furthermore, Kristeva discusses the idea of the semiotic, the pre-cultural realm without meaning and structure, and the symbolic, the realm of shared cultural meaning after the initiation into language. In *Revolution in Poetic Language*, she asserts that "the subject is always both semiotic and symbolic" and that "no signifying system he produces can be either 'exclusively' semiotic or 'exclusively' symbolic, and is instead necessarily marked by an indebtedness to both" (Kristeva, 1984, p. 24).[7] While the language of the nonhuman predator could be marked as semiotic and the human's as symbolic, both Vaillant and Blakeslee demonstrate how the interconnectedness between human and nonhuman challenges that animals exclusively embody nature and humans exclusively embody culture. Ultimately, instead of considering language as exclusive to humans, humans' relationship with language developed through an interaction with the nonhuman world, including predatory animals. While it is evident that human predators employ language using methods

[7] Kristeva's work on the semiotic ties it to emotion, instincts, and the prosody or language rather than denotative meaning belonging in the symbolic.

that nonhuman predators may not use, the human use of language cannot be perceived as a privilege when the roots of language come from nonhuman animal predators. While both authors explore the predatory animals' relationship to language, they also question what happens when we rob animals of their potential to teach us and reduce them to objectified bodies.

2.2 Exploiting Dead Animal Bodies

Vaillant and Blakeslee consider the fate of the dead bodies of the predatory animals. After narrating the death of the tiger, Vaillant includes the voice of Ivan Dunkai, who explains, "In the past, when a tiger attacked a man, it was only because the man was aggressive to the tiger; who would like to be wounded—to get a bullet? Those were the only cases'" (p. 287) After killing the tiger, the men search the tiger's body and Vaillant reveals that the tiger had been shot with "dozens of bullets, balls, and birdshot" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 282) that the body of the tiger had absorbed, and that "Markov may not have been the beginning, but the last straw" (282). Vaillant explains that while the dead body of the tiger is lying at the men's feet, "By turns, people patted it, kicked it, swore at it, and spat on it" (p. 280). The written image of people desecrating the tiger's dead body allows readers to feel a sense of injustice for the tiger. With regards to the tiger's corpse, Vaillant writes, "the tiger has been stuffed and put on display for all to see. Safely contained in a glass case, it has been caught forever, out of its element and visible to all" (p. 288).

The two-dimensional objectification of the tiger's dead body is comparable to the dead body of the wolf O-Six in Blakeslee's work. Blakeslee comments on when he visited Turnbull and Turnbull asked him if he wanted to see O-Six's body: "Now she was hanging from a plastic hook in a two-room cabin with an audience of just Turnbull and myself and Bubba … It felt profane, though I had no idea how to explain to my host why" (Blakeslee, 2017, p. 261). The disembodiment of both animals as well as Blakeslee's choice of the word "audience" illuminates a connection to a statement in Vaillant's work: "As one taiga hunter said, 'The tiger will see you a hundred times before you see him once'" (p. 51). This statement, alluding to the gaze between human and nonhuman, can be linked to a statement made by Derrida in his discussion of the gaze of animal:

> The animal is there before me, there close to me, there in front of me – I who am (following) after it. And also, therefore, since it is before me, it is behind me. It surrounds me. And from the vantage of this being-there-before-me it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also … it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me. The point of view of the absolute other … (Derrida, 2002, p. 380).

In the desecration of the body of the predatory animal and "the absolute other" the human tries to destroy any truth in that the predator "surrounds" them. In objectifying the animal and taking away its sight, the human reclaims power and can look at the animal "a hundred times" or more, while the animal never will again. Vaillant and

Blakeslee's examples, along with a consideration of Derrida's statement, reveal not only a fear of the animal predator, but a lack of security in the human self. While Vaillant and Blakeslee's examples help readers understand that predatory animals can be and should be empathized with, they also reveal the instability of anthropocentrism when humans choose to rely on robbing power from the predatory animal even *after* their death in order to secure their human superiority.

2.3 Predatory Animals and the Environment

Vaillant and Blakeslee also consider how humans and the environment are supported by predatory animals. Considering that the OED aligns animal predation with killing other beings for food, the predatory animal is not typically aligned as giving back to others. Yet, Vaillant subverts this line of thinking: "By regularly bringing down large prey like elk, moose, boar, and deer, the tiger feeds countless smaller animals, birds, and insects, not to mention the soil" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 111). Vaillant further notes how humans also benefit from the tiger's contribution to the environment, stating, "These random but rhythmic infusions nourish humans, too … Udeghe and Nanai hunters occasionally scavenge from tiger kills, and so do their Russian neighbors" (111). In his epilogue, Vaillant modifies the idea of predation to consider how predation can be perceived as a way of giving back to the community: "an environment inhabited by tigers is, by definition, healthy. If there is enough land, cover, water, and game to support a keystone species like this, it implies that all creatures beneath it are present and accounted for, and that the ecosystem is intact" (p. 300). Blakeslee also looks at how the reintroduction of wolves in Yellowstone became a beneficial act for the environment. He explains that "The Lamar Valley that O-Six claimed as her own was not the same landscape that her Druid ancestors had been introduced to fifteen years before. It was healthier in ways that even some of the wolf's most ardent advocates hadn't anticipated" (Blakeslee, 2017, p. 183). He further explains that it is not just the natural landscape that benefitted, but other animals: "Another surprise for Smith and his colleagues was the sheer number of animals that fed on wolf kills. Not only ravens and magpies but also coyotes, foxes, and eagles routinely visited almost every carcass, despite wolves' efforts to keep them away" (p. 185). Both Vaillant and Blakeslee thus outline how humans and other animals are intertwined with predatory animals. In understanding the ways in which predatory animals can benefit the livelihood of humans, humans can begin to reassess the idea of the predator as a monstrous figure.

3 Conclusion

The message that Vaillant's *The Tiger* and Blakeslee's *The Wolf* ultimately offers is that the word "predator"—like Derrida's observations of the word "animal"—is burdened with culturally enforced ideas that establish a separation between human and nonhuman animal, and that the word "predator" needs to be reassessed in order to demolish this line of separation. Both authors show that the word predator cannot be used as a blanket-term to describe all animals that are carnivorous and survive off predation, and they succeed in showing how literary journalism can express this message. Vaillant and Blakeslee also note that the tiger and the wolf, while also living off acts of predations, also choose to be scavengers when given the chance. The fact that these animals are not usually culturally seen as scavengers reveals a human close-mindedness and a need to better understand predatory animals. In his work, Vaillant considers a difference between humans and tigers, when he states, "If a tiger can poach on another's territory, it probably will, and so, of course, will we. A key difference, however, is that tigers take only what they need" (Vaillant, 2011, p. 297). Vaillant and Blakeslee's texts demonstrate how humans can choose to become predators for reasons that do not align with necessity—such as, for example, trophy hunting. In the epilogue of Blakeslee's work, he writes of an interaction between Rick and a young boy coming to see the wolves at Yellowstone park: 'My dad just bought a license to kill a wolf,' he added, and Rick, who still found it difficult to even talk about O-Six, braced himself for what was coming next. 'But I hope he doesn't,' the boy said, and Rick found himself filled with optimism" (Blakeslee, 2017, p. 265). The words of this child become an example of what humans must learn to accept when considering the predatory animal—that the predatory animal also deserves human respect and compassion. With regards to predatory animals, the human's priority should not be towards destruction and frivolous gratification but to a genuine and willful alliance and to a strive towards preservation. As Vaillant and Blakeslee demonstrate, reassessing the attitudes towards nonhuman predators can help us change how we perceive and treat them and it can also allow for an enhancement of the lives between human and nonhuman animals.

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Birds of a Feather: Interspecies Ethics and the Fate of Liminal Companion Animals

Josh Hayes

Abstract This paper investigates the moral and legal challenges of managing wild urban parrot populations. Due to the continued proliferation of the illegal importation of wild parrots from Central and South America, established breeding programs of captive parrots, and the physiological and psychological degradation of their complex emotional intelligence, the chapter argues for a renewal of animal welfare policies to protect their rights at the local, regional, and international levels. By drawing upon the legal framework for political animal categories presented by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka establishing introduced exotics as liminal denizens and the critical theory of interspecies ethics inaugurated by Cynthia Willet, the relative interests and well-being of wild urban parrot populations should be protected as co-residents of our human political communities.

1 Introduction

This chapter investigates the moral and legal challenges of managing wild urban parrot populations. Due to the continued proliferation of the illegal importation of wild parrots from Central and South America, established breeding programs of captive parrots, and the physiological and psychological degradation of their complex emotional intelligence, the chapter argues for a renewal of animal welfare policies to protect their rights at the local, state, and national levels. By drawing upon the legal framework for political animal categories presented by political theorists, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka, establishing introduced exotics as liminal denizens and the critical theory of interspecies ethics inaugurated by Cynthia Willet, the relative interests and well-being of wild urban parrot populations should be protected as co-residents of our human political communities.

Although stray and feral cats and dogs remain a widely acknowledged problem in major cities throughout the globe, much less attention has been dedicated to monitoring the plight of wild urban parrot populations. Today, a quarter of the 352 parrot

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species are at risk of extinction in their native habitats, while populations of introduced parrots in North American cities ranging from Miami to Chicago and New York to San Francisco only appear to be growing (https://www.NWF.org). Among the American Ornithologists Union and the American Birding Association, there is widespread disagreement about the establishment of a census that could effectively monitor wild urban parrot populations (Dunn et al. 2005). The American Ornithologists' Union currently recognizes at least six 'established' or self-sustaining wild parrot species including the budgerigar, the rose-ringed parakeet, the white winged parakeet, the yellow-chevroned parakeet, the green cheeked Amazon parrot, and the monk parakeet (AOU, 1998).

Due to an ongoing debate distinguishing between established or self-sustaining and non-established or non-self-sustaining species of parrots, the only reliable indicator is the annual Christmas Bird Count organized by the National Audobon Society (Pranty, 2002). Since 1900, the annual data compiled by Christmas Bird Counts (1981 circles throughout North America alone with over 55,000 observers) has provided a long-term data set for most urban bird populations including wild parrots (National Audobon Society, 2002). Nonetheless, as Christopher Butler notes, "data from Christmas Bird counts should be used with caution. Although observers are supposed to report all individuals of each bird species recorded, Christmas Bird Counts have in practice produced erratic coverage of exotic species. In addition, the ranges of some introduced species may not overlap with the Christmas Bird Count circles" (Butler 2005, p. 145). Numerous variables are implemented by Christmas Bird Count circles as a standard for measuring urban parrot populations including the number of observers involved, hours in the field, extant and modes of travel, coverage of different habitats, skill levels, use of attractive devices, and the amount of effort expended in a count circle from year to year (Dunn et al. 2005, p. 339). Within populations of wild parrots in the United States considered 'established' or 'self-sustaining' by the American Ornithologists' Union based on data from the annual Christmas Bird Counts, at least four of the six established species, the rose-ringed parakeet, green conure, green-cheeked Amazon, and monk parakeet, exhibit significant linear increases in population (Butler 2005, p. 146).

The same trend appears to be continuing with those non-established species. Currently five species, the Nanday conure, Blue-crowned conure, Blue-fronted Amazon parrot, Chestnut-fronted macaw, and Mitred conure show significant increases in population and are becoming 'established' in the United States (Butler 2005, p. 147). This significant increase of urban parrot populations among both established and non-established species bodes well for their future viability. However, this increase should not offset the potential harms that could negatively impact the sustainability of these populations, i.e., predation, habitat alteration, the introduction of diseases, such as psittacosis or New Castle disease, hybridization, competition for nest cavities, and a combination of these (Butler 2005, p. 147). In the last one hundred years, the United States has lost two native parrot species, the Carolina parakeet and the thick-billed parrot. The extinction of the Carolina parakeet in 1918 is largely attributed to a combination of overhunting, habitat destruction, and disease (Snyder et al., 2002). Similar pressures including hunting, lack of consistent reproduction,

and predation also led to the extinction of the thick-billed parrot in 1964 (Snyder et al., 1999). Since the extinction of both native species and the introduction of at least eleven exotic species of wild parrots into the United States, beginning with wild populations of rose-ringed parakeets and green-cheeked Amazon parrots in southern Florida and southern Texas in the 1920s and 1930s, the population of both established and introduced species of wild parrots appears to be steadily rising. The second half of the twentieth-century has witnessed the introduction of seven new species of wild parrots (Butler 2005, p. 148). The prospect of the increased population growth of wild parrots throughout urban areas in North America including the possibility of seven additional species becoming established during the next two decades presents distinct moral and legal challenges, especially in terms of interspecies interaction with native wildlife and the human population.

The increase of wild urban parrot populations across the globe brings distinct advantages to the preservation of certain species of wild parrots who would otherwise face a higher risk of extinction in their native habitats since parrots are among the most threatened birds with 28% (111 of 398) of extant species classified as threatened under IUCN criteria. It has been confirmed by a recent ornithological study that parrots have a lower Red List Index (higher aggregate extinction risk) than other comparable bird groups (Olah et al., 2016). Wild urban parrot populations that are predominately composed of both established and introduced species of a larger historical distribution size are classified as less threatened than those species with "high forest dependency, large body size, long generation time, and greater proportion of the human population living in urban areas in the countries encompassing the parrots' home ranges" (Olah et al., 2016).

Although the prospect of preserving urban parrot populations may be advantageous to certain species of parrots, particularly those species that are imported as pets into a country with a relatively high GDP, this prospect should not diminish the constant threat of agriculture, hunting, trapping, and logging to parrots across the globe. Since the rise of the wild parrot populations in the 1960s, the relative harms imposed by parrots to both native plants and agriculture has been greatly exaggerated. One such example is the Monk parakeet that continues to inhabit parts of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, Florida, California, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Michigan, and Ohio. The Monk parakeet was first reported to be a 'wild' species in 1967. In the following three years, nearly 35,000 birds were imported legally into the United States (Ehrlich et al., 1988). The Monk parakeet was once considered to be a major agricultural pest in its native Argentina, reportedly causing millions of dollars in agricultural damage. As a result, coordinated eradication programs throughout the United States were implemented, especially in New York, New Jersey, California, and Virginia. These eradication programs were quite successful in limiting the population of Monk parakeets to select locations in Florida and Chicago. However, the economic threat of the Monk parakeet, like the avian flu, remains unsubstantiated. In this case, the number of 'feral' birds was most likely overestimated and most importantly, wild populations did not expand but remained confined to urban areas in New York, Florida, Pennsylvania, and Illinois (Jackson 2003, p. 59). Since the vast majority of wild urban parrot populations have remained relatively undocumented in

most global cities, legislation at both the local and state levels remain insufficient to protect the welfare of those known populations. In addition to a widely perceived lack of collective will, inadequate financial resources to effectively manage wild urban parrot populations, especially the rehabilitation of sick and injured birds, has only led to an increased number of wild urban parrots being euthanized by local animal control services.

If we are to consider the primary cause of wild urban parrot populations in the United States, namely their legal and illegal importation by countries throughout Central and South America, there remain long-standing physiological and psychological effects of such importation in addition to their lack of suitability as life-long companion animals. Throughout much of the last century, parrots were legally imported into the United States until a ban was imposed in 1975. After the ban, most parrots born in the United States were produced by breeders who still continue the practice today by selling to pet shops and individual customers (Engebretson 2006, p. 271). The most pressing dilemma surrounding the importation and sale of wild parrots stems from the fact that parrots fundamentally remain wild animals and are therefore incapable of domestication. Given their long life- span, up to eighty years, in some cases, and their complex psychological needs concomitant with their capacity to have rich emotional lives characterized by bonding with a mate that is often substituted by their individual owner, it is extremely difficult to ensure that a parrot will flourish as a companion animal. As a result, millions of parrots throughout North America have either perished or received less than humane treatment and continue to be resold or abandoned. In the United States alone, numerous animal welfare facilities have been established to accommodate parrots who no longer have a stable home, including exotics bird sanctuaries in California, Massachusetts, and Florida.

The increased awareness of the moral and legal challenges of managing wild urban parrot populations throughout the United States has largely been the result of Mark Bittner, a long-time resident of San Francisco. In October of 1993, Mark Bittner was completing a housecleaning job in the Russian Hill neighborhood of San Francisco when he noticed four brightly colored birds clinging to a small feeder that hung outside the living room window, “At first glance, I didn’t know what I was looking at. Then it dawned on me. They were parrots” (Bittner 2004, p. 3). Bittner’s discovery of a wild flock of parrots was the beginning of a six-year odyssey as their itinerant care-taker. The birds quickly became known as the ‘wild parrots of Telegraph Hill’ since they were often seen by locals and tourists foraging in the northeast waterfront neighborhood of San Francisco. As a self-proclaimed ‘dharma bum’ who found his way to San Francisco only to occupy a laundry-list of odd jobs, Bittner’s journals documenting his daily relationship with the flock culminated in the international success of a best-selling book (2004) and documentary, *The Wild Parrots of Telegraph Hill* (2005). Bittner’s attention to the physiological and psychological well-being of this particular flock of parrots has been instrumental in encouraging local communities to monitor wild urban parrot populations throughout global cities ranging from Miami and Tokyo to London.

The welfare of wild urban parrot populations now remains at a crossroads beginning with a tendency even among members of the scientific community to label their

status as 'feral' rather than 'wild.' One such example of this tendency can be located in an article, "Feral Birds" published by the noted Stanford conservation biologist, Paul Ehrlich and his associates at the Stanford Center for Conservation Biology:

> Feral birds are ones that have escaped from domestication and have managed to establish breeding populations in the wild. Feral populations are the results of accidents -- not of releases by people who intended to add new birds to the local fauna. A substantial proportion of exotic species that 'get away' are doves, parrots and their relatives, and waterfowl, because of the popularity of these groups in the pet trade. In most cases, pet escapees (and those 'given their freedom') have not gone feral (Ehrlich et al., 1988).

It is important to contest this common definition of 'feral' as 'having escaped from domestication,' namely because the term always already implies that the animal in question is capable of domestication. Since 'feral' applies only to animals who have previously been domesticated, most notably dogs and cats, the term should not apply to parrots since they are not bred to live in the care of humans or be domesticated.

In contrast to dogs and cats, parrots are not granted the same legal protection by the Humane Society and other animal welfare agencies. Throughout the United States, the majority of animal welfare agencies are not capable of taking in and caring for sick and injured parrots even though it is estimated that there are over 20.6 million birds in captivity. Since the public discussion of urban animal populations is primarily focused upon the plight of stray and feral dogs and cats and the increasing public health concerns posed by their interaction with the human population, parrots who have been re-introduced into urban areas by their owners have received much less attention by the scientific community.

If we are to consider the moral and legal challenges posed by the management of such populations, we might begin by replacing the word 'feral' which does not apply to most species of wild birds, especially parrots, given their lack of domestication with the term 'liminal' first introduced by political theorists, Sue Donaldson and William Kymlicka (2013) and later adopted by radical feminist theory. The term 'liminal' applies to those "animals who live within human communities without being of those communities or directly subjected to human control" (Montford and Taylor, 2016). By introducing 'liminality' as a moral and legal designation, we may approach the management of wild urban parrot populations from a perspective that defends their relative autonomy as wild animals while in some cases acknowledging their past dependence upon individual owners as companion animals. Since their lack of domestication ensures their treatment as wild animals, the implementation of appropriate legal policies that ensure that parrots are treated as wild animals in urban areas rather than as domesticated companion animals is critically needed. As made evident by the case of Mark Bittner, the author of the New York Times best seller, *The Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, parrots have the potential to form lasting bonds with human individuals, including their owners. When a parrot is abandoned by its owner, the psychological consequences of such abandonment can be severe, including self-mutilation and self-imposed starvation and can be psychologically defined as trauma, "the psychoid's (integrated mind–body system) response to changes in the environment that exceed psychological and psychological expectations and capacities" (Yenkosky et al. 2010, p. 22). More specifically, parrots in captivity experience

relational stress to trauma because of their non-normative existence as captives and their life in socially and emotionally desperate conditions.

In a *New York Times* magazine article, "What does a Parrot Know about PTSD?" Charles Siebert documents this trauma by establishing an unusual connection between veterans and abandoned parrots for treating post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Abandoned pet parrots in captivity suffer a double trauma by first being denied their natural will to flock and then the company of the humans who owned them, "A parrot separated from its flock will flock fully and fiercely to the human attentions and affections of its new human keeper. And when that individual, for whatever reason, fails to uphold his or her end of such an inherently exclusive relationship, the effects are devastating" (Siebert, 2016). Siebert eloquently describes the "winged wreckages of such broken bonds" replete with pacing and rocking, screaming, corner-cowering and self-plucking that characterize the parrots suffering from PTSD. A classic definition of PTSD is presented by Joseph Yenkosky, G. A. Bradshaw, and Eileen McCarthy, the authors of "Post-traumatic Stress Disorder among Parrots in Captivity: Treatment Considerations": "individuals suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as a result of exposure to psychological trauma. PTSD is defined in the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic Criteria from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual as exposure to a traumatic event when the individual witnessed, experienced, or was confronted with an event that involved actual or threatened death or serious injury, or a threat to or serious injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of self or others; which includes intense fear, helplessness, or horror" (Yenkosky et al. 2010, p. 7).

Due to the pioneering work of Dr. Lorin Lindner, the founder of Serenity Park in Los Angeles, California, the interspecies bond established between humans and parrots presents a miraculous opportunity for healing the traumatic wounds of PTSD in both veterans and parrots. Linder's recognition of this unique interspecies bond through her own organization, Parrot Care, demands an investigation into how we can secure both moral and legal rights for parrots as co-residents of our human political communities. Privately owning exotic animals including parrots is currently permitted in a handful of states with essentially no restrictions. Since parrots are among the most socially and psychologically complex of exotic animal species, it is especially important that we might begin to develop a theory of moral and legal rights for exotic birds, just as we have done for higher-order mammals, especially great apes, who are confronted with the prospect of captivation.

The theory of legal denizenship that I shall propose is indebted to a framework for political animals first conceived by political theorists, Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka. Following their legal denizenship model, parrots are our co-residents rather than co-citizens and hence deserve to be accorded the same legal rights as any legal resident. The basis for according rights to parrots as our co-residential denizens is grounded in the work of continental philosopher and critical theorist, Cynthia Willet, who remains among the few bold enough to articulate a substantive theory of interspecies ethics. An interspecies ethics does not hesitate to consider the ethical valence that indeed exists between and among species beginning with the acknowledgement of affect as a criterion for moral status. "Affect, in contrast,

with feelings or emotions, here refers to waves that sweep across a biosocial field and not properties or states interior to bound subjects or nonporous bodies" (Willet, 2014, p. 18). If we are to claim that relations between certain animals are indeed ethical and that individual animals are worthy of moral status, we might begin by interrogating their relationships in terms of affect. Willet develops an interspecies ethics attuned to the affect animal grounded in empirical evidence from evolutionary zoology and cognitive ethology. Such affects begin with how an animal finds itself situated in an environment. The situation of the animal to a large degree determines how the cognitive capacities develop. Since there exists a symbiosis between the environment of the animal and the development of its cognition, it is not too far-fetched to consider the role that affect plays in cognitive development, especially among parrot species. Natalie Angier, who writes for *The New York Times*, identifies this relationship between affect and cognition in birds, "Recent research reveals that birds have a nose for news after all, that people are deeply affected by odors in ways they often are not consciously aware of, and that one class of odor that is likely to impinge on both humans and birds is the scent of a fellow's despair" (Angier, 2012).

A host of previous experiments has already proven how certain mammals, including chimpanzees, dolphins, and elephants also share attributes of affect which greatly contributes to their degree of emotional intelligence. From a precursory glance at such experiments, including recent research documenting the intersection between behavior and trauma in parrots, we are left with a perplexing question regarding the role of affect in determining emotional intelligence. Clearly, this is the case with parrots smelling fear, as Willet writes, "the chemicals in the sweat of the distressed creature signal fear to others, who respond with increased anxiety. These negative affects can spread like wildfire, casting onto entire cultures or societies a paranoid style or virtually untreatable cultural malaise" (Willet, 2014, pp. 18–19). If we are to conclude that parrots have a complexity of emotional intelligence, what bearing does this have on our treatment of them as our legal denizens? The psychological complexity of parrots warrants that their abandonment be considered with the same degree of both moral and legal gravity as other higher-order mammals, including our canine and feline companions. Parrots occupy a liminal status as companion animals and therefore deserve a unique moral and legal status, "liminal animals are in different political relations to humans than domesticated and wild animals, and a different set of moral obligations to these animals is entailed by these relations" (Montford & Taylor, 2016). If we are to assume that a new ethical and political relation is needed to manage liminal animals, how can we apply this to the case of the wild parrots of San Francisco?

First, we must consider the issue of parrot autonomy. A more radical approach to parrot autonomy begins by respecting the moral status of the parrots themselves. As one of the leading proponents of 'feral' theory, Brian Luke demonstrates in his "Taming Ourselves or Going Feral: Toward a Nonpatriarchal Metaethic of Animal Liberation," how we must first develop a nonpatriarchal approach to animal liberation that attempts to subvert the distinction between the human and the non-human animal as one of ownership. For example, Bittner's status as a homeless and itinerant caretaker deeply informs his own relationship with the parrots of Telegraph Hill who

indeed exist as liminal animals occupying the boundary between domestication and the wild. Second, if we are to effectively embrace their liminal status, we might begin by focusing upon the marginalization from a phenomenological perspective (Painter, 2007). Although we cannot embody the subjective consciousness or material body of a parrot, Bittner in his own intimate relationship with the birds comes closest to occupying their 'feral' status by developing an empathic relationship with each individual bird. One might identify this approach to being with the birds as 'going feral.' As Brian Luke argues 'going feral' would imply "letting our natural sympathies flow in our relationships with other animals, rather than allowing our emotional responses to animals be further domesticated (i.e., be tamed)" (Luke, 1995). Having briefly surveyed the tragic history of wild parrot domestication, we might therefore apply Luke's label of 'going feral' to consider how humans in their relationship with wild animals, and indeed liminal animals, might learn to become wild again by honoring our natural sympathies with them.

From his own individual history with the parrots on Telegraph Hill, Bittner illustrates this possibility by establishing a sympathetic bond with liminal animals. In order to foster the development of these sympathetic bonds, we might consider how marginalized individuals, especially homeless populations, in urban areas develop especially strong emotional bonds with liminal animals. What are the moral and legal stakes for repopulating our own urban areas in such a way that we allow a niche for homeless individuals to effectively care for liminal animals? How can the management of urban homeless populations be improved in order to accommodate the intimate bonds that develop between homeless individuals and liminal animals? If we assume that we have a moral obligation to liminal animal populations in urban areas in order to ensure their well-being, how should these moral obligations be distributed among those members of urban homeless populations?

In what follows, I will attempt to further develop Luke's argument for 'going feral' in such a way that respects the integrity of homeless individuals yet also preserves the integrity of liminal animals. Although, the popularity of Bittner, the itinerant caretaker of the wild parrots of Telegraph Hill, has led to some cases where the parrots have become abused by other homeless individuals, the rewilding of urban parrots might also be fundamentally identified with the re-wilding of those who are living on the streets as a means to gaining both psychological and economic autonomy. As James Barnes claims, "'going feral' is going wild again, escaping a subservient status and reestablishing one's own autonomy" (Barnes, 2010). However, one must recognize that this autonomy can most effectively be established only within a supportive community setting which aims to rehabilitate homeless individuals to seek a vocation that values their identity as contributing to the local community. In this case, homeless individuals who decide to take care of liminal animals, as Bittner has done, retain their individual autonomy by engaging in a daily practice or ritual that rewards the re-wilding of liminal animals. Such a re-wilding is concerned with ensuring that these liminal populations are able to live within their means or in harmony with an urban environment while not endangering native species populations (Monbiot, 2014). Just as liminal animal colonies of dogs, cats, and parrots have been established throughout urban areas, homeless colonies are often somewhat arbitrarily established

to provide a similar atmosphere of urban camaraderie. By uniting the plight of homeless individuals with the care for liminal animals, as Bittner has done, there remains the possibility that new urban policies might be established to accommodate the needs of both populations.

2 Conclusion

The status of legislation has unfortunately not effectively addressed the protection of urban parrot populations in light of the increase of the human population in global cities. The passage of the 1916 Migratory Bird Treaty by the United States along with the Great Britain (on behalf of Canada) to protect birds and active nests from harm or harassment should be celebrated as a major legal victory on behalf of bird conservation in North America. However, the majority of parrot species are considered to be sedentary or semi-migratory and therefore do not qualify for federal protection. Although federal law does not technically protect parrots from the harms imposed by the human population, certain states such as California have introduced laws to protect the state bird population including the issuance of citations and fines to individuals and companies that disregard state regulations. For example, the California Fish and Game Code 3503 states in part that "it is unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird" (https://wildlife.ca.gov). Following the success of Bittner's best-selling book and documentary, *The Parrots of Telegraph Hill*, the San Francisco Board of Supervisors voted 10–1 to approve a ban on feeding 'feral' birds in city parks in 2007. This decision by the Board of Supervisors was supported by multiple ornithologists who feared that feeding the 'feral' birds would contribute to their own endangerment:

> James D. Gilardi, director of the Davis-based World Parrot Trust, supports the ban on feeding the birds for a host of reasons, including the safety of the birds -- which could be injured -- and children who might get bit, "In the short term it's probably not a big deal one way or another, but over time this is something that can create serious risks for the parrots and the people involved…there are wild parrots living in every major city in the world, including a flock of 4000 Amazon parrots in Los Angeles, but San Francisco is the only city he knows of where people hand-feed the birds…there's really not a positive side of feeding the birds" (Rubenstein, 2007).

The misapplication of the term 'feral' to designate the status of wild urban parrot populations continues to sufficiently impede efforts to protect their legal status since parrots by definition resist domestication as companion animals. Therefore, we must strive to practically adopt and implement an interspecies ethical approach which respects the integrity of individual members of urban parrot species as co-residential denizens in our global political communities.

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Animal (Re)constructions

Posthuman, Postanimal? Nonhuman Intelligence and Intentionality in Three Short Stories by H. G. Wells

Adrian Tait

Abstract This chapter explores three short stories by H. G. Wells in which his human protagonists encounter hitherto unexpected levels of nonhuman intelligence and intentionality. In "In The Abyss" (1896), "The Sea Raiders" (1896), and "The Empire of the Ants" (1905), nonhuman creatures possess the power to reason, communicate, and cooperate, and perhaps build empires and construct civilisations. They are also potentially hostile or already predatory, even rapacious. Are they resisting humankind's relentless intrusion into their own habitats, and trying to liberate themselves from human interference, or simply mirroring human patterns of aggression? Tantalisingly, Wells's stories leave these questions unanswered. Even as these creatures expose the myth of human exceptionalism, with its assumption that humans (and humans alone) possess the capacity for reasoned thought, they withdraw from human comprehension; in their inscrutable strangeness, they exist beyond the reach of humankind's own ability to penetrate their mysteries, and in so doing, exert control over them. These creatures exist beyond the humanistic conception of what an animal is and should be; they are at once posthuman and postanimal.

1 Introduction

> Reason, mercilessly advancing, belongs to man. (…) Unreasoning creatures have encountered reason throughout the ages – in war and peace, in arena and slaughterhouse, from the lingering death-throes of the mammoth overpowered by a primitive tribe in the first planned assault down to the unrelenting exploitation of the animal kingdom in our own days. This visible process conceals the invisible from the executioners – existence denied the light of reason, animal existence itself. (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p. 245–6)

For Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, modernity was rooted in a concept of enlightenment that took as its concomitant the invisibility of the animal (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p. 246), a "disavowal" of its existence (Derrida, 2008, p. 25)

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that made possible what Jacques Derrida (mindful of "the number of species endangered") would later describe as "animal genocides" (p. 26). The invisibility of the exploited Other was, argued Adorno and Horkheimer, enculturated by the Enlightenment's imposition of a dualistic divide between "man" (who could demand justice for himself) and "animal" (who, denied the powers of language and of reason, could do no such thing) (p. 245). As Tsz Man Chan explains, this dualistic divide was (and still is) rooted in a "very simple [Cartesian] formula: the animal is part of the *res extensa* (corporeal substance) whereas man's existence (which has 'doubt' as its essence), can only be defined as *res cogitans* (mental substance)" (2018, p. 330). This divide "reminds us that our posthumanist endeavours (…) must always already be accompanied by a postanimalism, as only together—in continuity with one another—can these new areas of thought release us from Cartesianism and propose new ways of thinking man, animal, and above all their relationship" (Chan, p. 330).

Yet the tradition of Enlightenment rationality, argues John Parham, was itself the basis for new thinking about the right relationship between human and non-human or more-than-human worlds (Parham, 2010, p. 57–59). "To regard the Enlightenment from a solely negative perspective is [Parham contends] somewhat misleading" (p. 57), since it also bequeathed a spirit of self-reflexive or "critical rationalism" (p. 58) to later generations of thinkers. Furthermore, Parham notes, the Enlightenment tradition was a spur to new forms of scientific thinking, and it was work in this field that laid the basis for "elements of ecological theory" (p. 58). Evolutionary ideas were a case in point. As Darwin's Victorian contemporaries realised, his argument for a common origin of species problematized the divide to which Adorno and Horkheimer would later refer, and opened up new debates about what constituted fair treatment for animals. Moreover, Darwin's theory also suggested what many of his contemporaries were perfectly prepared to believe: the possibility of mental as well as physical kinship with non-human animals.[1]

What, then, might come of the "reasoning power of animals" (McLean, 2009, p. 134), in an age of their unremitting and ever more extensive exploitation? This chapter discusses three short stories by H. G. Wells, all of which suggest a disturbing answer to that question: in "In The Abyss" (1896), the scientist who encounters an

[1] As Elliott Sober explains, Darwin and his "chosen successor" George Romanes insisted on the "mental continuity of human and nonhuman organisms" (2005, p. 87). In the later Victorian period, however, this view was challenged by a scientific community that was increasingly dubious about the attribution of "human mental characteristics to nonhuman organisms" (Sober, p. 85). To the psychologist C. Lloyd Morgan, for example, such a process of attribution was simply an instance of the kind of anthropomorphic bias against which scientists must guard. Instead, Morgan argued that animal behaviour should never be interpreted "as the outcome of the exercise of a higher psychical faculty, if it can be interpreted as the outcome of the exercise of one which stands lower in the psychological scale" (qtd in Sober, p. 86). As Sober points out, Morgan's desire to avoid the anthropomorphic projection of human qualities onto animals risked introducing "an opposite bias of its own" (p. 88). These were discussions in which Wells's work actively participated. It is relevant to note that, compared to its first draft, "written over the last quarter of 1894" (McNabb, 2015, p. 393), the published version of *The Island of Doctor Moreau* downplays the Beast-Folk's level of intelligence, a change that reflects Wells's own engagement with this late-Victorian shift in perspective (McNabb, p. 395).

undersea civilisation in the story does not return from his second trip to the bottom of the ocean; in "The Sea Raiders" (1896), deep-sea creatures attack bathers and boaters along England's south coast; in "The Empire of the Ants" (1905), a new species of South American ant begins to attack human settlements, and displace humankind from its tenuous hold over the Amazon region. All of these creatures possess intentionality and intelligence, but in spite—or perhaps because—of their ability to reason, their behaviour appears threatening, even overtly hostile. Are these, perhaps, responses to humankind's own actions? The field of animal studies—or "postanimalism"—centres on the question of how the nonhuman animal may be "released from (or emancipated from) its anthropocentric rule" (Chan, 2018, p. 330); it may be that these creatures are intent on their own liberation. It is not made clear. Instead, Wells leaves his stories open-ended. As this chapter discusses, the reader is nevertheless left with two disturbing implications. On the one hand, these narratives collapse the dualistic divide on which humanistic assumptions of superiority depend. In its place, they offer a portrayal of "the animal" not as the inferior corollary of the superior human subject, but as itself active, agential, and intelligent, thoroughly destabilising both the reader's sense of self (as human) and of the nonhuman as "animal" (and as his subjugated "Other"). On the other hand, these stories do not therefore substitute a knowable subject that is "like" the human. To the contrary, the behaviour of these creatures remains inexplicable, just as the creatures themselves remain unknowable, and perhaps irreducibly strange. Wells's scientific romances were steeped in the science of the day, evolutionary theory included; these tales point not only to humanism's limits, but to the limits of the Enlightenment's own humanistic, scientized forms of knowledge formation. In so doing, the creatures they describe escape humanism's influence to become posthuman; they become, in other words, postanimal.

2 Three Nonhuman Narratives

Like many of his contemporaries, H. G. Wells was profoundly influenced by evolutionary ideas, ideas whose effect was "both to make the human more animal and animal more human" (Morse & Danahay, 2016, p. 2). In turn, Wells was perfectly prepared to entertain the possibility not just of nonhuman agency, but of nonhuman intelligence and intentionality. However, Wells also felt a profound anxiety about the precariousness of humankind's dominion, and the potential for non-human animals to upset that dominion, a reflection, in part, of his own doubts about the relative adaptability and resilience of the human race itself. "[F]ace to face with the advance of a fresh glacial epoch, or a sudden accession of terrestrial temperature, or the addition of some new constituent to the atmosphere, or a new and more deadly disease bacillus," Wells wrote, "[man] would remain obstinately man, with the instincts, proclivities, weaknesses, and possibilities that he has now. His individual adaptability and the subtlety of his contrivance are no doubt great, but his capacity for change as a species is, compared with that of a harvest mouse or a green-fly, infinitesimal. He would very

probably go before the majority of such slight and flexible creatures" ("The Rate of Change in Species," 1894; Wells, 1975b, p. 131).

"The Sea Raiders" is an early expression of these concerns. In the story, a "peculiar species" of "cephalad" (Wells, 2007, p. 153) begins to attack boats and bathers along the south coast. Various theories are advanced. It is, for example, suggested that these creatures have accidentally become "enamoured of human flesh," and blindly sought it "out of their accustomed zone" (Wells, 2007, p. 161). Yet the survivor of one of these encounters—"a retired tea-dealer" (p. 154) named Fison—describes the creatures in terms that suggest intelligence, not "blind" instinct, and his reaction turns on the disruptive, irruptive power of their features. At once horrified and disgusted by these "ghastly-looking creatures," he is startled to find that they possess "large intelligent eyes" and the "grotesque suggestion of a face" (p. 155)—and as the narrator adds, "their eyes regarded him with evil interest" (p. 156). Moments later, the creatures pursue him across the rocky shoreline onto which Fison has ventured, "creeping at first deliberately, and making a soft purring sound to each other" (p. 156).

Horrified and now in fear of his life, Fison realises that this is a concerted, coordinated attack. He is lucky to survive it, for reasons that are symptomatic (as Wells's narrator implies) of much more general assumptions about humankind's position in the world. It simply does not occur to Fison that he might be the prey and these creatures the hunters. As the narrator perceptively notes, Fison approaches them "with all the assurance which the absolute security of his country against all forms of animal life gives its inhabitants" (Wells, 2007, p. 155), forgetting that he is as mortal as any other creature, including the ones intent on making a meal of him. Fison's other mistake is his failure to anticipate their ability to communicate and coordinate with each other in ways that suggesting reasoning minds. Yet their behaviour begs another question. If these creatures are capable of acting and not simply of reacting—if they do, in fact, possess the ability "to 'respond'" (Derrida, 2008, p. 32)—are their raids simply accidental? Is there, perhaps, a purpose to or meaning behind these attacks?

The story does not provide any final or definitive answer: the raids (a word that in itself implies some purpose) simply cease. In "The Empire of the Ants," however, a "vibrantly agentic" world (Sullivan, 2016, p. 47) begins to exercise its own dominion over humankind, in a chilling parody of the late-Victorian colonial impulse; as Virginia Richter points out, this is a "reverse colonisation narrative" (2011, p. 90). For Holyroyd, the figure through whom the story's narrative is focalized, the stage for this terrifying revelation is set by his journey up the Amazon. Fresh from "England, where Nature is hedged, ditched, and drained into the perfection of submission" (Wells, 2007, p. 349), he begins to realise what a "precarious hold" (p. 349) humans have on this "inhuman immensity" (p. 353). "[A]lways running like a sluice (…) animated by crocodiles and hovering birds, and fed by some inexhaustible source of tree trunks" (p. 349), the river is the locus of a vibrant, nonhuman world, full of "alien and mysterious activities," from "strangulating creepers" to "assertive flowers" (p. 353). The immensity, diversity and liveliness of this world underlines how "meagre" and insubstantial is the occasional human settlement (p. 349), and how insignificant Holyroyd is himself. "Who were the real masters?" ponders Holyroyd (p. 353). As he reconsiders the reports of ant attacks further upriver, the answer to that

question is no longer so self-evident: after all, he reasons, ants also "had a language, they had an intelligence (…) Supposing presently the ants began to (…) form great empires, sustain and planned and organised war?" (p. 354).

Here as elsewhere, Wells tapped into a contemporary anxiety. To the Victorians, invertebrates constituted a "hindrance (…) to the process of colonization" (Sleigh, 2001, p. 37), whether as pests, or as vectors for or sources of disease. Ants were a particular concern. "Ants lived without reference to man," notes Charlotte Sleigh, "and their complex behaviour without humanoid intelligence challenged the confident superiority of European humankind" (p. 36). Wells did not need to invent insect intelligence, or pretend that it was the result of a hitherto unexpected evolutionary twist; there was widespread agreement amongst entomologists that ants "might already be 'intelligent', in some hidden or previously unknown way" (Sleigh, p. 56). Nor did Wells need to concoct the possibility that insects might seek to exercise their own form of dominion; "travellers had [already] impressed upon the reading public how like armies insects could be" (Sleigh, p. 36). What, then, was to stop a colony of ants from challenging Europe's own colonial domination? These "insect conquerors" (Wells, 2007, p. 361) are, as Holyroyd discovers, implacable, intelligent, coordinated, and now possessed of lethal stings; they are also, as his account of their behaviour highlights, watchful: *en masse*, they are "full of watching eyes" (p. 358); the ants "were looking at him" (p. 358).

As their own empire continues to expand, it seems that there is no limit to the ambition of the ants—as the narrator asks, "why should they stop at tropical South America?" (Wells, 2007, p. 364). "I fix 1950 or'60 at the latest for the discovery of Europe," the narrator adds (p. 364). As Sleigh notes, "Wells's use of the word 'discovery' here is quite brilliant, for it up-ends the received history in which European man 'discovered' the Americas" (2001, p. 64). By reversing the trajectory of European expansionism, Wells also calls into question the entire basis of the colonial project, with its assumption of European moral superiority: what is the difference, after all, between a rapacious colony of ants—which contemporary entomologists such as Jean-Henri Fabre presented as "morally reprehensible creatures" (Sleigh, p. 53)—and similarly rapacious Western colonisers, so calmly dispossessing indigenous peoples of their land rights and simultaneously destroying nonhuman habitats? If it is somehow wrong for these intelligent creatures to "dispossess man"—whether through "flight or slaughter"—why should it then be considered fair or right for empire-building Britons to exert their influence in the exact same way (Wells, 2007, p. 364)?

As Wells's readers may have recognised, the army-like behaviour of the ants—like the coordinated aggression of the cephalad sea raiders—suggests unpalatable similarities between human and nonhuman psychologies: in "the marauding, invasive Other, [notes Stephen Arata] British culture sees its own imperial practices mirrored back in monstrous forms" (1990, p. 623). To Victorian contemporaries, therefore, "The Empire of the Ants" was both a worrying projection of anxieties "about the tenability of Empire" (Sleigh, 2001, p. 34) and a disturbing critique of its legitimacy, a legitimacy which hinged on the same dualistic opposition that separated human and

nonhuman as it did the "white man" and the "uncivilized" or "primitive" indigene (Sleigh, p. 57).

Behind those doubts lies a related and important ethical dilemma, common to virtually any discussion of what constitutes right and wrong, just or unjust behaviour. It may be argued that the ants are simply pursuing their own best interests, and thereby enabling themselves to flourish; but for the ants to flourish, humans must suffer. How can these conflicting demands be reconciled? It is reasonable to suggest that the needs of one species should not be met at the expense of any other, but this assumes that there are and will always be sufficient resources to facilitate the flourishing of every kind of biotic lifeform. What if there are not? To return to the imagined world of Wells's story, and as Holyroyd's account stresses, the ants seems unrelenting, implacable. In this clash of species, perforce, there can be no compromise.

There is, in fact, a telling irony at work in the narrative. Holyroyd's conclusion—that the ants cannot be diverted from their expansionist project—assumes that it is impossible to forge some kind of reciprocal arrangement with them that might avoid further conflict. Wells himself was increasingly of the view (argues John McNabb) that humans, and humans alone, were able to develop the kind of "ethical social behaviour" that might keep in check "the selfish and primitive instincts we still retain" (2015, p. 395). Speech was the key to that behaviour, since "[c]omplex language allowed for complex thought" (McNabb, p. 395). Yet the activity of the ants, like that of Wells's sea-raiders, suggests coordination and hence communication, which itself opens up the possibility of "complex thought" and hence "ethical social behaviour". Indeed, it not only opens up the possibility that the divide between species might be bridged, but it also implies that the ants deserve reciprocal treatment *as a matter of principle*, since they share with humankind many of the characteristics that make humans morally considerable.

As these stories stand, therefore, Wells tests the limit of human exceptionalism—by suggesting that the nonhuman is not mere matter but itself possessed of *res cogitans*—only to draw back from the possibilities that this variously implies, not least that the needs of the nonhuman animal can and ought to be taken into consideration, or that the interaction between human and non-human plotlines might be "symbiotic rather than competitive" (Bowden, 2019, p. 20). "These days are the days of man's triumph," Wells had earlier written, in an essay entitled "On Extinction" (1893; Wells, 1975a, p. 171). "The earth is warm with men. We think always with reference to men. The future is full of men to our preconceptions, whatever it may be in scientific truth" (Wells, 1975a, p. 171). Wells's narratives were, it seems, no less tangled up in the anthropocentrism whose limits they challenge—and this is no less true of "In The Abyss," in which an underwater civilization worships the explorer whose bathysphere intrudes upon its world, seeing him as the expression of that "unseen power above" (Wells, 2007, p. 151). The only difference here is that, at least initially, these creatures appear to bow down to human dominion; once again, man is the measure of all things.

But is this all that can be said about Wells's ground-breaking narratives—that they fail to escape the gravitational pull of anthropocentric thinking, even as they so

successfully unsettle it? As Parham suggests, Enlightenment rationality also encompasses its own, self-reflexive impulse, its own self-critical stance, a "critical rationalism" (2010, p. 58) that extends to Wells's narratives. Wells is, it may be argued, working from within a scientized, rationalistic framework, whilst at the same time signalling the limits of scientific understanding, the risks inherent in it, and the dangers of extending the scientific desire to understand and comprehend into an all-too-human desire to master and control. Certainly, Wells is taking advantage of the discursive regime of Enlightenment rationality, a regime that promises that "matter will be mastered by scientism, systematism, and rationalist empiricism" (Rohman, 2009, p. 71). The "distinctly modern quality" that Richter identifies as integral to Wells's "scientific romances" is a reflection of those discursive practices (2011, p. 183), as narratives like Wells's novella *The Island of Doctor Moreau* (1896) illustrate: it is steeped in recent scientific thinking (McNabb, 2015; Glendening, 2002, p. 585), grounded in its "principles and terminology" (Glendening, p. 583), and couched in a narrative form that presents itself as a scrupulous pursuit of the truth (Richter, p. 99). Yet it also operates as a troubling critique of the scientized tyranny that Enlightenment thinking enables, and of the risks it may inadvertently generate, risks which are, as Ulrich Beck predicted, "a form of involuntary self-refutation of scientific rationality" (1995, p. 9).

"The Abyss" is itself an instance. As Kelly Bushnell notes, scientific discoveries of real deep-sea creatures excited public interest throughout the Victorian period: according to the *Times* in 1878, "nothing is so fascinating to an English crowd as a sea-monster" (qtd in Bushnell, 2018, p. 53). This excitement found literary expression in works such as Alfred Lord Tennyson's "The Kraken" (1830), a poem that is itself about a "monster polypus" (Bushnell, p. 53) or cephalad, rising out of the depths of the ocean. As Bushnell adds, the poem can plausibly be read as a continuation of the "final Romantic caution to nascent Victorian science" (p. 62)—that there were dangers in the scientific "ethos of capture and domestication (…) and the Kraken is 'roaring' against it" (p. 62). Tennyson's Kraken, Bushnell argues, "sets the scene for other large literary polypi" in novels such as *Twenty-Thousand Leagues under the Sea* (1870), "in which the creature unsettles men's conquest of the sea" (p. 68). It also sets the scene for "The Abyss". The titular chasm could indeed gesture to the constructed gulf or rift between "Man and the Animal"—the "abyssal rupture"—to which Derrida would later refer (2008, p. 31); it may symbolise the dark void that the scientist Elstead is trying to illuminate; or it could denote the metaphorical depths to which he is prepared to go in order to extend "the sovereignty of man [that] lieth hid in knowledge" (as a founding father of Western scientific methods, Francis Bacon, put it) (cited in Adorno & Horkheimer, 1997, p. 3). Certainly, Elstead is impelled by the desire to know, but "[w]hat men want to learn from nature," as Adorno and Horkheimer argued, "is how to use it in order wholly to dominate it and other men" (p. 4). The question, then, is what might come of that demand for understanding. Notwithstanding the way in which Elstead is at first received by these undersea creatures, his failure to return from his second visit opens up the alternative possibility: that he has been recognised for the threat he represents. These undersea

creatures live in cities constructed, in part, from the detritus of human civilization—"our ships, our metals, our appliances" (Wells, 2007, p. 151), and even its very bones (p. 150)—and perhaps Elstead's disappearance (and death?) are simply their revenge against a power whose "sinking things [periodically] smite down and crush them" (p. 151).

That no explanation is ultimately forthcoming signals another, important aspect of Wells's textual response to the Enlightenment project. The story is left open-ended. The same is also true of "The Sea Raiders," a story that can itself be seen as an oblique but critical response to that scientific ethos, that Enlightenment ambition; whatever it is that drives Wells's cephalad—or determines its return to the depths—no scientist can properly explain. This returns us to "The Empire of the Ants," a story which seems to reject the possibility of any outcome but conflict even as it acknowledges the intelligence of the ants; and might that not form the basis of a resolution? To entertain the possibility of an alternative outcome to Wells's story—of a cooperative rather than competitive relationship between species—is, however, to substitute one way of understanding species interaction for its opposite, thereby reinstating a version (or idealised vision) of "Nature" as a harmonious whole with which humankind simply needs to reconnect. In turn, this assumes what science itself cannot yet achieve: a way in which to understand invertebrate intelligence, and translate it. Here as in each of these three narratives, Wells allows his nonhuman Others to retain their inscrutable strangeness, their unknowability, a disconcerting dissimilarity that is repeatedly made manifest in the way that they stare at or regard or gaze upon the privileged white male subjects whose own "comfortable, imperious British identity" (Sleigh, 2001, p. 49) is now under threat. As Sleigh asks, "[w]ho knew what went on behind the insects' unreadable faces?" (p. 53). Nonhuman minds are, as the narrator suggests in *The Island of Doctor Moreau*, alien, "unaccountable" (Wells, 2005, p. 78); they have the power to act in ways that confound human control. Perhaps they exist beyond the representational resources of the mind itself. "Can culture legitimately conceive of the non-cultural at all?" Glendening asks (2002, p. 586).

If nonhuman animals are irreducibly "strange"—if they always exist beyond the limits of our comprehension, a question which is as much philosophical as it is scientific—then this also carries an ethical implication: if we cannot say what these creatures are (or are not), what right do we have to limit our moral consideration in relation to them? It is not a question of making the nonhuman like us, but of acknowledging that it is not, and that, in its very strangeness, it exists beyond the reach of humanist assumptions, just as it exists beyond (and defies) the Enlightenment rationality whose mastery it eludes. In this sense—in this, important sense—perhaps all Wells's creatures are posthumanist animals; even (more properly) *postanimal*.

3 Conclusion

As Parham contends, the Enlightenment embodies a "tradition of emancipatory modernity" (2010, p. 69), and it is perfectly possible to read Wells's narratives as critical commentaries on the expansionist tendencies of Western society; in this reading, his nonhuman adversaries are simply seeking to free themselves from the multifarious effects of a "self-endangering, 'civilized' world" (Beck, 1995, p. 13). They are, in other words, narratives of nonhuman resistance—or retribution. In describing the way in which these new species behave, however, Wells suggests a second, still more intriguing possibility, itself opened up by Enlightenment models of scientific inquiry: that nonhumans may display human-like qualities, even possess human-like characteristics, and that human exceptionalism has the most tenuous foundations. Nor is this implausible. Nonhumans also possess the capacity to feel, reason, communicate, organise and create communities. The only question is whether, having established this much, humans are themselves intelligent enough to fully understand these characteristics; recent scholarship (such as Frans de Waal's *Are We Smart Enough To Know How Smart Animals Are?*) suggests that the answer may be yes, but only once we have abandoned many of our presuppositions. In drawing back from the obvious implications of these three narratives, each of which presents nonhumans as intelligent, it may reasonably be argued that Wells has fought shy of acknowledging the equivalence between humans and nonhumans, and settled instead on fashioning exciting short stories rooted in the possibility of competition or conflict, as in "The Sea-Raiders," where creatures hunt and kill at whim, or "The Empire of the Ants," in which invertebrates mirror the West's own imperialist ambitions. There is, however, a further possibility that reflects more profoundly on the limits of the Enlightenment project: that the creatures that Wells's protagonists encounter are equal to them not because they are alike, but because they elude human comprehension. It is precisely their unreadability—their indecipherability—that makes the stories so haunting. In their very strangeness, they exist beyond the reach of humanist constructions of the dualistic divide, and in so doing, they also elude any definition of "the animal" that positions the human as its superior alternate. Like the "strange, ghostlike" (Wells, 2007, p. 150) creatures in "The Abyss," they are at once posthuman and postanimal.

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The Snake Has a Face: Levinas, Mondo, and the Suffering Non-human Animal

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Abstract The ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas has traditionally been understood as inherently anthropocentric, the "face-to-face" encounter with the absolutely Other occurring beyond the realm of raw nature, and therefore, as Levinas himself suggested, precluding the involvement of non-human animals. "I don't know if the snake has a face," he has stated. "I can't answer that question." Via a Levinasian analysis of scenes of animal suffering and death as figure prominently in the Italian "Mondo" cycle of the 1960s and seventies, this chapter suggests an answer to this question whilst challenging such a limited conception of the ethical encounter and suggesting a new mode of theoretical engagement through which to approach some of the most contentious and exploitative components of a most problematic and unruly body of films. The visceral charge of mondo's depictions of the abuse of non-human animals, I argue, engenders not only a breach of the "world" as understood by the off-screen spectator, but also a momentary obliteration of the various themes woven about and masks imposed upon the onscreen animal other, a process of ferocious destabilisation that allows the non-human face to speak.

1 Introduction

> All the scenes that you are about to see in this film are true and are taken only from life. If often they are shocking, it is only because there are many shocking things in this world. Besides, the duty of the chronicler is not to sweeten the truth but to report it objectively.

Such is the decidedly disingenuous disclaimer appearing onscreen at the outset of the infamous and enormously influential Italian shockumentary *Mondo cane* (1962), Gualtiero Jacopetti and Franco Prosperi's kaleidoscopic, globe-scouring melange of scenes by turns resplendent and repellent, transgressive and surreal, ridiculous and profound. Hinging on a dyadic meld of sensuality and violence, its excesses legitimised by a studiously affected air of anthropological enquiry, the film careers

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from continent to continent, from one hyperbolic vignette to the next, each episode replete with jarring juxtapositions and shock cuts and musical cues both stirring and startling. On the streets of Hamburg, assorted inebriates stagger and box and twist and gurn, wrestling other to the bemusement of passing pedestrians. Crowds in Portugal goad rampaging bulls and puppies are slaughtered in Taiwanese restaurants. "The last cavemen" go about their business high atop the mountains of New Guinea, whilst in Southern Italy, Catholic penitents troop through bloodied thoroughfares, tearing at their flesh with glass.

Although its roots in Italian culture go back at least as far as the travelling "Mondo Niovo" entertainments of the late eighteenth century, and although it is certainly not without precedent—the annals of US exploitation film history, for example, are littered with proto-Mondo pictures, from the wildly popular, deeply suspect safari films of Martin and Osa Johnson through similarly dubious expedition epics like William Campbell's *Ingagi* (1930) and Lewis Cotlow's *Zanzabuku* (1956), and salacious sex education films after the fashion of *The Naked Truth* (1924, dir. Fred Sullivan) and *Mom and Dad* (1945, dir. William Beaudine)—the mondo film essentially begins here, with Jacopetti and Prosperi's bizarre, transfixing, and disturbing meld of fact and contrivance, art and exploitation, pedagogic pretence and untrammelled excess (Usai, 1996, p. 123). From it, a bewildering array of filmmakers would derive both *raison d'etre* and *modus operandi*, the dozens of increasingly graphic "Mondo Movies" produced in its wake throughout the 1960s, seventies, and eighties delivering a myriad of minor variations upon the same handful of seemingly inexhaustible themes and rarely straying from the template unwittingly established by *Mondo cane* itself: heavily racialised nudity and violence; an emphasis on the exploitation of the natural world by human beings and on the continuities underscoring the practices of "developed" and "undeveloped" cultures ("Primitive Rites, Civilised Wrongs!" as posters promoting's 1964's *Go, Go, Go World!* [*Il pelo nei mondo*, dirs. Antonio Margheriti, Renato Marzi] promised); spectacular location photography; a lush orchestral score often complemented by an overwrought ballad; a sardonic voiceover abundant with facetious quipping, world-weary hand-wringing, and outrageous misrepresentation, and; prolonged and harrowing scenes of animal cruelty and slaughter.[1]

It is the mondo film's subversive carnivalization of the abuse, suffering, and death of non-human animals that I wish to explore throughout this chapter via a theoretical framework informed by the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas. Concerned primarily with the possibility of an ethical, respectful relation with the Other which stresses absolute alterity and rescinds the kind of phenomenological reduction which would cast the Other as, essentially, a protrusion from the self, Levinas's thought initially appears wholly incompatible with the mondo film, in which is mounted a ferocious penetration of the darkness, the hitherto opaque and obscure paraded in full view, alterity neutralized and reduced to shards of taboo easily assimilated by

[1] "*Mondo cane*," Jacopetti laments in David Gregory's documentary profile *The Godfathers Of Mondo* (2003), "sadly, indirectly spawned a breed of dozens of titles: *Mondo* this, *Mondo* that. Ghastly stuff, absurdities that people would strangely go to see".

the observing I. Yet this "observing I" is also a veiled space, and in the likes of *Mondo cane, Savage Man, Savage Beast* (*Ultime grida dalla savan*a, 1975, dirs. Antonio Climati, Mario Morrra), *Mondo Magic* (*Magia nuda*, 1975, dirs. Alfredo Castiglioni, Angelo Castiglioni, Guido Guerrasio), and numerous others, it too is subject to scrutiny, to probing and unsheathing. Seemingly symptomatic of drives towards domination and containment, these films are far more often propelled by a will towards destabilisation, consistently undermining and challenging the privileged positions of their audiences before (or above) their subjects by foregrounding the plasticity of the representations they present, gesturing beyond them towards a genuine alterity that pulses in the spaces between the frames. This is no more apparent than when they deal directly with the violence done to non-human animals by human beings onscreen and off; when they are trading in and upending the spectatorial relationship with animal "snuff": footage of animal abuse and murder in which is foregrounded what Simon Hobbs describes as "a sense of the animal body as a tool for human supremacy within a wider sensationalist lexicon" (Hobbs, 2016, p. 71).

2 Levinas and the Dwelling

Largely ignored upon first publication in 1961, Emmanuel Levinas's *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* represented a radical—if not, as Jacques Derrida argued, quite as radical as it might have been—break both from the phenomenological philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger which had so heavily influenced his earlier work and which he had done much to promote, and from the wider Western philosophical tradition in general (Derrida, 2002). Essentially, Levinas urges a return to a pre-Platonic, pre-ontological ethics (the ethics from which, he insists, *all* ethics are derived), to a primordial site haunted by the Other. Encountered "face-to-face," the Levinasian Other is defined by its very resistance to definition or classification, the face-to-face an experience which transcends experience. Furthermore, the "face" here refers not to any set of physiognomic attributes, but ultimately to the very essence of an alterity that cannot be totalised or thematised by she or he who moves towards it. "The way in which the other presents himself," Levinas writes, echoing Descartes here as elsewhere:

> exceeding *the idea of the other in me*, we here name face. This *mode* does not consist in figuring as a theme under my gaze, in spreading itself forth as a set of qualities forming an image. The face of the Other at each moment destroys and overflows the plastic image it leaves me, the idea existing to my own measure and to the measure of its *ideatum* – the adequate idea. (Levinas, 1969, pp. 50–51)

As in "Reality and its Shadow," the contentious and problematic essay on aesthetics first published in 1948, Levinas is here advocating an anti-ocular mode of engagement. To retain the image of a thing is tantamount to murder, inasmuch as it reduces an entity to my perception thereof and in this way nullifies alterity. The act of communication which is fundamental to the ethical encounter with the Other is

engendered by one's respect for that very Otherness, for "the infinite in the finite, the more in the less" (Levinas, 1969, 50). Crucially, the Other must be allowed to pass. Central to this formulation is Levinas's subtle but radical subversion of the Heideggerian "dwelling." To dwell in the world, Heidegger asserted, is, in some sense, to have the world dwell within oneself. To exist is not simply to take one's place amongst the elemental, quasi-mythological foursome of earth, sky, divinities and mortals. Rather, one's existence is predicated upon the interrelation, and co-existence, of all four with and *within* one another. "When we say [either earth, sky, divinities or mortals]," he states, "we are already thinking of the other three along with it, but we give no thought to the simple oneness of the four" (Heidegger, 1993, p. 351). This primal "oneness" is encapsulated in the dwelling, the site of the self. Levinas follows Heidegger to a point, emphasising the back-and-forth with nature, the simultaneous moving out into the element and drawing the element into oneself which culminates in the establishment of a world recognisably one's *own*. In Levinas's account, however, the focus is on the *latent* environment, the environment prior to consciousness, prior to the grasp, and on the separation from the element which characterises the being who dwells. "The access to the world" he writes, "is produced in a movement that starts from the utopia of the dwelling and traverses a space to effect a primordial grasp, to seize and to take away. The uncertain future of the element is suspended. The element is fixed between the four walls of the home, is calmed in possession." (Levinas, 1969, p. 158) Labour, figured as the effecting of an almost symbiotic bind with the environment, is a means of both claiming, and traversing the gulf separating one from, the element beyond one's dwelling by attributing *to* that element the substance of a possessable artefact. Labour "*arouses* things and transforms nature into a world" (Levinas, 1969, p. 157). Yet the interior world of the dwelling, furnished via this labour, bears traces also of a pre-originary existence characterised by a kind of senseless abandon and suffused with the voice of the Other, a voice which is dispelled once one's dominion over the elements is affirmed in the grasp. Prior to this grasping, one is confronted with the Infinity of an entity yet to be rendered finite, yet to be fixed. "The hand delineates a world by drawing what it grasps from the element, delineating definite beings having forms, that is, solids; the informing of the formless is solidification, emergence of the graspable" (Levinas, 1969, p. 161). The face-to-face encounter with the absolute Other is an encounter with that which has yet to solidify. It is an encounter which has already occurred by the point at which it has taken form in consciousness. It is the supreme expression of one's ultimate separation from the element, the ultimate challenge to the sovereignty of the self.

The metaphor of the dwelling, with its "window that makes possible a look that dominates, a look of him who escapes looks," seems especially pertinent within the context of a discussion of mondo cinema, a genre characterised in large part by the voyeuristic gaze that it invites, by the manner in which it appropriates and moulds into simplistic "forms" any number of disparate cultures, peoples, and environments (Levinas, 1969, p. 156). Moreover, mondo film spectatorship invites comparison with Levinas's account of *dwelling* because, whilst drawing us towards the world at the same time as the world is contracted, tamed, and drawn back to us, these films force us towards a space where, for a fleeting moment, we are confronted with

something outside of ourselves, with something which *refuses* our grasp. The mondo film engenders such confrontations by employing certain formal, narratological, and stylistic devices, of which three in particular are common across the cycle. The first is the unanticipated subversion or denuding of the symbolic structures within which the "authenticity" of the "authentically" other finds form, as in the 1964 film *Ecco* (dir. Gianni Proia), for example, which takes sly delight in revealing how certain ceremonies and customs presented as 'authentic' in the course of the film have in fact been staged by actors for the benefit of tourists and, by extension, for us. A second tactic is to focus upon extreme psychological, spiritual, or emotional states, thereby drawing attention to the limits of representation. The third means of engineering such a moment is by pummelling the spectator with images of graphic violence edited in such a way as to engage the whole of the body, and so collapsing the space between the event onscreen and the viewing of that event in the present. At these times, the face of the other speaks, its voice rupturing the perception of self and other, onscreen and off, as dichotomised elements of a fixed totality.

All of this relates to the extent that the ostensible *others* of the mondo film are essentially phantasms; products of myths, anxieties, prejudices, religious or political or philosophical predilections. Constructions that, as Amy J. Staples has identified, speak less of the alien than they do of "western concepts of primitivism, modernism, authenticity, representation, gender, class, race, and identity" (Staples, 1995, p. 111). They are protrusions from the self. They are casings, caskets, but they are also prone to fracture, and it is from the depths of these fractures, from the darkness moiling in the gulf between what is drawn from and drawn to the self and what is forever exceeding the grasp, that the voice of the absolutely Other resounds. In the mondo film's many graphic depictions of the mistreatment of non-human animals, this address most often and most forcefully issues on the back of a series of shocks engendering the humbling, but not the negation, of the spectator before the Other. What negation does occur is the negation of the illusionary, or inherited, or adopted "I" within which the spectator is situated above events onscreen: the totalising I and the totality it fosters. The "pathways of power," to borrow a phrase from Randy Malamud, are confused and redrawn (Malamud, 2010, p. 2). The non-human addresses the human from a space beyond the frame.

3 The Non-Human and the Ethical Command

The most significant reference to non-human animals to be found in Levinas's writings occurs in a much-discussed essay entitled "The Name of a Dog, or Natural Rights," first published in 1975. Therein, Levinas recounts the details of an episode unfolding during the period of his incarceration as a prisoner of war at Fallingbostel during World War II.[2] Whilst "the French uniform still protected us from Hitlerian

[2] The recollection is provoked by meditations upon two verses from the book of Exodus: "You shall be men consecrated to me; therefore you shall not eat any flesh that is torn by beasts in the field;

violence," Levinas recalls, "the other men, called free, who had dealings with us or gave us work or orders or even a smile… stripped us of our human skin. We were subhuman, a gang of apes" (Levinas, 1997, p. 152–153). A momentary restoration of something approaching this "human skin" is granted with the arrival in the camp of "the last Kantian in Nazi Germany," a stray dog which the prisoners name "Bobby," and which, as Sam B. Girgus notes, "has become somewhat legendary in modern philosophy" (Levinas, 1997, p. 153; Girgus, 2010, p. 2). Where men, women and children looked upon the prisoners as something less than human, for Bobby, Levinas asserts, there was "no doubt that we were men" (Levinas, 1997, p. 152–153).

Whilst Bobby clearly recognises in Levinas and his fellow prisoners a fundamental human worth which transcends any and all insignias and demarcations, and which no amount of cruelty or violence can diminish, what Levinas recognises in Bobby is somewhat more difficult to discern. Earlier in the essay, without reference to any empirical animal, Levinas considers the "crouching, servile, contemptible" nature of the dog which will, nonetheless, "at the supreme hour… attest to the dignity of its person" in a manner which recalls the "the Other qua Other" of *Totality and Infinity*: the Other "situated in a dimension of height and of abasement—glorious abasement; he has the face of the poor, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan, and at the same time, of the master called to invest and justify my freedom" (Levinas, 1997, p. 152; Levinas, 1969, p. 251). Yet Levinas stops short of drawing the dog, or any animal, into the ethical realm engendered by the face-to-face encounter. As Barbara Jane Davy has illustrated, Levinas envisions the face-to-face as the locus of an ethical command which "calls one out of the state of nature," and therefore transcends the sphere of the animal (Davy, 2007, p. 43).[3] The animal face, for Levinas, is incapable of issuing this command. "One cannot entirely refuse the face of an animal," he states elsewhere, but "the priority here is not found in the animal, but in the human face" (Wright et al., 2003, p. 169).

The ethical command which might be issued by the face of the animal, Levinas asserts, is in the end obfuscated by the "pure vitality" of the "force of nature," a realm which the beast can never transcend (Wright et al., 2003, p. 169). Therefore, whilst there exists an ethical obligation towards it—in the prevention of cruelty and unnecessary suffering, for instance—the animal is incapable of communicating, and thus commanding, as does the human. Davy challenges Levinas on this issue, mounting a convincing argument that the conception of the face integral to his philosophy exceeds the strictures of anthropocentricism. "Levinas's writings about the face" she states, "are better interpreted metaphorically (…) What is crucial in ethics is that the Other expresses infinity, that the Other teaches, and that the Other can provoke one to ethics, not that the call to ethics be given through the speech of a human face"

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you shall cast it to the dogs" (22:31), and; "But not a dog shall growl against any of the people of Israel, either man or beast, that you may know that the LORD makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" (11:17).

[3] Genesis 1:26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth".

(Davy, 2007, p. 40). It is not, then, that the Levinasian "face-to-face" is fundamentally incompatible with the notion of the non-human animal as Other; rather, it is that Levinas neglects to explore these possibilities. Indeed, he expresses as much himself: "I don't know if the snake has a face. I can't answer that question. A more specific analysis is needed" (Wright et al., 2003, p. 172). For Davy, the snake *undoubtedly* has a face, the "speech" it issues as intelligible and as arresting and as compelling as that of any human other. As evidence, she cites the images of suffering animals as feature prominently in the campaign materials of PETA and similar organisations. She might just as soon have chosen one of any number of mondo films, where the expressivity of the face of the animal other is shown to transcend and to command—in, to borrow a phrase from Levinas, the "language of the eyes"—from a point above or beyond any classificatory or conceptual schemata (Levinas, 1969, p. 66).

4 A Dog's World

The title Levinas chose for the brief essay in which the tale of Bobby is recounted is broadly consonant with that which Jacopetti and Prosperi adopted for their first feature together, and from which the term "mondo film" would derive. Levinas's "The Name of a Dog" is, as Davy explains, in the original French ("nom d'un chien") a mild expletive derived from the somewhat harsher "nom de Dieu," or "in the name of God" (Davy, 2007, p. 46–47). The expression is roughly analogous with the English "doggone," which itself corresponds with "mondo cane," literally "a dog's world," or "world gone to the dogs." There are correspondences too between Levinas's understanding of the relation of the human to the non-human animal, and the views espoused by Gualtiero Jacopetti. For the former, the human being's capacity for thought-for-the-other and moral deliberation is evidence of the species' essential, and necessary, elevation above other animals, above nature, and above the raw "struggle for life without ethics" (Wright et al., 2003, p. 172). Jacopetti too recognises this ability as indicative of the fundamental difference between human and non-human, but for him, the fact that non-human animals "act according to an absolute and scrupulous faith in nature" is, on the contrary, evidence of their essential superiority: "Man is worse than animals in the sense that he has a brain. Man can judge good and evil… You can't say that animals have a moral behaviour, while you can say that man has an immoral behaviour" (Panigutti, 1995, p. 150). Relatively cosmetic, these correspondences are nonetheless emblematic of a much deeper affinity between the work of Jacopetti and Prosperi—and by extension their many imitators—and the ethical philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas than one might initially assume, particularly if the latter is filtered through the less literal, non-anthropocentric readings of commentators such as Davy. Essentially, this intersection pivots around the idea that the commanding face of the Other—for our purposes, the "face" of the suffering non-human animal—exceeds and exhausts thematisation.

"The consequence of most human-animal encounters," Randy Malamud argues, "is the expression of harm via pathways of power" (Malamud, 2010, p. 2). From its

opening depiction of a handler dragging a dog towards impoundment, *Mondo cane* is littered with scenes in which these pathways of power are not only rendered brutally visible, but, by dint of the film's application of hyper-aggressive montage, aural manipulation, and uncommonly distressing imagery, are *felt*. Scores of wild pigs are clubbed to death by "New Guinea savages"; Gurkha swordsmen decapitate bulls to steady rounds of solemn applause; sharks are subjected to vicious retaliatory attacks by the friends and relatives of maimed islanders; a female sea turtle for whom "contamination has destroyed all sense of direction" collapses from exhaustion, unable to find her way back to the water; and on it goes. The thread is carried through into the following year's *Mondo cane No.2*, which, in a spiteful swipe at British censors who objected to the first film's abundance of such scenes, opens with further images of captive dogs, these ones, we are told, located in London, their struggles now silent, the vocal chords severed by English surgeons carrying out "experiments in vivisection." Later scenes capture cockfights organised by gamblers in Singapore, the butchering of a large crocodile, the final agonies of flamingos dying in contaminated waters, and the pitiful whimpering of a dog tied to the top of an immense pillar, left to die under the African sun.

5 The Language of the Eyes

Both *Mondo cane* and its sequel demonstrate conclusively that most any slither of raw footage can be moulded and warped to tell any number of stories, can be transformed and recontextualised to embolden or legitimise even the most patently ludicrous contrivances. Yet the images of animal suffering in both pictures refuse to yield so readily to these impositions, the traumatic blow they deliver rupturing the narratives constructed about them. If, as Malamud has posited, the varieties of performances that non-human actors have been tasked with delivering across the width and breadth of motion picture history and prehistory, the multiplicity of forms and "vaudevillian faces" that they have been charged with inhabiting and with wearing, are indicative of the extent to which we as spectators "are ashamed to look animals in the eye, ashamed to confront what we have done to them," then it is tempting to read the harried, harrowed, suffering animals of the mondo film as totemic of some kind of return of the repressed (Malamud, 2010, p. 4). Repeatedly, mondo asks us not only to look animals in the eye, but to wither in their glare, to "see" beyond the narratives and the thematic inventions and duplicities woven around and about them. A pertinent example is provided a quarter of the way through *Mondo cane* itself. The segment opens with a disorienting shock cut which pulls us from an image of bewildered chicks freshly dyed in preparation for their confinement within novelty Easter eggs (Fig. 6.1) towards a shot captured in some other space at some other time, the camera fixed now on one side of a goose's head, the human hand which has been clamped about the beak just about visible in the upper corner of the frame (Fig. 6.2). Before any contextualising information has been provided—the bird, we eventually learn, is one of several being force-fed to fatten the liver for human consumption—a narrative

Fig. 6.1 Mondo cane (1962)

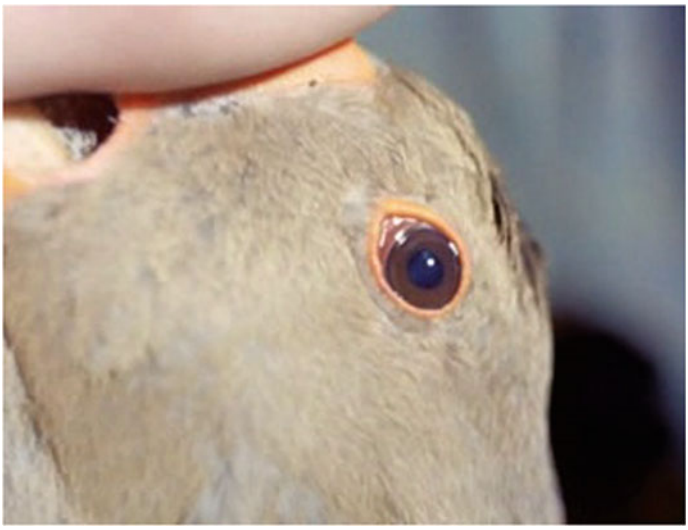

Fig. 6.2 Mondo cane (1962)

is communicated. The bird's head is tilted upwards, the eye initially positioned just above centre in the middle of the frame, occupying only a small fraction of the whole, yet dominating the screen. Its gaze, periodically fixing or appearing to fix on the lens, is searing from the off, permeated with pain and confusion, imploring and commanding. It is a gaze which registers first upon the body of the spectator as

shock, as a touch that is felt in the present. As Akira Mizuta Lippit has written of the lion fatally wounded in the course of Peter Kubelka's experimental documentary short *Our Trip To Africa* (1973), "the look of the dying animal brings the spectator across the threshold of the film" (Lippit, 2002, p. 17). The shock cut that Jacopetti and Prosperi employ, whipping us from the image of the chicks to the sight of the goose, the latter framed in such a way as to allow for the heat of its gaze to exceed the frame, connects so viscerally and so profoundly, that the address of that gaze travels outwards from the spatiotemporal coordinates of the indexical event represented onscreen to speak *now*. In the course of this communication, the force of which upends the power dynamic that exists between the one who watches and the one who is watched, the very notion of the "animal," in relation to which the spectator has hitherto been situated at a position of height, is transcended. The power of the gaze and of what it says temporarily shatters what Stanley Cavell, reflecting on Wittgenstein, has termed the human being's "soul-blindness" vis-à-vis the non-human (Cavell et al., 2008, p. 93). We are forced to "hear" the non-human, and in the hearing we must recognise too that we are "seen."

We can talk in a similar way about the gaze of the elephant slain in the later feature *Mondo Magic*, a gaze that haunts the screen long after the actual eye has been removed from the head of the beast, that it might not, in the words of the narrator, "see" its assassins. Here, as in countless similar scenes in countless other mondo movies, the film intersects with and articulates the human desire to maintain this "soul-blindness," to avoid both seeing and being seen, with an uncommon brutishness. "No amount of sacrificial blood," the narrator assures us, "can make one forget that twitching eye ripped from its socket and hidden so quickly."

"The eyes break through the mask" writes Levinas; "the language of the eyes, impossible to dissemble. The eye does not shine; it speaks" (Levinas, 1969, p. 66). The mask which the eye of the non-human Other penetrates in these episodes is threefold. First, it encompasses the "theme he offers," which we can understand as the mask imposed upon the non-human animal by me, the mask which announces my elevation, or at least enforces my sense of elevation, as a human being, above the non-human. Second, and closely related, is the mask which I wear, the mask which represents me and which announces my position in relation to the world outside of myself and the others, human and otherwise, inhabiting that world, and which informs my use of and approach to both. Third is the mask of the "old" clouding the image, marking the representation as a document of a time and a space far removed from that inhabited by the spectator. Each of these masks is momentarily torn away in the immediacy of shock, so that what is carried towards me in shock might register, that the absolute novelty of the Other's address might be felt.

Despite the neat correspondences these scenes provide with the image Levinas puts forth, however, the "eyes" of the Other, like the "face," should be understood in figurative, rather than literal, terms. They are an affirmation of alterity, of something speaking and breathing outside of the totality of being and of imposed thematisation, and yet, contradictorily in this instance, part of what they communicate is the underlying unity of species inasmuch as all are capable *of* communication, of breaching the "I," of issuing the ethical command. The shot of the goose's eye disturbs

because, although it is ultimately inscrutable, it presents an uncanny simulacrum of "humanity." This is the converse of how mondo's frequent and often hugely problematic reflections upon the inherent savagery of man disturb. Meditations upon this theme figure prominently throughout the cycle. Often, and most contentiously, it manifests as an engagement with the ethnic other which casts indigenous communities as feral and bestial; denizens of the wild, churning id of the so-called "developed" world. Occasionally, as in Arthur Davis's *Brutes and Savages* (1977), these ruminations allow for a few suitably salacious, if not always terribly convincing, depictions of purported bestiality. In the likes of *Slave Trade in the World Today* (*Le schiave esistono ancora*, 1964, dirs. Roberto Malenotti, Maleno Malenotti, Folco Quilici), they are expressed as a fear that the human being might be returned to a state of animalilty via the stripping away of agency and the commodification of the body. Most often, they figure as components in a wider analysis of man's limitless capacity for barbarity towards other species, an avenue of inquiry which Climati and Morra's gruelling *Savage Man, Savage Beast* thoroughly exhausts.

Like much of Jacopetti and Prosperi's incendiary and hugely controversial *Africa addio* (1966), on which Antonio Climati served as cinematographer, *Savage Man Savage Beast* looks towards humanity's treatment of non-human animals with a palpable, if decidedly hypocritical anger. Within the first ten minutes alone, a deer is stalked and killed by a trophy-hunter, scores of bats tumble from the heavens upon receipt of fatal boomerang blows, and spearing claims the lives of any number of kangaroos, buffalos, gazelles, and elephants. The latter scenes in particular are possessed of a relentless intensity, the cameras forever whipping, zooming, and swooping, seemingly propelled towards the stampeding beasts on the backs of the spears themselves, appearing to rebound and ricochet as the targets topple onto their sides or rise on hind legs in panic. Consequently, the spectator is pulled hither and thon, back-and-forth, situated now with the hunter, now with the hunted, mimetic identification oscillating with overwhelming velocity, commandeered first by the thrill of the chase and next by the terror of being pursued. Yet here again, this dialectical back and forth is derailed, the frame rent by the command, the questioning, of the upturned eyes of the dying gazelle, or the pathetic, discombobulated swaggering to and fro of the elephant swatting with its trunk at the spears protruding from its body.

6 World and Soul

In the Levinasian account of the dwelling discussed at the outset of this chapter, the Heideggerean notion that the element already exists within the parameters of the self is subverted and the emphasis shifted to the moment prior to consciousness of those things which, once grasped and comprehended, are utilised in the fashioning of one's *world*. Reduced to their most basic functions, the general pursuits of the mondo film appear much more Heideggerean in this regard than Levinasian. The constituents of the mondo film are, ostensibly, shards of the *external*, scrutinised,

co-opted, and catalogued, and as J. B. Harley reminds us, "to catalogue the world is to appropriate it" (Harley, 1989, p. 13). Indeed, there are many parallels to be drawn between the work of the mondo filmmaker and that of the cartographer as analysed by Harley. Harley's conception—elucidated with recourse to Foucault and Derrida—of maps as culturally-constructed artefacts loaded with intertextual narratives redolent of the ideologies of the societies which produced them is readily applicable to the mondo film, a form which also serves a certain kind of cartographical function, which measures topographical as well as cultural and psychological distance, which advances a subjective, ideologically-charged conception of the world and of our place therein under the auspices of objective scientific enquiry, and in which knowledge, power and the visible are inextricably bound. Invoking Foucault's formulation of the panopticon, Harley announces the map as "a'juridical territory': it facilitates surveillance and control," and cartography as an expression of power by which "the world is disciplined" (Harley, 1989, p. 13). Similarly, the mondo film exerts a power over the world it scrutinises. Its omnipresent gaze, its substitution of the thing for culturally-loaded images of the thing—images which, to borrow a phrase from Levinas, "do not force [the thing's] presence, but by their presence insist on its absence"—and its apparent propagation of colonial myths and stereotypes all constituents of an apparatus of knowledge-power through which the external is consumed by the internal (Levinas, 1989, p. 136).

There is, however, another—by no means unrelated—Foucauldian formulation with which we might unpack the mondo spectator's relationship with the "world" paraded before them, and with the non-human animals occupying that world: that of the disciplined *soul*. Whereas Cavell's use of "soul," as cited above, denotes a certain authenticity of being, a dignity and an essence fundamental to the non-human yet largely obscured in human-animal relations by the perceived elevation of the former before the latter, the "soul" as described by Foucault is itself an agent of obfuscation. It is, he explains, "produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised on those punished—and, in a more general way, on those one supervises, trains and corrects (…)" It is "born (…) out of methods of punishment, supervision and constraint" (Foucault, 1995, p. 29). Like those of their human counterparts, the animal bodies existing within the diegesis of the mondo film are bodies bound and moulded by the gazes under which they are scrutinised. They are bodies not only disciplined and constrained, but also, insofar as they are presented to us as images, *constructed* by the play of intersecting discourses, perspectives, and ideologies whipping around and about and upon them. They are bodies enveloped by the matrix of symbols, insignias, and impositions which, for Levinas, might be considered a mask, and for Foucault, constitutes the "soul" within which they are contained and ultimately silenced. Yet the mondo spectator too has a *soul*, conjured in the interweaving of those same forces, tended and nurtured by the position the film invites one to take with regard to the onscreen other. Essentially, the relation of onscreen to off as viewed from this position is the distinctly counter-Levinasian relation of two elements borne of the same imagination, situated in diametric opposition. In an overwhelming number of mondo pictures, however, including those discussed throughout this chapter, the

mechanics of these "souls" are subject to intermittent attack, the web of forces at play upon the subject, whether onscreen or off, momentarily unraveled. In these moments, sparked by explosions of visual excess, violence, and shock, the spectator's remove from the representation collapses, and the other is granted a voice. In the scenes detailed above, the concatenation of demands and commands billowing outwards from those explosions serve to pull the onscreen other, the non-human, from the "past," the time of the image's creation, to the time/space occupied by the spectator. In this collision, the "soul" is short-circuited, the "mask" destroyed, and the body addressed directly.

7 Conclusion

These instances of breach, intrusion or disassembly of the "soul" are also, then, those moments when the alterity of the Other blazes most profoundly, when the mask is most vulnerable and the "theme" most amenable to transcendence. As such, this soul, which might be considered an inherited, or *imposed*, consciousness deriving from the act of spectatorship itself, is analogous to the world which, for Levinas, exists somewhere between the "utopia of the dwelling" and the primordial purity of the element prior-to-possession (Levinas, 1969, p. 158). It is at once the source of the residual image which blazes in the absence of the thing in the wake of my consciousness *of* the thing, and a structure erected from that very residue. On the face of it, so to speak, mondo professes to "show," to "illuminate," and, in so doing, to banish the shadows wherein alterity resides, for its gaze is at once an agent of constriction and contraction which "suspends," rather than *meets* its object. All is illuminated, made sense of, appropriated. At its best, however, the mondo movie is also capable of plunging the spectator deep into the darkness prior to that suspension or seizing of the other as object, and in that darkness is found the space, or non-space, wherein the true encounter with the absolutely Other occurs. The darkness which swells in those moments is possessed of a boundless fecundity, and it is from within its folds that the hitherto stifled and throttled is awoken in shock and permitted to breathe and to speak. In attempting to penetrate the element, to draw into oneself the world and all that is in it, to mark all things as knowable and therefore claimable, the mondo spectator instead finds themselves wilting before an Other that demands to be heard *as* Other, whether it be the goose, or the elephant, or any of the other non-human participants suffering across any number of mondo films. In the shock of that address, felt now in the present, is a deafening insistence that beyond the mask, beyond the theme, beyond the notion of the other as an artefact to be claimed and tamed in consciousness, the snake, indeed, has a face.

***NB**: Certain sections of this chapter were initially delivered as part of a conference paper entitled "The Snake Has A Face: Emmanuel Levinas, Mondo Cinema and the Death of the Non-Human Other" at Film-Philosophy 2011, held at Liverpool John Moores University. These sections have been subject to significant revision.*

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Bowers of Persuasion: Toward a Posthuman Visual Rhetoric

Cynthia Rosenfeld

Abstract In 1992, classics scholar George Kennedy proposed that rhetoric existed pre-speech and was present in all-animal life. As visual rhetoric increases in popularity as an area of study, another question emerges: Is visual rhetoric present in nonhuman animal life? In the natural sciences, the question of bowerbird artistry has been debated for years. The Vogelkop bowerbird, as depicted in the popular BBC *Life* series, provides an avenue to explore the possibility of bowerbird agency in crafting texts of visual rhetoric. Weaving observations from the documentary with critical tools and frameworks, while continuously embedding research from the natural sciences, this manuscript offers a posthuman, interdisciplinary approach that illuminates the possibility of nonhuman animal visual rhetoric by exploring the aesthetic choices, cultural preferences, and communicative purposes of the Vogelkops' bowers. Visual rhetoric offers posthuman studies an area of study that focuses on how creatures—humans and nonhumans—exhibit agency in their embodied lives. A posthuman perspective of visual rhetoric allows for a study of the vast and rich study of the history and diversity of visual rhetoric, and encountering the bowers, even through documentary footage, may afford viewers a moment of epiphany that encourages ecological mindedness.

1 Introduction

He positions an assortment of berries and an arrangement of flowers. He spent hours working on this display. He moves back, observes his work, and returns to adjust some of the items. All of the effort is an attempt to influence a female to choose him as her mate. Is the described a display of visual rhetoric? Does the answer change if the agent of display is revealed to be a Vogelkop bowerbird?

Birds of the bowerbird family (Vogelkops and other species) have been creating bowers and fascinating the humans who view them, from the local people who have

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lived alongside them for centuries to European naturalists who encountered them in the 1800s (Darwin, 1879; Gilliard, 1969; Iredale, 1950; Marshall, 1954). Bowerbirds raise difficult questions, about agency and about natural selection, and have done so for quite some time (Gilliard, 1969).

The question—and in many cases, doubt or denial—of nonhuman animal agency has been at the center of many discussions in various fields and disciplines. Indeed, it may be this very doubt that allows the humanities to exist: "The non-human becomes a solid and consistent category: all animals are lacking whatever makes the human a non-animal. This nullifies... the common animal-being inclusive of the species *Homo sapiens*, so that the human finds itself belonging to a different realm, which requires disciplines and approaches opposed to natural science" (Marchesini, 2017, p. 2).

To study a materiality like an avian-crafted bower as an exemplar of nonhuman animal agency is to step outside the humanism that delimits traditional humanities' studies. Humanism centralizes humanity, privileges the welfare of humans, and focuses on human reason and rationality; posthumanism is a paradigm that examines phenomena with consideration to how agents/agencies—from humans to nonhuman animals to technology—are intertwined and both shape and are shaped by each other (Haraway, 2016; Marchesini, 2017; Wolfe, 2008). Posthumanism is not anti-humanism (Lennard & Wolfe, 2017), nor is it a zoophilic or technophilic method of study. Rather, posthumanism is a deconstruction of humanism that problematizes the sharp distinctions separating "culture" from "nature" and "human" from "other." Posthumanism studies attempt to de-center the human as the central point of reference (Calarco, 2015) through acknowledgment that nonhumans, both nonhuman animals and the larger nonhuman world (e.g., technology, landscape), have agency to shape human experience. Further, posthumanism does not engage in the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. The paradigm looks at communication, behaviors, and productions as embodied, lived experiences of human systems interacting with other systems, and provides a a way to understand our animalityby "uncovering new identities and differences" (Calarco, 2015, p. 56).

In this chapter, I argue that the bowers of Vogelkop bowerbirds can be interpreted as examples of visual rhetoric—an argument that engages controversial ideas of agency in multiple disciplines, from philosophy to biology to rhetoric (Darwin, 1879; Despret, 2016; Foss, 2004; Hawhee, 2011; Prum, 2017). The goals of this essay are to extend the posthumanist work that has problematized the human/animal and culture/nature divides in the humanities and to illuminate the possibility that Vogelkop's bowers function not only as influential means to attract a mate but also as material sites of disruption to hegemonic narratives of human exceptionalism.

2 Visual Rhetoric and Nonhuman Animals

Kennedy (1992) and Hawhee (2011) provide a foundation for arguing for the consideration of nonhuman animals as rhetoricians. Kennedy, a classics scholar, wrote an article and later presented a talk that startled the rhetorical community: Kennedy

(1992) proposed that "general rhetoric" exists prior to speech and "is manifest in all animal life" (p. 4) because the most basic component of rhetoric is energy, energy to move others. Kennedy explains that there is emotional energy that compels one to speak, physical energy in the act of speaking, and energy involved in the encoding and decoding of the message(s). Hawhee (2015) extended Kennedy's work in several ways. She studied the history of, and calls for the greater exploration of, rhetoric's sensorium, the receptions and interpretations of the full array of sensory stimuli. Attending to the sensorium provides the ability to investigate rhetorical elements beyond discourse. "Animals instead offer models of rhetorical behavior and interaction that are physical, even instinctual, but perhaps no less artful" (Hawhee, 2011, p. 83).

From Davis's (2011) "Creaturely Rhetorics" to Gruber's (2018) "Multiple Rhetorical Animals," many rhetoricians have explored non-human rhetors and rhetorical acts. Gruber (2018) engages interdisciplinary work with neuroscience to describe evolutionary frameworks of rhetoric and how we can understand motivation and fairness in the rhetorical tradition. Mucklebauer asks us not to presume to know what a species or rhetoric is in advance (2011), and to remember that persuasion can be non-linguistic and without conscious intent (2016). Seegert (2014) offers a play of sniffication, in which the coyotes of Chicago offer their own creaturely rhetoric of howls and fur and urine.

It may seem like nonhuman animals as agents of *visual* rhetoric would be less contested than arguing them as rhetoricians writ large, given that visual nature sidesteps any issue of needing to wrangle classical rhetoric from associations with human language. However, Olson and colleagues (2008) defined visual rhetoric as the "symbolic actions enacted primarily through visual means, made meaningful through culturally derived ways of looking and seeing and endeavoring to influence diverse publics" and that rhetorical acts are "actions that humans perform when they use symbols to persuade or invite cooperation from others" (p. 2). The authors are far from alone in their assessment of who has the agency to create visual rhetoric. For example, Foss (2004) goes a step further and issues a species specification in her definition of visual rhetoric: "Three characteristics appear to define artifacts or products conceptualized as visual rhetoric: They must be symbolic, involve human intervention, and be presented to an audience for the purpose of communicating" (p. 304–305).

To call for consideration of nonhuman animals as capable of producing visual rhetoric should not be misconstrued as an attempt to open up the definition of visual rhetoric (not that there exists one definition) to consider *everything* an act of visual rhetoric. If everything possessing visual aspects were to become visual rhetoric, then, in effect, visual rhetoric would lose its meaningfulness as an analytical tool. To that end, I adopt Seegert's (2014) definition of rhetoric—the "relational force of signals interacting with the world" (p. 160)—and operationalize visual rhetoric with Peterson's framework (described later) to guide my analysis and argue that Vogelkop bowerbirds create visual rhetoric: they create displays that engage aesthetic selection; have cultural preferences (i.e., within the species, preference for objects and colors vary by region); and design their bowers with communicative purpose.

3 The Bowers of the Birds

Male Vogelkops court differently than peacocks. Male peacocks are graced with the vibrant green and blue plumage that has garnered them not only mating rites but also the adoring gaze of humans and goddesses, like Hera. Vogelkop bowerbirds, however, physically create the displays they use in hopes of capturing the attention of a potential mate. The suitors spend years learning how to create, build, and (re)decorating bowers (Frith & Frith, 2004). He may find his decorations in nature or steal them from another bird's bower or a human's backyard. Once setup is complete, he uses his wide vocal repertoire to attract attention to his bower. Females then come to investigate the bower and decide whether or not to mate with the bower's creator.

My analysis focuses on the decorated, material bowers presented in BBC's *Life*. Although images of the bowers of Vogelkops abound on social media, I limit the scope of this inquiry to the *Life* exemplar, supported by research on bowerbird behavior, for three reasons. First, *Life*, broadcast worldwide, was seen by over 4 million viewers in the UK alone when it premiered (Broadcasters' Audience Research Board, 2018), and the Vogelkop-specific segment has been viewed over 600,000 times on YouTube (BBC, Nov. 29, 2009). Second, short of being able to travel to West Papua to witness the bowers in person, *Life* offers high quality imagery produced using state-of-the-art technology (Khan, 2009) and offers internal views of the bower. Finally, *Life* is noted as being the first to record Vogelkop mate selection, after spending weeks filming in the field (BBC, Sept. 18, 2009).

In *Life,* audiences view the bowers of two male Vogelkops. Vogelkops build what are referred to as "maypole" bowers, roofed, tepee-shaped constructions of sticks, built around a central pillar, which may include additional pillars for support. Looking inside one of the bowers (we only see inside one), the male used a sapling for the central support, and the inside—including the sapling—is carpeted in a dark moss. Under the "covered porch" area of the bower, the male has placed beetles that shine with a metallic quality. Some beetles walk away, and he replaces them. Beyond the moving decorations, this Vogelkop uses flowers, fruits, and fungus of oranges, reds, and pinks to adorn the "garden" or "court" (as the main display area is commonly referred to by naturalists and wildlife writers) area. Facing the bower, as the female would for viewing, what appears to be an exposed tree root serves to offer a visual bisection of the front of the bower. The right side features a collection of flat, orange pieces of fungus, arranged in a heap on top of the moss. There is a gap immediately next to the fungus, filled in only by the mossy background. On the left, there is a floral arrangement, snipped just above the receptacle area of the stem, so that only the perianths (petals, sepals, and the inner parts of the flowering body) are present. The flower is a yellowish-orange that tapers into petals of a pinkish-orange, which are a close match for the fungus. The pile of flowers looks substantially larger than the fungus pile, and there is little empty space between the bisecting wood, the mound of flowers, and the left edge of the bower. In the court area in front of the floral mound is a large expanse of berries. At first, the pile is mostly red, but when the display is shown later, most of the berries have turned a deep blue. The court area immediately

in the front-left of the fungus has a small assortment of red flowers, which were the last item added to the court. In a close-up shot, it appears to contain only about six, small flowers, as opposed to the heap of over a dozen, larger flowers.

The other bower on display in *Life* is by a rival Vogelkop, who is competing for mating rites within their shared call range. The smaller red flower that was featured only sparingly in the former bower is used more extensively by this Vogelkop. There are smatterings of red flowers all along the center and left court (although "left" here is more arbitrary, as there is no root or stick serving as a visual bisection). On the right further away from the bower, but still in the court, is a bank of charcoal. Finally, in the entry of the bower, with a trail of the red flowers seemingly leading to this display, is the most prominent feature: a large pile of deer feces. (There are also white fungus sprouting from the deer feces, which the Vogelkop is seen working to remove).

4 Flowers and Fruit and Fungus—Oh, My!: Analysis of the Bowers

To evaluate the symbolic nature of the bowers, the analysis begins with the visual stimuli—"light, line, color, perspective, volume, scale" (Peterson, 2001, p. 23)—of the bowers alongside a discussion of form, function, and aesthetics interwoven with the natural history and field biology literature concerning bowerbirds. To demonstrate that the bower and its decorations are made "to shape perception and influence their viewers" (p. 25), an analysis of the female bowerbird's behavior is necessary: with which bowerbird does she choose to mate? To discuss perception and persuasion, the analysis below incorporates research on Vogelkop mate selection, to ensure that the video from which I base my analysis is an accurate (i.e., not heavily edited) depiction.

Kress and Leeuwen (2006) offer detailed criteria for assessing the significance of the forms (signifiers) of color (saturation, differentiation, modulation, value), perspective, and line. Although the tools they present are designed to examine human artifacts, and examining an avian-crafted product with the same tools runs the risk of anthropomorphism and thus re-centering the human, there are some reasons the choice is acceptable. For one, female bowerbirds have been found to favor different color schemes geographically (e.g., some females in some areas prefer blues, others favor red and oranges) (Kusmierski et al., 1997). Although I cannot know how the female bowerbirds interpret colors affectively, an understanding of the physiology of avian eyesight offers some understanding of what they see. While the avian eye is more complex than our own, with several species capable of seeing in the ultraviolet spectrum, there is evidence to suggest their visual processing bears some resemblance to our own. In a series of studies, birds were found to be able to distinguish cubism from impressionism (Watanabe et al., 1995), traditional Japanese paintings from impressionist paintings (Watanabe, 2011), watercolors from pastels (Watanabe,

2010), and (what humans consider) "good" from "bad" drawings (Watanabe, 2010). The series of studies found that birds use colors, patterns, and visual elements to make the distinctions. For example, to be able to distinguish a good or bad painting, the bird needed to see the global, unscrambled image. However, to distinguish the style of the art work, the bird only needed elements of the image (Watanabe, 2010). Watanabe (2010) specifically references bowerbirds as an example of an animal that makes qualitative judgments about an object created by a conspecific.

Using tools such as those offered by Kress and Leeuwen (2006) while referencing biological data is an example of *critical anthropomorphism* (Marchesini, 2015). Critical anthropomorphism uses human perceptions, intuitions, and feelings, combined with an informed understanding of normalities (e.g., behaviors, ecologies) for the animal being described, to generate novel hypotheses for other species. A critical anthropomorphic approach is not an attempt to *make human* nonhuman animals through identifying ways in which nonhuman animals are *like us*. It is an attempt to understand continuities from an evolutionary perspective (Gruber, 2018), to illuminate where we share commonalities with our nonhuman relatives, while understanding that some of the discontinuities may not be understandable from a human vantage point.

With the recognition that no species can serve as a guide to understand all other species, critical anthropomorphism allows us to use the only experiences we know—our own—with knowledge of a species' (and, to the extent possible, the individual's) *umwelt* to generate plausible understandings of behavior. Like any interpretive work, critical anthropomorphism does not try to make projections for an animal's inner experience—claiming that an interpretation is *the* interpretation, or to speak *for* an animal; rather, critical anthropomorphism tries to create a space for human empathy in a beyond-human world (Marchesini, 2015). Critical anthropomorphism has been used effectively by biologists, such as Frans de Waal (2009), who calls outright rejection of intersubjective states between humans and nonhuman animals "anthropodenial" (p. 25).

4.1 Aesthetics and Influence

Can the bowers be considered to be constructed through aesthetic selection? This is a difficult question. For a mating behavior to be considered aesthetic, biologists first try to rule out if the behavior could instead be ascribed to a larger, adaptive mechanism. For example, could the fruits and insects displayed on the bower's court provide food for the females, thus offering a direct benefit? Vogelkops' selection of objects and use of color and perspective all suggest the bowerbirds are crafting an aesthetically-pleasing display.

First, the choice of objects indicates that they are chosen more for some perceived aesthetic value or as objects to indicate some aspect of superiority of that particular male (e.g., health) than to serve as a direct benefit for the female. In *Life,* we see a bower featuring beetles, flowers, fruit, and fungus. Although in many birds, edible

items serve as a food offering (i.e., the fruit offers a direct benefit) (Reilly, 2018), at least one female who observes the bower and decides to mate with its creator never eats the fruit. She looks over the arrangement from different angles and using the bisecting log as a vantage point, and then signals her willingness to mate. The flowers could contain insects, which could also be considered a food offering, but again, she does not peck at the objects. Were the female to consume the presented objects, the signification of the bowers may be interpreted to be a direct health benefit to a potential reproductive mate to aid in a healthy gestation of progeny. However, she does not eat the items; she takes them in visually. Her behavior suggests that she is attending more to the signifiers—the aesthetic features—of the bower than its uses (e.g., potential source of sustenance) of the objects present in the bower. Further, the other bower shown has as its "centerpiece" a pile of deer feces. Given that feces are a prime reservoir for zoonotic diseases, it would be an odd choice for any direct benefit to the female. Also, if it were divorced from any aesthetic preferences, why remove the sprouting fungus from the feces? The natural science literature supports a reading of the displays as based on preference and fulfilling some aesthetic sensibility, by attesting to the lack of direct benefit offered by the chosen objects (Diamond, 1986; Madden & Balmford, 2004; Uy & Borgia, 2000).

Second, beyond the choice of objects, their displays make use of a perspective signifier (Ryan 72). The bower featuring the bisecting line has large pieces of fungus and the largest mound of flowers in the entryway of the bower, with the smaller flowers and berries in the court leading up to the bower. As Kelley and Endler (2012) observed with another species of bowerbirds, the Great Bowerbirds, this has the effect of creating *forced perspective*, making the bower seem smaller from the "central perspective" (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006, p. 147). Ryan (2018) states that one hypothesis for this behavior is that it makes the male in the bower look larger by making the entry of the bower seem smaller. Further, male Vogelkops engage in perspective-taking when constructing their bowers, placing objects and then viewing the placement from different locations (Frith & Frith, 2004).

Third, color figures prominently in the displays. Zettl (2016) states that "the most common compositional practice [of humans] is to have small areas of high-energy colors set off against large areas of low-energy background colors" (p. 77). The low-energy background serves as a unifying background for the high-energy colors. This can be seen to a greater extent in the bower of the male with whom the female selected to mate: The reds, oranges, and pinks of the fruits, flowers, and fungus, as well as the shiny beetles, are set off against a vast expanse of dark green moss. The male who was passed over displayed only red and black items and used much more black than red against an already low-energy background. A low color modality (i.e., limited use of color, with the lowest modality being black and white) has a more suppressed mood than high color modality (Kress & Leeuwen, 2006). The dung bower lacks the vivacity of the flower bower, which makes greater use of color. In the *Life* clip, we see that the bower with the higher color modality is ultimately the one that gains the female's favor. Taken as a whole, the female's behavior suggests the signification of the bower is an aesthetic one.

4.2 Cultural Preferences

There is no evidence of cultural preferences in the *Life* video, as only two bowers in the same geographic area are depicted. Researchers document that Vogelkops decorate with over a thousand objects per bower, ranging from flora and fauna to manmade objects (Frith & Frith, 2004). Sometimes, the construction of the bowers is unique, with naturalists observing one bower with two apexes and multiple bowers with two entrances (Frith & Frith). Selection of decorations also varies over time. After eight years of observing four bowers and their designers, Frith and Frith observed that two of the Vogelkops added dried amber resin for the first time the ninth year.

Acting as agents, some of the bowerbirds' choices create material differences in their bowers, but could these choices be connected to anything resembling a cultural distinction? Diamond's (1986) and Uy and Borgia's (2000) research suggests that this might be the case. In a 1986 field study, Diamond (1986) offered male Vogelkops an assortment of different colored poker chips to use in decorating their bowers. For males in the area of the Wandammen Mountains, blue was the most chosen color (males would steal blue chips from other males' bowers), followed byorange and red. In the Kumawa Mountains, where the bowerbirds tend to decorate with drab ornamentation (despite having access to the same variety of materials from the environment), male Vogelkops did not take any colored chips. Fourteen years later, Uy and Borgia (2000) repeated the experiment and found that males in the Fakfak Mountains rejected colored tiles and instead selected tiles of beige, brown, and black. In the Arfak Mountains, blue tiles were not the most selected by the males but were evidently preferred by the females, as the male Vogelkops who had the most prominent blue displays were selected for mating most often.

4.3 Communicative Purpose

Bowers displayed in the *Life* segment have two primary avian audiences: the male architect and designer and the female audience. While some researchers posit that the elaborate ornamentation of the bowers shows off a male's brain power, others suggest the decorations serve "to exploit sensory biases in females" (Ryan, 2018, p. 71). This debate is an example of the contestation between honest signaling versus aesthetic choice, and under either circumstance, the bower is serving to communicate to an audience. Female bowerbirds look over displays from multiple angles and vantage points before making a decision to mate—or not. The segment, for example, shows a female bowerbird visiting and looking over the bower with deer dung, before leaving without mating.

The clip also shows both males looking over their bower and court and continuously making adjustments. For example, in addition to cleaning, pruning, and replacing dead and discolored flowers with vibrant, new ones, male Vogelkops make choices about adding new objects. Researchers found one Vogelkop added a sardine

can to his display area (Frith & Frith, 2004). In addition to (re)constructing the bower and display area, in one scene, the male who constructed the "flower bower" is described as engaging in a "dress rehearsal": he approaches a display of flowers and expands his wings in a cupping fashion. Later, when the female signals her desire to mate, the male approaches her in the same manner. This specific example is supported by the scientific literature on Vogelkop displays (Borgia, 1985; Uy et al., 2001).

5 What Does It All Mean?: Implications for Posthuman Visual Rhetoric

One task of an ecological, posthuman rhetoric is to embrace the differences between and within species, rather than to see species and behaviors in some sort of hierarchy. Engaging the bowers of Vogelkops, even through the distance of film, can provide an opportunity for a more-than-human epiphany, as evidenced by the comments left on the BBC's YouTube video ("*Life*—The Vogelkop"). The male bowerbirds may be persuading an unintended audience, humans, toward a moment in which the audience can project into otherness and gain a sense of identification with the birds (many comments expressed empathy with the rejected male) while also having the distance to grant the birds their own unique agency.

Vogelkop bowerbirds offer a foray into a posthuman analysis of visual rhetoric. Through their rhetorics of display, male Vogelkops contribute material weight to the philosophical project of overcoming the human/nature opposition to create a more embodied, emplaced, and emergent understanding of *humanature*. By embracing an ecological posthumanism, visual rhetoric stands to gain "a non-reductive materialist ontology of difference and multiplicity" (Urpeth, 2012, p. 101).

By studying the rhetorical, posthuman studies stands to gain from an area of study that affords nonhuman animals greater agency in how we represent them discursively, by attending to their rhetorical acts and creations. Posthumanistic visual rhetoric is a new path to travel, and we have yet to know what insights we stand to encounter and engage on the journey. However, the case example of the bowerbirds—as seen in the *Life* segment and as described by naturalists and other scientists—highlights three things such a paradigm shift offers scholars of visual rhetoric: a greater history of the practice of visual rhetoric, more attention to rhetoric's sensorium, and more attention to the ethics of representation.

The first is a greater historicity of the practice of engaging in influence through visual means. Studying nonhuman animals as agents of visual rhetoric means acknowledging that we are rhetorical animals and not the only (or first) ones. Paraphrasing Prum (2017), visual rhetoric is a form of communication that coevolves with its own interpretation. Male bowerbirds adjust their bowers to influence and accommodate females' preferences. We engage in acts of rhetoric that are always

(co)created by our audience. And this dance has a history that probably began with the first life forms (Kennedy, 1992).

Next, this analysis showed how a close reading of the signifying elements of a visual act—by attending to the process of creation—affords a more embodied, sensorial interpretation of visual rhetoric displays. Displays generated by nonhuman animals beckon us to return to rhetoric's sensorium and to interpret the signification of signs by using all of our senses to take in their signifiers. Because displays created by animals are not grounded in human discourse, they allow the chance to receive and interpret rhetoric through the full array of sensory stimuli (Hawhee, 2015).

Finally, this paper offers a case for the ethics of representation of nonhuman animal life in the (post)humanities, perhaps best summarized by Prum (2017):

> Traditionally, aesthetic philosophy has failed to appreciate the aesthetic richness of the natural world, much of which has come into being through the subjective evaluations of animals. By viewing the beauties of nature through an exclusively *human gaze*, we have failed to comprehend the powerful aesthetic agency of many nonhuman animals. (p. 33).

The confluence of evidence from visual rhetoric literature, biology (spanning evolution, ecology, ethology, anatomy, and physiology), and the case example of the two bowers featured in BBC's *Life* show that the bowers of the Vogelkop bowerbirds meet three of Foss's (2004) and Olson and colleagues (2008) criteria defining visual rhetoric: symbolic nature, cultural preferences, and communicative value. The conclusion is that we need to acknowledge the error in insisting that visual rhetoric is limited to human rhetoricians; indeed, male Vogelkop bowerbirds are also rhetoricians, producing influential messages in a visual format to convince visiting females to mate with them. Denying male Vogelkops aesthetic agency is tantamount to suggesting nonhuman animals make reproductive choices based solely on some rational basis (Prum, 2017). If this were true, the many varieties of bowers and ornamentation would, through natural selection, be reduced to one.

In order to influence prospective mates, aesthetic choices are brought to bear on bowers and their decorative courts. Influence—through visual means—may well account for much of the beauty and diversity that exists in our world. To deny that nonhuman animals are capable of producing visual rhetoric is to deny the profound role visual rhetoric plays in evolution as aesthetic sensibility drives aesthetic choices. And to deny our animality is to deny our ecological, material embeddedness in the world. The exigence of the Anthropocene is that we recognize this and adopt more ecological perspectives in our work and play. We need a posthuman rhetoric, and we need all of Earth's rhetoricians.

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Jacques Derrida and the Autobiographical (Non-human) Animal: An Analysis of (False) Animal Autobiographies

Samantha Allen Wright

Abstract What if animals could voice their own stories? In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida (2008) describes the autobiographical animal as, "the sort of man or woman, who, as a matter of character, chooses to indulge in or can't resist indulging in autobiographical confidences" (p. 49). He argues only humans are autobiographical animals because, by recording their own histories and lives, they are defining themselves as s separate from animals and thus denying non-human animals the right to define themselves. Here, I analyze Derrida's autobiographical animal by examining two human-written animal autobiographies (or life writings from an animal perspective), Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1998), and Murray's *Translations from the Natural World* (1992). I focus on exploring the following questions: does writing from an animal's perspective allow the non-human animal to merge with humans into Derrida's autobiographical animal? Or, does writing from an animal's perspective simply reinforce the boundary between human and non-human animals? By analyzing these works through a Derridean lens, I argue that false animal life stories transcend against traditional thinking about the human/non-human animal divide and give readers a glimpse of a world in which animals are no longer denied stories, language, and *life*.

1 Introduction

Non-human animals do not speak fluent English. Non-human animals also do not speak fluent Spanish, Latin, Korean, Xhosa, or any other human tongue. Despite the recent scientific experiments that prove that some animals, such as various forms of primates, can learn to communicate effectively in human languages, particularly sign languages, many humans still consider the animal dumb, deaf and mute, unable to ever establish any meaningful communication with a human. In 1646, philosopher Descartes wrote, "seems to me a very strong argument to prove that the reason why animals do not speak as we do is not that they lack the organs but that they have no

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thoughts… they would express their thoughts also if they had any" (2007, p. 60). Despite how long ago those words were written, many humans still discount the non-human animal because of its lack of speech. Jacques Derrida addresses these issues in depth in his 2008 book *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, a compilation of several talks Derrida gave before his death in 2004. Derrida argues that language, the very thing humans believe animals lack, is exactly the same tool humans use against the animal, as a way to subjugate the animal and create a nonsensical boundary between human and non-human animal. The very term, *animal*, according to Derrida, speaks volumes about the relationship between human and non-human animals, arguing "animal is a word, it is appellation that men have instituted, a name they give themselves the right and authority to give the living other" (2008, p. 23) and that the use of this term corrals non-human animals "within the grand territory of the beasts: The Animal" (p. 32).

Due to human's subjugation of animals through language, Derrida suggests that humans are the only "autobiographical animals," a term he defines as a person "chooses to indulge in or can't resist indulging in autobiographical confidences" (2008, p. 49). Derrida argues that humans are the only creature who meets this definition because they, by recording their own histories and lives, use animals as the standard for what a human is and what a human is not, essentially denying the animal the right to define itself against or independently from the human. Derrida argues that humans refuse animals all the characteristics they consider human like "the logos, history, laughing, mourning, burial, the gift, etc" (2008, p. 5). Derrida also adds that the traits humans consider uniquely theirs is ever-changing and "can never be limited to a single trait and it is never closed" (2008, p. 5). Derrida demonstrates how humans can deny any trait they possess to the animal as a way to continuously reinstate the false boundary between what is human and what is not, the animal. The animal, therefore, is denied the ability to communicate, to reason, to lie, to mourn, to experience joy, the ability to operate as an autobiographical animal.

Although humans, by their own design, are the only autobiographical animals, some humans—intentionally or not—are attempting to share this title of the autobiographical animal quite literally by creating what I am calling "false animal autobiographies." These stories, inherently false due to the fact that they are human written (and the human makes no pretense that an animal actually penned the tale), comprise a unique genre, one that defies categorization and one that is rarely, if ever, thoroughly explored. False animal autobiographies are often written with the intention of evoking sympathy and/or encouraging fair treatment for animals, but these tales also provide a valuable exploration into what the human envisions about animal thought, feelings, cultures, and lives. False animal life stories also raise many questions about the implications, effects, and results of writing from an animal perspective, especially from a Derridean standpoint. I will pose the following questions: does writing from an animal's perspective allow the non-human animal to merge with humans into Derrida's autobiographical animal? Or, does writing from an animal's perspective simply reinforce the boundary between human and non-human animals? What are the consequences or potential benefits of extending the genre of life writing to non-human animals? To examine these questions, I will look at two different works written from

the animal perspective Barbara Gowdy's elephant novel *The White Bone* (1998) and Les Murray's poetry collection entitled *Translations from the Natural World* (1992). By analyzing these works through a Derridian lens, paying close attention to his concept of the autobiographical animal, I argue that the false animal autobiography genre, no matter the author's original intent or motives, and no matter the text's reception, shares language with animals and extends to them the same autobiographical abilities Derrida argues humans deny animals. Although I will not argue, nor do I believe there is any evidence to support the claim that false animal autobiographies are making a powerful impact on the human/non-human animal relationship outside of the scopes of these texts, I do argue that these works provide a model for the how the language barrier between humans and non-human animals can be broken and that animals do, in fact, belong in Derrida's autobiographical animal category. By imagining what animal life stories can look like, these fictional works open the door to rethinking what animal conscious is and provide a model for interpreting, understanding, and listening to animal communication.

2 What is an Animal Autobiography?

Before I can examine how false animal autobiographies challenge the human/non-human animal barrier, I must first address the questions, what is an autobiography? And most importantly, can animals even have this kind of life writing? The Oxford English Dictionary (OED) defines an autobiography as, "An account of a person's life given by himself or herself, esp. one published in book form" (n.d.). The careful use of the word "person" indicates the writer must be human. The dictionary writers, who no doubt scrutinized over every word choice for the utmost accuracy, did not choose the word "subject," or "narrator," or any other word which could possibly indicate that anyone other than a human can write an autobiography. Clearly, with this definition of an autobiography, animals are excluded from this category. Derrida (2008), on the other hand, describes the autobiography genre a bit differently, defining the genre as "the writing of the self as living, the trace of the living for itself, being for itself, the auto-affection or auto-infection as memory of achieve of the living" (p. 47). An autobiography, as Derrida explains, holds more significance than simply being a story of a life; the act of writing an autobiography also implies that the subject is declaring themselves as living, a declaration many humans may take for granted. However, this declaration has traditionally been denied to animals. Derrida, examining animal consciousness, writes that every creature, including human and nonhuman animals:

> has recognized in its power to move spontaneously, to feel itself and to relate to itself…But what is in dispute—and it is here that the functioning and structure of the 'I' count so much, even where the *I* is lacking—
>
> is the power to make reference to the self in deictic or auto deictic terms, the capability to at least virtually to turn a finger toward oneself in order to say "this is I" (2008, pp. 94).

The animal, as Derrida explains, cannot have an autobiography because an animal cannot have an I, nor does an animal have the agency to declare themselves as an I as a way to tell their own story. In a similar vein, he writes that the animal, although never denied the ability to "track itself" has always been "refused the power to transform these traces into verbal language, to call itself by means of discursive questions and responses, denied the power to efface its traces" (2008, p. 50). An autobiography, clearly, is the work of a living subject who has the ability to define themselves, a right humans stripped from animals with language.

If animals are denied autobiographies, then what is the function of a false, human-written animal autobiography? Can these works provide an opening for animals to have their own autobiographies? Do these texts allow the animal an I, a self, a story? In her article, "Mission Impossible: Animal Autobiography," scholar Jacqueline Colombat (1994) explores false animal autobiographies:

> Writing the autobiographies of animals is indeed a wonderful idea, and a great temptation and challenge to the writer no doubt, especially to a writer with an axe to grind (kindness to animals, natural history, wonderful illustrations), but it just cannot be. It can never be anything but fiction. (p. 48)

Clearly, given Colombat's opinion and the definition of autobiography from the OED, false animal autobiographies, at least in the strictest terms, are not autobiographies at all and instead works of fiction written by a human. Although this conclusion is rather obvious, the implications of false animal autobiographies are not nearly as clear.

Do false animal autobiographies have no value other than as fictional tales? Or can these imaginings of animal lives provide valuable insight to humans about their non-human neighbors? I am not claiming that false animal autobiographies are the true tales of animals. *Black Beauty*, perhaps one of the most famous literary animals, never existed. And if he did, he certainly would not have put a quill in his hoof (or however he may have chosen to write) and penned his story.

However, despite the OED and Colombat's conclusions, I argue that false animal autobiographies are more than fiction and that, ultimately, these texts help demonstrate the animal's own subjectivity, something humans have routinely denied the animal. The authenticity of the works written from an animal perspective is not the focus here; rather, false animal autobiographies mimic a true, non-fictional autobiography and allow the animal, even the fictionalized, anthropomorphized animal, to enter into Derrida's realm of the autobiographical animal—providing a platform for humans to explore and imagine animal subjectivity. There is a profound difference in writing about the animal and writing from the animal's perspective, and the latter manages to share a plethora of traits that many humans consider exclusive to their species. The works I will explore share these traits with the animal. Despite the vast differences in these works, these false animal life stories can transcend traditional thinking about the human/non-human animal divide and give readers a glimpse of a world in which animals are no longer denied stories, language, and *life*.

3 The White Bone: Elephants and Religion

The first questions to ask about the unique genre of the false animal autobiography is: do these works, and other writings from the animal perspective, truly break down the human-imposed barrier between the human and the animal, and extend Derrida's autobiographical agency to animals? And if so, *how* do false autobiographies accomplish such a task? In this section, I will turn my attention to Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone* (1998), a complex and detailed biography (of sorts) of a clan of African bush elephants called the She-S's. Gowdy's work, while not an animal autobiography, is written by a third person omniscient narrator and focuses on the elephant's perspective, rather than the human perspective, accomplishing many of the same goals as an autobiography. In the novel, Gowdy tells the story of the She-S's, an elephant clan that struggles to find a safe haven from ivory poachers who pose a constant threat. Although the novel's plot details vital animal rights and environmental issues, Gowdy's attention to detail and elephant culture is what makes *The White Bone* so fascinating and unique. For example, Gowdy dives so deeply into her fictionalized elephant world that before the first chapter of her book even begins, the readers are treated to a map, a family tree of all the elephant clans, and a glossary of terms, many of which help explain the incredibly complex belief system Gowdy gave her elephants. The religious aspect of her novel, which is perhaps so prevalent that it overshadows the story's plot, demonstrates how false animal life writings can extend "human-only" traits, such as religion, onto animals. However, unlike many other works from the animal perspective, which have to extend language and the ability to think and communicate to the animals, Gowdy's work and use of religion truly shows a break down between of the human/non-human animal barrier by showing an example of what elephant religion might look like and how it could influence their actions. By creating a plausible examination into elephant spirituality, Gaudy's work forces the reader to ponder the possibilities of elephant culture and society.

From a Derridean perspective, extending religion to animals, or at least, considering the possibility that religion is not an exclusively human trait is perhaps the most promising aspect of Gowdy's novel. By giving her elephants spirituality, Gowdy not only allows the elephants to partake in "human-only" customs, but also gives—or rather, does not deny—animals the ability to both name itself and name others, which is one of Derrida's requirements for entry into the autobiographical animal category. According to Derrida (2008), one of the defining features of the human/non-human animal divide is the fact that "man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself the name that he believes he gives himself" (p. 12). By giving themselves a name, humans also "have given themselves the right and the authority to give to the living other" a name, which humans use as a way to define themselves against the animal, a vague term which Derrida argues represents all non-human Others (2008, p. 23). In Gowdy's story, the elephants not only name themselves, but they name the humans "hindleggers," referring to the fact that humans walk on two legs, and therefore, are inferior to elephants. By showing how elephants with the ability

to name themselves and others, Gowdy's false animal life writing demonstrates yet again why animals are every bit as autobiographical as human animals.

However, despite the many positive aspects of Gowdy's elephant religion, her choice to focus so much of her novel on animal spirituality garnered some criticism. For example, in her article, "Animals and Spirituality: A Skeptical Animals Rights Advocate Examines Literary Approaches to the Subject," Scholtmeijer (1999) argues that Gowdy's elephant religion functions as a plot device to demonstrate the terribleness of humankind. Scholtmeijer writes:

> the elephants have complete lives, lives which humankind violates. The spirituality Gowdy attributes to the elephants is a tool. It assists the Western imagination to overcome the diminished animal amenable to human use. These elephants are ponderous beings, with a social nexus and a culture. The boost Gowdy gives to their lives augments, the hideous irrationality of human behavior (1999, p. 391).

Scholotmeijer's critique, fails to realize the greater implications of Gowdy's use of religion. In an interview, Gowdy said she "didn't want to write a novel… designed to shed light on human folly through animal behavior. Rather than being a social satire, *The White Bone* is an attempt, however presumptuous, to make a huge imaginative leap" (qtd. in Gordon, 2005, pp. 88–9). This leap, even if it was a bit presumptuous, offers the readers a revolutionary view into a world that is not dominated by humans. In Gowdy's world, humans, although present, are in the background, posing a looming, yet distant threat. Even when the humans are in a scene, Gowdy writes them in such a way in which they are barely present. In one scene, humans descend from a vehicle and slaughter several of the She-S's. However, even in this scene, with the humans literally right next to the elephants, Gowdy writes her scene in such a way as to squash all anthropocentric expectations and tendencies. Everything is told from the elephant's perspective, not from the human's. For example, Gowdy does not write that humans slit She Scares' throat, but rather explains that "pink blood froths from She-Scares' throat, and blood jets from a hole in her trunk" (1998, p. 86). There is very little explanation of what the humans are doing and, in the context of the novel, it does not really matter. What does matter is the elephants' reactions, experiences, and perceptions. Even though the human threat on elephants is a central theme on the story, Gowdy includes the human because they are simply part of elephant life. She focuses intensely on all aspects of what it could mean to be an elephant, from their physicality to their psychology to their spirituality, providing an example of an animal world that is as detailed, complex, and as important as human's. This kind of imaginative leap challenges the anthropocentric tradition, which Derrida argues, haunts modern human thought towards animals. *The White Bone* works to show how false animal life writings, even with the great amount of creative license taken by the writer, are able to not only expose the human-animal barrier but question whether or not the traits humans consider exclusively their own are truly unique among both human and non-human animals.

4 Translating Animal Languages

The same imaginative, barrier-breaking leap Gowdy aims for in her book is also readily apparent in Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World* (1992). Murray's book of poetry features numerous poems about all aspects of non-human lives, acting as a sort of short poetic autobiography for a plethora of creatures, from eagles to dogs, snakes to horses, and perhaps most surprisingly, from cockspur bushes to cell DNA. The book's title *Translations from the Natural World* indicates that the poems are translations from the animal (or plant, or cell strand, etc.) to the human, suggesting that these creatures do have lives that need translations for humans to understand. In her article on Murray's *Translations*, scholar Lambert (2010) criticizes Murray's choice to "translate" the language of the natural world into Australian English, arguing, "Such a task is literally impossible, doomed to fail, a blunder from the very beginning" (p. 44). Lambert continues her argument by stating, "nature cannot speak" (2010, p. 44). Lambert's argument revolves around how Murray's translation, "fails to bring nature to presence" but ultimately, "renews and transforms Australian English by breaking it down" (2010, p. 52). Lambert focuses her argument on Murray's poetic style and tends to gloss over the natural aspects of his work. Although Lambert's argument is a useful study of poetry, her statement that nature cannot speak is troublesome, especially to those like Derrida who are concerned with the question of the animal. What does it mean that nature cannot speak? Is Lambert correct? Is there really no way to translate from an animal or a plant into something a human can understand? Or perhaps, is there no value in attempting such translations?

False animal autobiographies, and Murray's work specifically, challenge Lambert's notion that nature cannot speak by giving voice to non-humans and by attempting to imagine language and communication existing in many various ways outside of the human sphere. Murray's translations do exactly as his title promises; Murray translates non-verbal or non-linguistic non-human language into a language that humans can understand. By doing so, Murray's work makes a convincing case that non-humans communicate in ways far outside of human understanding. Throughout his book, Murray shows that language as a human-only trait reeks of ignorance, while simultaneously supporting Derrida's assertion that the barrier between humans and non-humans is an artificial human-constructed boundary, which ultimately fails to withstand intense scrutiny. In his poem "Two Dogs," Murray attempts to translate the importance of scent to the canine perspective into words a human audience would understand. Murray writes, "Baldy grass./she adds, ant log in hot sunshine. Snake two sunups back. Orifice?/Orifice, he wriggles. Night fox? Night fox, with left pad wound" (1992, p. 19). Through this passage, Murray attempts to convert the dogs' scent-laden perception of the world into human language. The frantic exchange allows readers to imagine how dogs might communicate to one another, not through words, but through the sharing of scent.

The OED defines languages as "the system of spoken or written communication used by a particular country, people, community, etc., typically consisting of words

used within a regular grammatical and syntactic structure; (also) a formal system of communication by gesture, esp. as used by the deaf[1]" (n.d.). This narrow definition, which defines language as a system of communication used by humans, excludes all animal communication from the language category. However, there is a great body of evidence to prove that animals can learn human languages. In her article, "A Report on the Animal Turn," Weil (2010) writes that in recent decades, scientists have "worked to prove that a variety of animal species possess the basic capabilities deemed necessary for subjectivity: self-consciousness, rational agency, the capacity to learn and transmit language" (p. 2). Weil cites the numerous examples of apes learning sign language, which she argues indicates that:

> Given a long tradition in Western philosophy that has declared the capacity for rational thought and its manifestation in language as that which distinguishes human from nonhuman animals, the proven ability of apes to learn and to teach sign language to other apes aims both to show that a God-given human-animal divide is untenable and to confirm Darwin's apparently still controversial view that humans and apes are not so different. (2010, p. 2)

However, there is a vast difference between learning human language (which, as Weil argues, does point out the fact that language can no longer be considered for humans only) and an animal possessing their own language. Animals can surely communicate, but who is to say they do not have their own languages? In her article, "A Language of Their Own: An Interactionist Approach to Human-Horse Communication" Brandt (2004) argues that humans and horses create their own inter-species language by working together to learn to read, understand, and ultimately, live and work with each other. She writes:

> …humans can understand the meaning of bodily gestures in horses, and horses can understand the meaning of bodily gestures in humans. Together, they co-create a system of language—a language of their own—through the medium of the body. This is not merely a conversation of gestures…It is a mutually created language, a third language that enables the two to create a world of shared meaning and foster a deeper understanding of each other (Brandt, 2004, p. 313).

She adds that her "research is an effort to continue the challenge to the Cartesian divide begun by new human-animal research" (2004, p. 313).

In the *Animal that Therefore I Am*, Derrida (2008) argues that humans deny animals language, not because of the animal's lack of language, because as I have shown, animals can, at the very least, participate in human languages (if not have their own languages). Rather, by denying animals language, the human denies the animal the ability to respond. To prove his point, Derrida analyzes an excerpt from Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, in which Alice expresses her frustration in trying to speak to a kitten, who only meows and purrs. Derrida argues about this scene "the said question if the said animal in its entirety comes down to knowing not that the animal speaks but whether one can know what *respond* means. And how to distinguish a response from a reaction" (2008, p. 8). By denying the animal language, Derrida

[1] Adding sign-language to the definition of language is a relatively new addition to the OED, proving that even the very definition of language is ever evolving.

argues, the human prevents any response from the animal and instead creates the myth that any reaction the animal could give, a purr, a bark, a look, a whimper, is all merely (as Michael Naas explains in "Derrida's Flair") "a mere mechanical reaction," which fits into the Cartesian idea that animals act purely on a mechanical-like impulse, not on thoughts or feelings (2008, p. 232).

By writing from the perspectives of non-human entities, Murray's poetry allows non-humans to respond, to speak, and to live. As with all false animal autobiographies, Murray is not truly speaking for a creature, but his work allows the animal some notion of speaking. Murray's greatest strength as a poet in *Translations* is his ability to emphasize all the different ways an entity[2] can respond. In "Puss," the autobiography of a cat, Murray allows an insight into another world, one so unlike the human realm. From the very first lines of the poem, Murray's cat reclaims agency that has long been stolen from animals, "I permit myself to be/neither ignored or understood" (1992, p. 19). The cat then proceeds to explain how its essential *catness*, such as its longing to hunt, kill, and groom, *is* the cat's response. Murray's cat explains, "your dry-licking one suddenly/sickens me, till next time…/" (1992, p. 19). Something as small as a cat refusing to be petted by a human, something most house cat enthusiasts can relate to, is the response of a creature who can think, feel, and reason. By translating what he envisions of animal life and thought, Murray's work works against the notion that animals are deaf, mute machines and shows his readers a new world, a non-human world, in which other entities have thought that guides their actions.

5 Conclusion

From an animal right's standpoint, how do false animal life writings further non-human animal subjectivity? I argue that the simple act of attempting to think like an animal and then writing the results of this thought experiment for a public audience allows these false animal autobiographies to create and argue for animal thought and storytelling. From a Derridean standpoint, this is an effective way to question and ultimately attempt to destroy the artificial, human created human/non-human animal divide. Naas (2014), in his analysis of Derrida's *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, writes.

> Derrida's analyses aim always to question both the human denial of certain capacities to the animal and the human attribution of these same capacities to man. His aim is always to rethink the line between the animal and the human, to take up the animal within the human, and to do so for the sake of both the animal and the human animal (p. 242).

Writing from the animal's perspective achieves this necessary rethinking of humanity versus animality, which helps prove that many of the traits humans consider exclusive to their species, and therefore the reason why they outrank animals in a self-imposed hierarchy, are not human-exclusive at all. For example, artist Patricia

[2] I use the word entity because Murray does not focus exclusively on the animal, but on all non-human life.

Piccinini created a series of sculptures of creatures that blur the line between humans and animals. In an interview, Piccinini describes what "becoming animal" means to her:

> To me it means that we are finally recognizing our own animal-ness. We tend to anthropomorphize animals, and see in them characteristics that we readily identify as "human." However, I think it is more interesting to recognize that many of these so-called "human traits" that we see in animals are just animal characteristics that we share in common…-Communication, social hierarchy, tool-making, empathy, hunting for sport; all have been suggested as "uniquely human traits," yet all can be found as behaviors in other animals. (qtd. in Thompson & Cox, 2005, p. 105)

False animal life writing, especially in works like Gowdy's and Murray's, turn to scientific research to prove that animals are capable of many of the same abilities as humans. This focus on scientific research acts as a way to both support their stories as well as a way to integrate the more fantastic elements of their stories without destroying the plausibility of these animal behaviors. For example, in Gowdy' novel, her extension of culture, religion, society, communication, etc. does not seem fantastical at all due to her extensive scientific research which proves that elephants truly do have many of the traits humans consider exclusive to their species. In his review of Gowdy's book for *McLean's* magazine, Bemrose (1998) writes:

> But what makes the book so powerful and original for adults is the soulful intelligent complexity of the elephant's thoughts and feelings. Outwardly, they do nothing that real pachyderms would not do: Gowdy has researched her creatures well, and all their mighty defecating, mating, eating, battling and trumpeting have the ring of authenticity. (p. 56)

Bemrose continues to argue that due to Gowdy's scientific research and devotion to capturing as many "real" elephant behaviors as possible and including them into her story, that when she includes the more imaginative elements, like religion, the story maintains its believability. He writes that when Gowdy incorporates religion, lore, history, and elephant culture into her story, the elephants, "are equally convincing as they experience the griefs and joys of elephant life" (1998, p. 56). By seamlessly transitioning from scientific fact to what Gowdy imagines about elephant lives, Gowdy shows that extending so-called human traits to her elephants is not so far-fetched. Gowdy herself, in an interview with Bemrose, recalls that she was inspired by learning that elephants grieve their dead, "I found shivers going up and down my back… It seems to me that if you're conscious of death, then you're conscious of life. And whatever consciousness is—awareness, sadness, dreaminess or speculative thought—the elephants had it" (1998, p. 56).

If elephants can examine the bones of other elephants, differentiate between those they knew and those they did not, and then mourn accordingly, is it really so far-fetched to believe that elephants, and many other animal species, could have real, defined cultures with their own practices or beliefs? Elephants can clearly achieve something most humans cannot: recognizing their dead from bones alone. This indicates that animals could have rich lives and abilities that humans cannot even begin to understand. This also opens up the possibilities of non-human animal-only traits, abilities that non-human animals can possess and humans cannot. False animal life

writing uses imagination as a way to explore the possibilities of what being an animal truly means and how humans are, in ways many would be afraid to admit, share so many characteristics with the animals they have so long subjugated. In this way, animal stories manage to fill a gap that science currently cannot. Although many scientists and animal experts can speculate on what an animal may think or what an animal culture may look like, false animal autobiographies are free to explore, to blend scientific fact with fiction, and create an animal world unknown to humans. Perhaps one-day science can further prove to a human audience that the traits humans consider human-exclusive are shared by numerous species. Until then, false animal autobiographies are able to explore the animal world in which animals do share the same autobiographical confidences as humans, which allows the figure of the animal, the human Other, to enter into the autobiographical animal categorization. Since Derrida was so concerned with the "*unprecedented* proportions of this subjugation of the animal" in modern times, the breakdown of the human/non-human animal divide that false animal life writings achieve is a necessary step, one that both humans and animals need (2008, p. 26).

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Interspecies Relationalities

"Neigh Way, Jose": Posthuman Communication in *BoJack Horseman*

James M. Cochran

Abstract Reading BoJack Horseman through queer ecologies, I argue that the show relies on posthuman beings to privilege nonnormative modes of relating and knowing. Specifically, the show often highlights the failure of human speech as the best form of communication between humans and animals and instead highlights how we can use vision and touch to know all beings, humans and non-humans. Ultimately, I argue that the show uses posthuman and interspecies relationships to embrace queer aesthetics, reject heteronormativity and speciesism, and ask us to think more deeply about what it means to live alongside human and non-human beings.

1 Introduction

The Netflix original *BoJack Horseman* was released 2014, and since its release, the show has had six seasons. The show follows BoJack, a humanoid horse who was once the star of the late 1980s and early 1990s sitcom called *Horsing Around*, a sitcom in which BoJack took care of three orphaned human children. In the six years since its release, the show has started to garner some significant critical attention. Some of this discussion has focused on how *BoJack* fits into generic television conventions. For example, Alissa Chater situates *BoJack* among more conventional sitcoms like *Real Housewives* and *The Brady Bunch*, and Eddie Falvey reads *BoJack* alongside Netflix's *Big Mouth* to demonstrate how more complex animated storytelling is evidence of changing taste cultures. More relevant to my project is Schmuck's (2018) article that reads *Looney Tunes*, *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*, and *BoJack Horseman* in relation to Akira Mizuta Lippit's concept of animetaphor, "a moving image of the re-membered animal which projects a collective anxiety of oblivion for all animals, including human."

Extending Schmuck's reading of *BoJack Horseman*, I argue that *BoJack Horseman* deliberately offers a range of posthuman beings to reject the human-animal hierarchy and to emphasize the value of alternate modes of knowing and being. This essay

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zooms in on two specific episodes "Fish Out of Water" and "Chicken 4 Dayz" to unpack how the show offers alternate modes of relating to humans and non-humans. As a silent episode, "Fish Out of Water" highlights the failure of human speech as the best form of communication between humans and non-humans. Instead, the episode suggests that we use embodied communication, through vision and touch, as a way to relate to others, even if we can never fully know the other. While "Fish Out of Water" traces our difficulties communicating with others, the episode "Chicken 4 Dayz" reveals the unethical ways that we represent and treat the non-human world.

2 Queer Aesthetics in Posthuman Animation

Sexuality in *BoJack Horseman* encompasses a range of different behaviors among many different beings. *In a Queer Time and Place,* Halberstam (2005) argues that "'queer' refers to nonnormative logics and organizations of community, sexual identity, embodiment, and activity in space and time" (p. 6). Queerness, then, includes nonnormative sexuality but it also includes other nonnormative identities, actions, and relationships. *BoJack Horseman* relies on this range of "nonnormative logics and organizations" to trouble "safe" understandings of the heteronormative nuclear human family. For example, BoJack enjoys male anal play, a behavior that occurs in a heterosexual relationship but that exceeds a conventional representation of men as the active penetrators and women as the passive penetrated. In the first episode of the second season, BoJack answers a call from his girlfriend and talent agent Princess Carolyn, and he screams "Don't put things in my butt if you want them back." This response surprises viewers because it is not what we expect to hear when someone answers the phone, but it is also surprising because the response reflects BoJack's behavior that breaches so-called normative masculine behavior.

BoJack's response to Princess Carolyn bespeaks a range of queer acts in BoJack Horseman. In addition to presenting non-normative heterosexual practices, the show's heterogenous blend of humans and animals constructs a queer world of posthuman, interspecies relationships. In other words, the representation of a world in which humanoid animals freely intersect with humans is a queer world for viewers because this animal-human world ignores the division between the human and animal world in the Anthropocene. BoJack Horseman's name, itself, underscores the collapse of the divide between human and animal through its juxtaposition of "horse" and "man" in BoJack's last name. BoJack, as a humanoid horse, resists any clear categorization that designates him as either horse or human; it is difficult to distinguish between BoJack's horse qualities and his human qualities.

BoJack represents a character emblematic of the merging of so-called human and animal worlds. The show further reinforces this merging through its posthuman interspecies relationships. While, within the story world of the show, the relationships between different animals seems to adhere to social norms, the interspecies relationships are queer to the show's viewers. For example, as already mentioned, BoJack is, of course, a horse, and he dates and has sex with Princess Carolyn, who is

a cat. Another character, Mr. Peanutbutter is a dog who date a human Woman, Diane. Later, Princess Carolyn dates Vincent Adultman, who is clearly three prepubescent boys stacked on top of each other in a trench coat. *BoJack Horseman* imagines an alternative world in which humans and non-human beings can form interspecies relationships with one another.

The fictional queer interspecies relationships in *BoJack Horseman* bespeak the reality of queer ecology that is a part of the evolutionary history of our planet. Morton (2010a, b), in one of their many essays on queer ecology, explains that evolutionary history is filled with queer encounters:

> Cells reproduce asexually, like their single-celled ancestors and the blastocyst attached to the uterus wall at the start of pregnancy. Plants and animals are hermaphroditic before they are bisexual and are bisexual before they are heterosexual. Males and females of most plants and half the animals can become hermaphrodites either together or in turn, and hermaphrodites can become male or female; many switch gender constantly (27, 34–35). A statistically significant proportion of white-tailed deer (at least ten percent) are intersexual (36). Hermaphroditic snails entwine with seeming affection (Nuridsany and Pérennou; Darwin, *Descent* 303–04). Moreover, processes of sexuality are not confined within species. Encountering another individual benefits plants, but they do it through other species, such as insects and birds. The story of evolution is a story of diverse life-forms cooperating with one another. Bees and flowers coevolve through mutually beneficial "deviations" (Darwin, *Origin* 76–79 and *Descent* 257). Heterosexual reproduction is a late addition to an ocean of asexual division (p. 276)

As Morton explains, our evolutionary history contains a range of activity outside of heterosexuality, ranging from asexuality, gender fluidity, and interspecies relationships. Along with this queerness of sexual and asexual reproduction, Morton sees a slippery boundary between what we consider life and nonlife, as well as human and nonhuman. Evolutionary history, Morton (2010a, b) explains, teaches us this boundary is "thick and full of paradoxical entities" (p. 276). We might ask questions about where one species and another begins. We don't have "missing links" in evolutionary history; what we actually have are a series of species, constantly in flux with so clear delineation between these species. As already noted, BoJack's hybrid last name, neither fully horse, nor fully human, reflects this world of "thick and full of paradoxical entities." Similarly, that many of the figures are seemingly animal but are also humanoid in that they walk upright calls into question the sharp division between the human species and animal species and thus casts doubt on the worldview that names humans as superior than other non-human animals.

In the episode "Fish Out of Water," the audience directly witnesses Morton's queer evolutionary history when a male seahorse gives birth on a bus. While male seahorses do give birth, the representation of a humanoid male seahorse giving birth is an initially confusing for viewers because we, as humans, are not used to males giving birth. The show further heightens the disparity between our expectations and the show's reality by depicting the male seashore in a stereotypically masculine manner as a blue-collar factory worker with a beer belly. As Spracklen (2014) notes, beer bellies are a sign of masculinity: "Obesity could be about status, and how men in particular might show off their beer bellies to flaunt their masculinity" (p. 110). The seahorse's so-called signs of masculinity, in the form of his blue collar job and

his beer belly, sharply contrast with signs of his femininity, like his pregnancy and *What to Expect When You're a Male Seahorse Expecting…Which is a Thing (The pregnancy guide that answers questions for fathers-to-be. "Is this normal?," How could I be pregnant?,' and many more*) instead of the best-selling *What to Expect When You're Expecting*. At the end of the episode, we learn that the male seahorse is presumably a single-parent, highlighting a viable form of community outside of the normative nuclear family. Schmuck (2018) accurately, in my view, describes the radical possibility of the single-parent seahorse family:

> This encounter with the male seahorse and his children undoes all the impossibilities that cause BoJack pain in the rest of the show. The artificiality of his TV show's premise (a horse as the single father of human children) and the assumption that he must be surrounded by people who adore him in order to be happy are both confounded by the underwater chase. In this alternate universe, BoJack finds an alternate self—a seahorse, who, by nature, even as a man, can bear his own children and happily love them. This is the impossible made possible in an alternative reality. (p. 9)

The interspecies world of *BoJack Horseman*, in which human, animal, and humanoid creatures intermingle, rejects the hierarchical model of human and non-human relationships and instead contributes to what Lupinacci and Happel-Parkins (2016) call "unlearning the Anthropocene" (p. 13). One primary aspect of this unlearning involves a shift away from a human-centered view of the world and from a hierarchical model of relating to non-human beings. *BoJack Horseman* offers a model of community, founded on a recognition that life on earth encompasses more than just human life. To live on our planet is far more than simply living with human beings; life encompasses an engagement with all beings, human, animals, living, and the dead, and beings within these seemingly sharp binaries.

3 Relating to Animals, the Failure of Language

So far, this essay has traced the general ways that *BoJack Horseman* offers a queer, posthuman aesthetic, one that values relations outside of the heteroromantic, nuclear human family. Now, I will focus on two specific episodes that explore alternate modes of being and communicating. The first episode I will examine is "Fish out of Water," an episode in which BoJack travels to a foreign ocean world to promote *Secretariat*, the biopic that he helped film, at the Pacific Ocean Film Fest. The nearly-silent episode follows BoJack as he attempts and fails to communicate with the ocean's residents because of a language barrier and because of his soundproof scuba-like helmet. Given the episode's muting of human speech, the episode offers a valuable case study for thinking about relating to others (both human and non-human beings) outside of verbal discourse. At the start of the episode, BoJack complains about having to go to the Pacific Ocean Film Fest in Pacific Ocean City because he finds fish "annoying" and he "no habla fish talk." At the start of the episode, BoJack's attitude toward "fish talk" corresponds to an ethnocentric discrimination against those who do not speak "our" language. BoJack's use of "no habla" signals the episode's engagement

with contemporary linguistic discrimination against Spanish-speakers in the United States. I suggest, however, that we can also read BoJack's initial rejection of fish language as an "anthropocentric" sense of superiority over those animals who, in the show's story world, do not speak English. BoJack's discriminatory attitudes toward the fish stem from his inability to understand "fish talk" and from his assumption that the English language is the only way to understand and connect with another being.

Once BoJack arrives in Pacific Ocean City, he discovers that his conventional modes of communicating—through verbal speech and the written word—break down. Because he must wear the scuba helmet in order to breathe, he can neither hear, nor project his voice beyond the helmet. Throughout the episode, BoJack attempts to communicate with Kelsey, a human who was fired from *Secretariat* for getting a shot that BoJack pressured her to get. Initially, his pen is out of ink, which he remedies by pricking a squid. Then, he drafts several notes, but, dissatisfied with them, crumples and throws them away. First, he writes, "Kelsey, weird we haven't talked. Keep it real!-BoJack!," then "Kelsey! Long time, no talk. So anyway, you're the Kelseyiest! Smell you later, BJ!, and finally "Kelsey, sorry you got fired. That sucks for you. -BoJack Horseman P.S. We're cool, right?" Each draft demonstrates superficial communication through recycled clichés or slang, like "Keep it real!" and "Smell you later!" When BoJack finally writes a sincerer note that recognizes Kelsey's firing, he still finds himself unable to apologize for being directly responsible for the firing: he expresses a sense of "sorry" that she "got fired," not that his actions caused her to get fired. BoJack's postscript of "We're cool, right?" further reveals BoJack's self-centeredness and inability to establish authentic caring relationships. Rather than apologize, BoJack hopes to reestablish an assumed "cool" relationship without engaging in the difficult work of reconciliation. BoJack's redrafting of the note reflects the ways that communication breaks down, especially when that communication is founded on self-centeredness and superiority, whether from ethnocentrism or speciesism. Even sign language breaks down in the episode when BoJack gives a thumbs-up, causing a controversy labeled "straight from the horse's thumb" because a thumbs-up is equivalent to a middle finger in Pacific Ocean City.

To propose an alternative to self-centered communication, the episode "Fish Out of Water" becomes silent and highlights alternatives ways of relating to other beings. This shift to a silent episode offers a chance for the characters (and the audience) to experience modes of communication that are beyond our conventional human modes of communication. In a chapter on ecological silence and Virginia Woolf's poetry, which equally applies to *BoJack Horseman*, Sultzbach (2016) argues,

> When war and grief have shattered forms of traditional knowledge—the assurance of…hierarchical and human-centered philosophy—humans are left to listen to the phenomenal environment. Humans stop positing, and begin questioning. The lapse into silence isn't failure; it is merely the newness of exercising unused depths of our emotions and most profoundly disturbing revelations of human fragility. Woolf depicts a hitherto unperceived reality that exists beyond but not completely outside of human experience. (p. 136)

Obviously, *BoJack Horseman* is different than Woolf's poetry: the silence in "Fish Out of Water" is not caused by war but by BoJack's need to promote his film in Pacific

Ocean City. Even so, Sultzbach's insistence that silence forces us to listen and learn new forms of communication that are not necessarily beyond human language but shared by humans and non-humans corresponds to the interspecies forms of silent communication employed in "Fish Out of Water."

One alternative mode of communication that BoJack uses is vision. As mentioned in the previous section, while visiting Pacific Ocean City, BoJack encounters a male seahorse giving birth. Initially, as the male seahorse starts undoing his pants, BoJack shifts his gaze to look out the bus window, and he even puts his hand up to block eye contact between the seahorse and himself. The seahorse, however, shatters BoJack's initial refusal to communicate by grabbing his arm, pulling their faces against each other, and urging him to help with the delivery. After BoJack refuses to communication through eyesight, the seahorse father resorts to touch. Reflecting his inability to fully recognize the queer body of the male seahorse, BoJack squeamishly looks away as he helps deliver the seahorse babies. His gaze returns to the seahorse father only when the seahorse walks away with his children.

What the above example shows is the crucial role that sight and touch can play as alternative modes of interspecies communication. While BoJack's initial encounter with the male seahorse demonstrates a reluctance to communicate through sight and touch, BoJack's extended encounter with a newborn seahorse reveal the ways that vision and physical embrace offer ways of relating across species. BoJack discovers that the seahorse father forgot one of his newborn children, and the rest of the episode follows BoJack's attempts to relate to the newborn seahorse and return it back to its father. The forced pairing of BoJack and the baby seahorse reveals the difficulty of relating to and communicating with other species, as well as offers embodied practices of communication shared across different species. Initially, BoJack attempts to entertain the newborn by propping *What to Expect When You're a Male Seahorse Expecting* up in front of it. Rather than read the book, which the infant is likely incapable of doing, the seahorse falls over, hitting his head on the ocean floor. The written word cannot provide for the seahorse. Instead, the episode offers embodied knowledge as a way to relate to others. BoJack angrily stomps and points to the ground, demanding that the newborn seahorse leave him alone and stay in one place, and, in response, the seahorse mimics BoJack's body language, stomping and pointing to the ground. In addition to mimicking BoJack's bodily movement, the newborn continually clings onto BoJack, hiding in unexpected places, like inside BoJack's jacket. As the newborn starts to cry, BoJack picks it up, and, after averting his gaze four times, BoJack finally looks at and acknowledges the presence of the seahorse. Not only does he gaze at the seahorse, but he initiates physical contact by pretending to steal the seahorse's nose. Following this prank, the seahorse begs for its nose, but then, embracing BoJack, attempts to suckle through BoJack's sweater. The significance of touch, here, echoes Haraway's (2008) argument that "touch ramifies and shapes accountability. Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other" (p. 36). Indeed, as BoJack and the baby seahorse embrace, they learn affection for each other, and BoJack learns to care for the newborn.

The initial moments of contact between BoJack and the seahorse child encapsulate the episode's two dominant modes of relating across species. Throughout the episode, the perspective shifts and places viewers in the point of view of BoJack, witnessing the baby seahorse's eyes staring directly at BoJack and thus directly at the human viewer. After the baby seahorse nearly dies in a freshwater taffy factory, BoJack swims away and lovingly gazes at the baby. The pair swim past the reflection of the sun in the water, a symbolic reflection of their temporarily warm and bright relationship. As BoJack and the seahorse baby swim away from the factory, they spot the baby's father so BoJack swims to the father's house to return the child. The seahorse father seems unconcerned about his previously-missing child, and he updates a banner reading "Congrats on your 5 kids!" to "Congrats on your 6 kids!" The scene is disappointing for BoJack, presumably because he found the child's father, just as he formed a bond with it. In addition, the scene is disappointing for BoJack and for viewers, because the father's cold attitude toward his children (demonstrated in his casual updating of the congratulations banner, his mechanical patting of the child's head, and his banging of the soup ladle to signal dinner time) sharply contrasts the newly-formed warm relationship between BoJack and the seahorse baby.

The scene again reminds viewers of the difficulty of communicating with other beings and the inability to fully know others. Presumably experiencing a sense of lost after returning the seahorse child, BoJack stands in the doorway of seahorse father's house. The father repeatedly fails to understand why BoJack remains in the doorway, although the audience understands that BoJack is experiencing extreme loneliness after finally bonding with another being. First, the male seahorse interprets BoJack's loneliness as hunger, and he invites him in to have dinner. Then, he offers to pay BoJack a reward for returning the child, and, finally, he asks something that sounds like "What do you want?" The episode, then, concludes with some small steps to communication, through vision and physical contact, but, it ultimately ends with a continued emphasis on the failure of interspecies and intraspecies communication. In the final moments of the episode, BoJack writes another note to Kelsey: "Kelsey, in this terrifying world, all we have are the connections that we make. I'm sorry I got you fired. I'm sorry I never called you after." The note, though, does not make it to Kelsey because the ink washes off the paper, causing the note to be illegible. I read these final moments of the episode as indicative of the difficulties of fully communicating with other beings. Perhaps, we do not need to read this inability to communicate, however, as an entirely pessimistic message. BoJack's difficulties recall Haraway's (2008) explanation of the complexities of embodied communication:

> The truth or honesty of nonlinguistic embodied communication depends on looking back and greeting significant others, again and again. This sort of truth or honesty is not some trope-free, fantastic kind of natural authenticity that only animals can have while humans are defined by the happy fault of lying denotatively and knowing it. Rather, this truth telling is about co-constitutive natureculture dancing, holding in esteem, and regard open to those who look back reciprocally. Always tripping, this kind of truth has a multispecies future. (p. 20)

The language of "dancing" and "tripping" here reinforce the necessary negotiation of communicating with others. The embodied communication, of vision and

touch, helps BoJack connect with the baby seahorse, but it does not fully remedy the difficulties of speaking across species. Even so, communication is never perfect, but requires a kind of dancing between partners as beings share, listen, and attempt to learn from the other.

4 Troubling the Pastoral (or Perhaps Not)

"Fish Out of Water" illustrates the difficulties of communicating with human and non-human beings, while also offering alternative modes of relating, through vision and physical embrace, that can help form connection across species. While these alternative modes are more useful than verbal speech, they do not, as I have shown, completely collapse the differences between languages across species. In the following section, I further examine the breakdown of language in the episode "Chickens," and I trace how *BoJack Horseman* rejects idealized depictions of "Nature," even while the show fails to fully move beyond an ecological vision that categorizes some animals as a part of "Nature" in contrast to the human world. Before discussing the episode, a brief overview of the episode is necessary. The episode presents two competing chicken companies: Chicken 4 Dayz, a factory-style, KFC-esque company that clearly pumps its chickens full of hormones, and Gentle Farms, a company, managed by a humanoid chicken farmer, that purports to be all-natural and fresh. Gentle Farms seems to provide the best possible conditions for chickens. For example, they have twenty acres of pasture and a movie night for the chickens. They brag that they offer open fields and dignity, but then they also mention their loving use of hormones for these chickens. After BoJack uses his iPad while driving, he causes a massive car pile-up, and a Chicken 4 Dayz truck is among the wreckage. A chicken escapes and ends up with Todd, BoJack's human roommate. Todd hides the chicken, named Becca, from the police and decides to release Becca to Gentle Farms.[1]

Chicken 4 Dayz makes no attempt to cover up what they are and what their product is. They are explicit about the violence that is a part of food production. In an interview, Michael Morgan, the CEO of Chicken 4 Dayz, directly admits that his chickens are grown through harmful methods. He explains that Becca should not be approached by the public if they find her: "I want to be very clear. This is not like a

[1] Todd names the chicken "Becca" because her bawk sounds similar to the name "Becca." Todd's naming recalls my previous discussion about the difficulties of communicating across species. Specifically, the episode highlights the problematic ways that we read animal communication through the lens of human speech. The misunderstanding of Becca's bawk is further highlighted when Officer Fuzzy-Face stops by BoJack's house in search of the missing chicken. When she bawks, Todd explains that she "loves her books." Todd translates another bawk as "back off." When asked who her favorite baroque composer is, she bawks, and Officer Fuzzy-Face interprets this bawk as Bach. Finally, as the officer pulls out his pen, Becca bawks, and the officer interrupts this bawk as an identification of the pen as a "Bic." Thus, we can read this episode as demonstrating the anthropocentric ways that we approach animals from our own perspective and language without attempting to communicate through their modes of language.

friend chicken you see at school or work. This is a special kind of food chicken that has lived its entire life indoors. This chicken is not socialized for the outside world." He continues, "Look, the safest place for this chicken right now is with us, so we can kill it, turn it into a sludge, and then press that sludge into a delicious patty." The host then asks, "How do you respond to allegations that factory farming is 'torture,' or 'cruel,' or like a terrifying movie about some strange dystopian society, but in this monster story, the horrifying monsters are us?" Here the CEO responds, "Relax, Tommy, everything we do is completely legal and FDA-approved, so, therefore, it is fine." Rather than attempt to disguise their unethical meat production process, Chicken 4 Dayz recognizes the chickens' lack of social development and that the meat just becomes "a sludge." Legality, instead of ethics or even aesthetics, become the standard by which Chicken 4 Dayz measures if their practice is "fine."

On the other hand, Gentle Farms advertises their farm as a safe and friendly environment for their chickens. In one commercial, one of the chicken owners explains,

> We treat our livestock differently. Lush fields, plenty of dignity and foosball. The chickens here have wonderful lives before we harvest them so you can eat them…These animals aren't like us. They're specifically bred to be eaten. They're genetically modified for maximum flavor. When our chicks are first hatched, we lovingly inject them with natural delicious hormones, which makes them meat, thereby erasing any moral grey area. Now you can feel good about eating our meat. It's simple: No one knows chickens like chickens.

Gentle Farms attempts to depict their meat production practices as safe and friendly because they supposedly offer "lush fields" to give the chickens "plenty of dignity" and "wonderful lives." Gentle Farms's representation of their farm relies on a pastoral vision of chickens in the "wild," while, in reality, the farm injects hormones into chicks. Gentle Farms's marketing corresponds to Harris's description of the "natural food movement in the early twentieth-century": the "natural foods movement portrays itself as the archenemy of processed foods, in fact it represents the very summit of the industrialization of the kitchen in the first half of the twentieth century, when manufacturers were as proud of their tin cans as they were of the cling peaches and Vienna sausages they contained" (p. 185). This seems, to me, to describe the marketing impulse or strategy of Happy Farms. They purport to be a kind of all-natural company that ensures happy lives for happy chicken, but in fact, they clearly inject their chickens with hormones. They try to be part of an all-natural-movement, a term which is itself suspect, but they actually participate in the "summit of industrialization." Happy Farms provides a pleasant aesthetic experience. They purport to have open roaming fields, dignified chickens, and movie nights. They sell an image of the "all-natural."

However, the pleasant aesthetics of Happy Farms covers up their violent harvesting practices. After Todd drops Becca off at Gentle Farms so that she can live a "wonderful life," he realizes that he wants to keep her himself, and so he returns to the farm in an attempt to rescue her. Todd and Diane enter the chicken coop, searching for Becca. When Todd thinks he finds Becca, he proclaims that he found her, but Diane responds, "No Todd, don't you get it, they're all Becca." Through their use of

hormonal injections, Happy Farms has erased any distinctions between the chickens, who are all just as disfigured as Becca was from her injections at Chicken 4 Dayz.

Moreover, when Todd and Diane run into a Happy Farms building that says "Keep Out," they are forced to come face-to-face with the reality behind Happy Farms's all-natural image. The building is filled with different tools for cutting, and most of them are covered in blood: axes, hatches, knives, and saws. They notice white funnels and buckets, also drenched in blood. On the wall is a taxidermied chicken head. Behind the aesthetics of a perfectly maintained farm with perfectly happy chickens is a nightmare. When Todd and Diane open the door to escape, one of the chicken owners cries, "Please, take me with you. I hate it here. I don't want to kill chickens; I want to design video games and help kids learn math."

The end of this episode is particularly significant, in my view, in the way that it retains ambiguity, refusing to shift to an overly optimistic ending. The show ends with Todd and Diane getting arrested as they leave Happy Farms with Becca. Thankfully, because BoJack is a famous celebrity, he gets them out of jail and has the charges cleared. Drew Barrymore owes BoJack a favor so she ends up taking Becca, and the group imagines that Drew Barrymore has a "meadow for Becca to frolic around in." The episode ends with BoJack, Diane, Kelsey's daughter Irving, and Todd reflecting on what the day meant and if what they did actually mattered or made a difference at all.

> Irving: So, after all that, the only thing that saved Becca was that BoJack was friends with Drew Barrymore?
>
> BoJack: Yep.
>
> Irving: So, did anything we did matter?
>
> BoJack: Nope.
>
> Diane: I think it did. I think we made a difference. A small one, but a difference.
>
> Todd: Yeah, I think we did, too. I think we really changed things for the better.

As Todd says this final line, BoJack and his friends drive by a Chicken 4 Dayz restaurant, where we notice a long line out of the door and down the street. A giraffe is changing their sign that says "5 billion served" to "6 billion served," giving the impression that, overall, not much has changed. Chicken 4 Dayz has continued to sell a massive amount of chicken. The changing of the sign from "5 billion" to "6 million" undercuts Todd's insistence that they "really changed things for the better." American consumers still continue to eat chickens, prepared in violent factory-settings, without much concern for the well-being of those chickens.

The ending is ambiguous and perhaps troubling for a few other reasons. First, as BoJack and others imagine Becca frolicking in a meadow, they are re-inscribing the same artificial view of "Nature"—that of happy and peaceful animals spending their time in the beautiful outdoors—that Happy Farms perpetuates. While the show itself seems to reject this move to make "Nature" and the animal world pleasant, the characters themselves find it difficult to break free from this conception.

That the sales of factory chicken meat continue to boom might appear to completely discredit the group's belief that they changed things for the better; the

increased sales certainly question any notion of improvement, change, or betterment. At the very least, though, within the world of the show, some things have changed for the better, albeit slightly. BoJack, Diane, and Todd are able to break free from the illusion that Happy Farms is a perfectly contained place of Nature.

5 Conclusion

BoJack's ending might seem to not get us too far to a life-giving ecological position. Are we back in the same trap that Happy Farms put forth? Maybe. But, it seems that the audience is at least much more critical of the pastoral vision at the end of the episode than Happy Farms was at the start. We become aware of the difficulties and the contradictions of being environmentally friendly. As in "Fish Out of Water," where we learn about communicating across species but also learn of its imperfections, "Chickens" highlights the failure of ecological visions of the pastoral but also relies on these same visions. Both episodes conclude with these contradictory messages. Perhaps, these contradictory attitudes reflect the difficult work of relating to other beings in the Anthropocene: even when we want to be "ecological," we find ourselves implicated in systems that wreck environmental havoc. Still, our recognition of this implication *should* prompt the difficult work of reflection and action. We find ourselves stuck in in a perplexing situation, but that is okay because we are thinking through these sticky problems, refusing to accept easy answers. According to Morton (2010a, b), to "be ecological" involves feeling stuck "on the earth, feeling like shit. Why did we think that the deepest ecological experience would be full of love and light? I am, therefore I doubt, therefore I think, therefore I am, therefore I doubt–I wish life were simple" (p. 138). Earlier, Morton (2007) writes, "We are going to have to admit it: we're stuck" (p. 155). This sense of "stuck-ness," of feeling doubt" anticipates Haraway's (2016) call for us to "stay with the trouble:" "Staying with the trouble requires making oddkin that is, we require each other in unexpected collaborations and combinations, in hot compost piles…Neither despair not hope is tuned to the senses, to mindful matter, to material semiotics, to mortal earthlings in thick copresence" (p. 4). *BoJack Horseman*, I have argued, can help us stay with the trouble by prompting us to reject heteronormativity, pastoralism, and speciesism and think more deeply about what it means to live alongside non-human beings.

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Understanding Across Differences in Patrick Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* and in Dany Laferrière's *Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat*

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Abstract The connection between the social and the environmental comes through Donna Haraway's words: "Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge" (*Anthropocene, Capitalocene* 160). Amidst the push to strengthen walls, two Franco-Caribbean writers provide refuge from boundary thinking because the way they write animals broadens the eco-social landscape. In Patrick Chamoiseau's *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* and Dany Laferrière's *Autoportrait de Paris*, animals are positioned meaningfully together with humans, illustrating the reality of our interconnected world. In this way, the authors perform co-constitutive power. The message is clear: to redefine material-discursive terrain, we must understand each other across our differences. Chamoiseau's updated animal fable highlights the links between climate change and social conflicts. His characters Foufou (a hummingbird) and Malfini (a hawk) lead us toward a material practice that is both ecologically and socially viable. Laferrière co-constitutes a portrait of Paris, in Paris, with Chat. Chat is a cat who plays the role of intermediary and recuperates the multiple artistic voices who have inhabited Parisian spaces. Paris' legacy is drawn while it provides refuge for the artists. The authors' renderings of displacements, movements and intellectual exchange align with Édouard Glissant's poetics of relation. In performing new ways of relating to others and to our environments, their work is emblematic of a contemporary French-language counter-aesthetic to dominating and totalizing discourse. The novel-forms of both writers open up the field of vision and comprehension about the world we live in and our place in it.

1 Introduction

The connection between the social and the environmental comes through Donna Haraway's words: "Right now, the earth is full of refugees, human and not, without refuge" (*Anthropocene, Capitalocene* 160). Amidst the push to strengthen walls, two Franco-Caribbean writers provide refuge from boundary thinking because

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the way they write animals broadens the eco-social landscape. Martinican writer Patrick Chamoiseau and Haitian Canadian writer Dany Laferrière illustrate Timothy Morton's term 'zones of exchange'[1] through the (human and nonhuman) figure of the refugee in *Les neuf consciences du Malfini* and *Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat*. These two Franco-Caribbean writers present the reality of our interrelatedness with their depictions of human and nonhuman belonging in our world. We encounter perspective and presence of an animal narrator and animal co-creator respectively, and we live each one's belonging in the stories. To understand the notion of belonging in postcolonial narratives it is important to understand the histories of dispossession and displacements borne of colonial projects and thinking. Instead of separating, categorizing, and keeping nonhuman animals marginalized compared to humans in the stories, the writers involve animals in a meaningful way by giving them prominent roles in mutual projects. This move amplifies the collective scope of beings (beyond humans) who have been (and are) historically marginalized. Chamoiseau and Laferrière, storytelling animals that they are, diversify creative expression in French-language literature and also account for the material reality of the wider living world. As articulate animals, the authors remind us of humans' place (vis à vis nonhuman animals) in dominant philosophical and religious traditions[2] and in practice. By centering animal character voices and contribution in their work they perform making room for other animals in the world. Both writers forward the Glissantian notion of Relation and interconnectedness in their content and in the arrangement of the telling. Accordingly, their poetic practice is emblematic of a contemporary French-language literary counter-aesthetic to dominating and totalizing discourse and ways of relating to others and to our environments.[3] Following Stéphanie Posthumus' approach for analyzing texts, I explore the ecosystems that exist within the stories. Even if a text is not written in a strictly environmental consideration, the textual ecosystems reveal the interplay of social and environmental conditions for the characters. Working through the intersections of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, I am interested in the implications this interplay has for the discussions of *Littérature-monde*[4] (world literature in French) and the animal turn.

For context, Malfini is the Martinican name for a hawk, and in Chamoiseau's novel he is the titular character who undergoes a transformation—the nine stages of consciousness per Buddhist understanding. The Malfini's appearance in Chamoiseau the *raconteur's* garden bookends the novel. He seeks Chamoiseau out at the start to pass along an important warning. Thus, we are transported into "story time." The Malfini becomes aware of a microscopic *chose* (a thing, his words), a hummingbird he refers to as "le Foufou," and the kind of being the Malfini has never ever taken

[1] Morton (2010).

[2] De Fontenay (1988).

[3] The question of interrelatedness is foundational, so that reading becomes a way of making connections between texts, readers, interpretive communities, authors. The choice of connections gives rise to a contextual and situated politics, one that reflects the orientation and perspective of that particular reading (Posthumus, French écocritique p.7).

[4] 'Pour une littérature-monde en français', *Le Monde des livres*, 16 March 2007, p. 2: http://www.etonnants-voyageurs.com/spip.php?article1574. Accessed 14 March 2016.

notice of prior to encountering him. We readers are taken deep into a forest world with human and nonhuman inhabitants who must deal with *une mort lente* (a slow death) brought on by climate change. In being attentive to the Foufou's movements, the Malfini becomes aware of Foufou's world and outlook. When the Malfini comes to appreciate the Foufou's intelligence, he faces the inherited assumptions of his own superiority as a bird of prey. We readers are also along for the shift-ride. In Dany Laferrière's illustrated novel, we follow a hand-drawn version of the author which looks different from the man in real life. He writes an autobiography of Paris, in Paris, with Chat (capital C). Chat acts as an intermediary for recuperating voices of writers and artists of all stripes who have come through Paris' past. Chat may even be his co-writer. They co-constitute this city portrait, a move that mirrors the co-constituted reality of Paris' reputation in culture. As Paris provides refuge for influencers (such as Laferrière), its landscape is inhabited with their ideas and artistic expression.

2 Amplifying with Animals

Staging human and nonhuman zones of exchange is how Chamoiseau and Laferrière help us understand the Glissantian idea of Relation. Édouard Glissant's concept of relating is that as we encounter each other, we continually expand and those encounters morph and build on each other dynamically. The undefinable and unpredictable contours of such encounters make his notion of Relation difficult to grasp or to fix, and this is likely the reason it is not widely discussed beyond the borders of postcolonial studies. Glissant's idea of the expanse of Relation where "The terra incognita lying before us is an inexhaustible sphere of variations born of the contact among cultures" (Glissant, 1997, p.57) captures the messy reality of life as living beings come into contact with each other. Representations of errantry resonate with us and help to picture some of these contact situations "in an expansion of a different sort"(ibid). The migrant figure is (not surprisingly) significant to postcolonial testimony evoking as it does displacements and dispossession. But what is different in both stories is the way animals are included in the migrant calculation.

Let's start with Chamoiseau. His novel is a modernized take on the animal fable and proposes a way forward as we face common disasters born of our own making. The story opens with the hawk Malfini making his rounds over Rabuchon Forest in Martinique and we readers are privy to the Malfini's interior experience. In the beginning, the Malfini thinks he has the world of Rabuchon Forest figured out:

> La vie était simple. D'un côté ce qui était utile à mon existence, de l'autre ce qui ne l'était pas. …. Rabuchon…. Je la déchiffrais sans efforts. En fait, je ne la déchiffrais pas : elle était une création de mon esprit. Et cela me rendait infaillible. …C'était comme si le monde était construit autour de moi, pour moi, avec comme seul aboutissement : le sang et la terreur. (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 22)
>
> Life was simple. On the one hand, what was useful for my existence; on the other what was not…. Rabuchon…. I deciphered it easily. In fact, I did not decipher it: it was a creation of

> my mind. And that made me infallible…. It was as if the world was constructed around me, for me, with the only end point: blood and terror. [Trans.]

Such imperial words and one-way attitude from the Malfini resonate for us on historical levels of imperial conquests and projects such as colonization and slavery. It takes an encounter with another being to cause a change in the Malfini. He becomes fascinated with the hummingbird Foufou who does not seem to be afraid of him or even, shockingly, to notice him. Such a non-reaction sparks his curiosity and inspires him to observe the little hummingbird navigate the world of Rabuchon Forest and beyond its borders. Truly, the Foufou seems to be marching to his own beat. He does not conform to typical hummingbird society nor does he keep to his own. Wandering in this story takes form in the Foufou's pilgrimages and adventures to learn about others in the living world he is a part of. With the Malfini following closely we readers learn the lessons at the same time he does during his observations of the Foufou: "Cela ne le troublait pas de découvrir une telle variété de ce qu'il était, qu'il aurait pu être, ou qu'il ne pourrait être (…) son vol était seulement ragaillardi, simplement exalté (…) ce phénomène me laissait à penser qu'il s'amplifiait sans fin"/"It did not trouble him to discover such a variety of what he was, what he could be or what he could not be (…) his flight was energized, simply exalted (…) this phenomenon left me thinking that he was amplifying continually" (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 107). As in human life, the Foufou's penchant for regularly engaging with other species is not easily understood. His attitude of openness towards other species causes him to be perpetually derided and socially outcast by the hummingbird leader in Rabuchon whose style of ruling has totalitarian impulses. The authoritarian leader cannot conceive of the gains to be had by relational exchange and only sees control as achievable through mastery and domination tactics.

When it becomes distressingly clear Rabuchon is dying an environmental slow death, the Malfini tries to fight his base impulse to abandon Rabuchon while he can for greener lands and prospects elsewhere. One thought calms and motivates him to stay. He knows the Foufou is examining the little cadavers of insects beside wilting flowers, the habits of bees and the general diminishing of Rabuchon to figure out what to do about the slow death. The Malfini already had learned an important lesson while observing the Foufou engage new groups of living beings. He saw the Foufou gain new ways of understanding. Experience tells him if anyone could potentially figure out a plan it would likely be the Foufou with "sa sagesse saugrenue et fofolle"/"his bizarre and crazy wisdom" (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 137).

The Foufou does find a way. What Chamoiseau has us see is the irony in the Foufou being considered the crazy one, the outlier. He eventually inspires others to join in the work he does to revive the forest. This work is to carry pollen to flowers, and he does it with "le goût de la rencontre dans Rabuchon"/"the desire of the encounter in Rabuchon" (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 106). The Foufou collaborates with all fellow living beings, no matter the species, recognizing as he does that everyone has something to contribute. The Malfini distributes the plants, the insects and the remains of mature flower pollen by transporting them according to his own attributes, while the Foufou and the *Nocifs* (a word the Malfini calls humans, meaning 'noxious')

accomplish the task in their own ways. In restoring life and beauty to Rabuchon, the collective succeeds in respecting the cycle of life, in living together while respecting each other, and in understanding the resulting regeneration in themselves. After the experience of learning from the Foufou, the Malfini acknowledges gaining.

> l'ampleur de ce que j'étais capable d'imaginer, de ne pas seulement penser mais de projeter par le moindre de mes actes dans la matière du monde. (…) Le désastre à venir ne menaçait pas la vie, il en faisait partie, mais il nous menaçait nous, dans nos limites, dans nos aveuglements, dans nos insuffisances. Il nous fallait trouver en nous et hors de nous comment vivre au vivant. (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 224)
>
> the fullness of what (he) was able to imagine, of not only thinking but projecting by the simplest of my acts into the material world (…) the disaster to come didn't menace life, it was part of it, but it threatened us in our limits, in our blind spots, in our insufficiencies. We needed to find in us and outside of us how to live in the living world. [Trans.]

In contrast, the totalitarian leader of the Foufou's hummingbird group realizes everything is dying and nothing is left for him to rule over. His dictatorial, dominating style is unable to deal with the effects of climate change on their previously abundant part of the forest. The fable tradition as extended by Chamoiseau reaches another level of consciousness in terms of compelling us to rethink the fundamental question of what it means to be human. To move beyond the arguments of old, Chamoiseau writes a Foufou who knows how to deal with *l'invisible désastre* (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 134) (the invisible disaster) to come. We also see the Malfini reach a sophisticated level in his reflections on following the Foufou's example of going towards others.

> Je volais autrement. Respirais autrement. Regardais autrement. M'intéressais autrement à ce qui m'entourait (...) *Hinnk*! J'étais plus libre que je ne l'avais jamais été. / I flew differently. Breathed differently. Saw differently. I concerned myself otherwise with what surrounded me (…) *Hinnk*! I was freer than I had ever been. (Chamoiseau, 2009, pp.107-8)

Chamoiseau's revised fable has implications for the human-animal relationship as well as for the human-world relationship. The Malfini's conversion leads to a freedom beyond what he had previously experienced and imagined. In this way, Chamoiseau signals the reward in going towards the unknown by changing our ways of doing and seeing. The regeneration of Rabuchon is symbolic of the larger transformation of place into an *intention.* The way forward for living together on earth requires a different kind of project, one where making kin is through true collaboration and common purpose.

In Laferrière's novel a sense of mutual project is also emphasized. Laferrière's animal character is a pseudo-roommate named Chat who helps him shape this auto-portrait of Paris. The title includes the words '*avec Chat'* which immediately suggests Chat's involvement is significant. Laferrière dresses and complexifies a portrait of Paris across the exiled migrants who have haunted its landscape. Writers and artists of all stripes and backgrounds collectively make up a vibrant whole. Many of the thinkers share/ed the objective of being caretakers of their cultures. Relating through ideas signals a different kind of connective material for building monuments and legacy. Laferrière's literary and artistic migrants evoke the sociological factors of their respective displacements. Since Chat helps the writer weave the connecting

threads of artistic influence on him, on Paris and on the systems of knowledge, Chat also represents animals' part alongside those in historical accounts (or more accurately, the dearth of animals' share in the historical figuring). The ghost of animals' presences in the official account also brings up questions of other under-represented presences and contributions in the official story.

When we see the term autoportrait in the title, we wonder how the author can be making a self-portrait of Paris. But if we think of Michel Leiris' *L'Age d'homme*[5] where Leiris groups together images he feels have contributed to his sense of identity, we can conceive of Laferrière's illustrations of past influences as a grouping that constitutes identity or "les traits qui (…) donnent sa ressemblance au portrait"/the traits that give the portrait its look (Leiris, 1973, p. 29). Laferrière places the emphasis upon the constructed nature of identity, therefore similar elements may constitute a city's identity as the ones that constitute living beings' identities. Laferrière's staging of Chat's role in shaping the recording of Paris' portrait is provocative in the light of Jacques Derrida's notion of autobiographical animals. According to Derrida we humans have been the animals writing history. But since only (some) humans' share has been officially recorded, Chat's presence evokes the ghost of animals past and so it seems disappearing animal traces also haunt Laferrière's page. In acknowledging the traces of presences past, he bears witness to their contribution in shaping Paris' identity as well as in shaping his artistic contribution to French letters. Chat's work in retrieving the memories of influences past outlines not only the belonging of such influences in the official story, but also his own belonging and consequently, animals' share generally. The artistic migrants constitute Paris even as Paris has informed parts of their work. Laferrière traces (figuratively and materially) the interlinked presences of past writers, artists and thinkers from Senghor to Malraux, Césaire, Damas, Montaigne, Baldwin, Basquiat, Borgès and more as they haunt Paris (see Fig. 1) and the waves of history. In doing so, the author produces the image of a shared sense of responsibility for "le destin de sa culture"/the destiny of his/her/one's culture (Laferrière, 2018, p.146). In his recently inducted role as an *immortel*[6] in the *Académie française* as contributor to and caretaker of the French language (plus his role as caretaker of books for Haiti) Laferrière understands that he alone does not fulfill the demands of the work. Others came before him as custodians of Haiti's cultural memory as well as for the larger body of texts in French-language expression. This includes contributions from thinkers of all continents and writers who express themselves in different languages. In one interview[7] he explained he wanted to make a song to Paris, a city that has united all these people from everywhere. He says the city is much more about all the faces Paris has known than its landscapes. His observation points to mutually shaping energies borne of encounters between us living beings

[5] Michel Leiris revolutionized the autobiographic genre with *L'Age d'homme*. He blended quests for self-identity with a desire for change. The preface to the 1945 publication testifies to an aesthetics of risk he felt was necessary in literature.

[6] *L'Académie française* members are known as *les immortels,* or immortals, whose mission is to carry the French language (with the attendant cultural aspects as vehicles through that language).

[7] La Grande Librairie, March 23, 2018, Paris https://www.france.tv/france-5/la-grande-librairie/saison-10/456433-autoportrait-de-paris-avec-chat-le-roman-dessine-de-dany-laferriere.html.

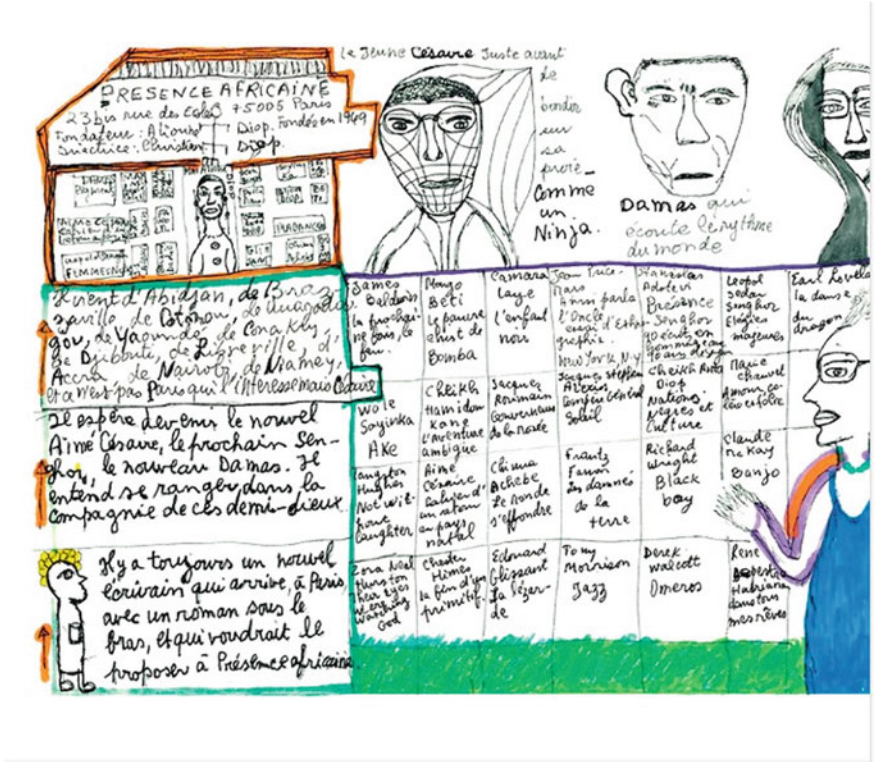

Fig. 1 Le présent est gorgé du passé (the present is filled with the past) Laferrière (2018). Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat. Grasset Paris

and our environments. The power behind the collaboration between author and Chat lies in redrawing what identity looks like. Identity is pictured as mutual belonging in a common world through project rather than only among similar kinds.

When asked of the role of Chat in dressing this portrait, he said cats are notorious for evoking the doubt that humans have in fact domesticated them. Chat in the telling is a cultivated being who lives with the author. He is emblematic of "le répondant à l'écrivain, quelqu'un d'éternel"/the alter-ego of the writer, an eternal being[8] who comes and goes independently, much like the ghosts of influences past do. It is fitting then, for an *immortel* like Laferrière to have such a companion to help him track the imprint of other culturally influential immortals who have passed through and co-authored the Parisian space. Although Laferrière may not have been thinking of Jacques Derrida's cat in the bathroom scenario, it is almost impossible not to think of Derrida's philosophical discussion through Laferrière's representation of an independent Chat self. When Laferrière says drawing, rather than writing, offers

[8] La Grande Librairie, March 23, 2018, Paris https://www.france.tv/france-5/la-grande-librairie/saison-10/456433-autoportrait-de-paris-avec-chat-le-roman-dessine-de-dany-laferriere.html.

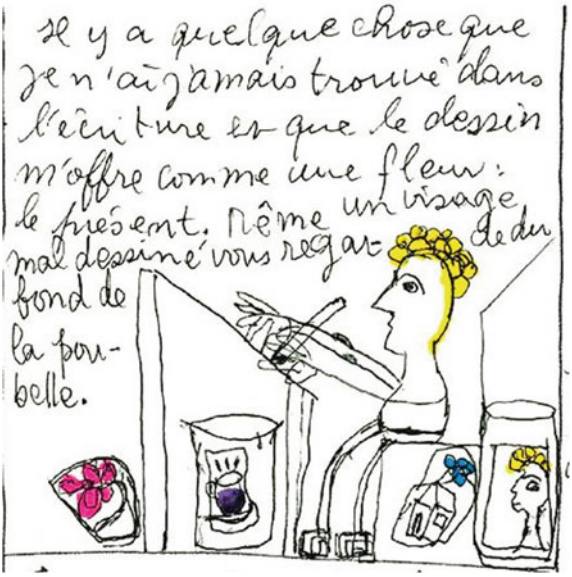

Fig. 2 Drawing (as opposed to writing) offers me the present. Even a badly drawn face still looks at me from the bottom of the trashcan. Laferrière (2018). Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat. Grasset Paris

him the present, he speaks of a sketched face looking back (see Fig. 2), which has associations for the *regard*, or the gaze, of others. Indeed, the author's embrace of Chat in his story conjures all kinds of other gazes, from unconsidered humans to the more than human. Annabelle Marie and Jean-Louis Cornille explain that based on the category of animal being qualified as "bas" (lower) with regards to the category of human, choosing the animal as a narrative vector can signal minorization,[9] or tapping into the lower frequencies of the world.

Chamoiseau and Laferrière, then, tap into one such "lowered" being in highlighting animals' contribution and they create a potential pathway for accessing *la part divine*, the highest element, of humanity. From the positioning of their animal characters, the writers also engage philosophical and scientific discussions. In his study on ecocriticism, Greg Garrard clarifies the important understanding coming out of biological sciences and animal studies:

> The great insight of animal studies, in its productive encounter with the biological sciences, is not that there are no differences between humans and other animals, but that differences are everywhere: not only are individual humans and animals different to each other, but all species are different to each other as well. (Garrard, 2004, p. 149)

[9] «Choisir l'animal comme vecteur narratif peut dénoter en soi-même une volonté de minorisation, du seul fait que l'animal est qualifié de «bas» en regard de la catégorie humaine». Marie and Corneille. (2017), p. 13.

Delving into writing territory that exposes the ills of elevating certain groups over others may be familiar for these Franco-Caribbean writers, but Dominique Lestel confirms that even though in European cultural traditions lowering the position of animals to elevate the position of humans is the standard practice, a shift has been happening. Now, it is understood complexifying animals "substantially augment(s) humanity's density" (Lestel, 2004, p. 715).[10] In the context of these two novels, difference between species and among species is highlighted since all have a valued role to play. The authors put in motion the idea of working in an inclusive way for the health of the whole community. In addition, Chamoiseau and Laferrière locate a different kind of project. The mutually inclusive and constitutive projects that make community are dynamic and representative of the ecosystems of the world. Just as Chamoiseau's Foufou contends with the challenge of a slow death in ways counter to mastery and domination, Laferrière's collaboration with Chat in piecing together the make-up of artist expression of thought marks territory in a way different from imperialistic conquest. These traces intersect time by travelling and propagating in relational waves through Paris, with Paris, while also helping to amplify Paris. The projects are the richer for the contributions. Time and space are rethought through this tracing work, remapped even, in a marking through belonging.

3 The Style of Telling

To complement their poetics of interrelatedness, Chamoiseau and Laferrière's narrative structures show differences in styles of telling in French-language literature(s). Similar to how the Malfini witnessed the Foufou gain force from each new encounter with other groups of living creatures, so too does the variety in the telling energize the body of French letters while breaking down fossilized oppositions. Recall that in Chamoiseau's novel readers get the Malfini story through Chamoiseau the *raconteur* (inside the novel-form of Chamoiseau the writer) because the Malfini comes to him in his garden and confides the precious telling to him. Chamoiseau the *raconteur* has been entrusted by this *frère vivant* (fellow living being or brother creature) to pass it on in language the world can hear and understand: "Frère, vivant… Un jour, au sortir d'une nuit de cyclone, j'entendis cet appel, et l'entendis encore; tendant alors l'oreille, je me découvris capable de comprendre un oiseau"/"Brother, (of the) living… One day, after a cyclone, I heard this call, and I still hear it; listening closely, I discovered myself capable of understanding a bird" (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 17). These words appear in tiny italics on the first page and again in the same style on the last page at the end of the Malfini and Foufou story, when Chamoiseau the *raconteur* brings the reader back from story time into the present. Positioning himself as *raconteur*

[10] «Toute la tradition culturelle européenne a considéré qu'en abaissant l'animal on élevait l'humain. Nous réalisons aujourd'hui que c'est plutôt en complexifiant l'animal qu'on augmentera substantiellement la densité de l'humain». Lestel (2004), p. 715.

infuses the animal fable genre with African-derived storytelling tradition. Chamoiseau's blend of storytelling styles echoes the blending of traditions for displaced peoples under slavery and colonialism, whilst the opening of the Malfini story alerts us, the fellow living, to heed the urgent call. In *Autoportrait de Paris avec Chat*, the work is done entirely in Laferrière's handwriting and is illustrated with colored drawings—also by the author—that look like a mix of childlike and Haitian art-naïf renderings. In all his book promotion interviews, Laferrière describes the experience of trying to draw this novel as liberating and the experience opened up a route towards the unknown in terms of where he was going (compared to his oft-treaded and established paths of novel-writing). People familiar with Haitian culture might liken the work to popular art renderings so prevalent on the island. Michael Dash details "painting's ability to evoke the opacity of things" and argues that novelists found in Haitian popular art a "model for translating a modern Haitian imaginary" (Dash, 2015, p. 23). In dipping into the Haitian popular art tradition to draw a portrait of Paris, Laferrière has effectively built it through a Haitian imaginary. His work to enhance the French language and culture partakes in the tradition of outsiders enriching Paris and vice versa since Paris has provided shelter and protection for them and their diverse expressions of thought. Paris can be proud to have sheltered and nurtured these literary and artistic migrant souls for a time, but as he is one of the signatories of the *Pour une littérature monde* manifesto, and since this is his first book since being inducted into the *Académie française*, Laferrière's autoportrait of Paris is more than benevolent shelter. He takes the measure of Paris' identity by showing how it is amplified through exchange. Laferrière's layout reminds us of the interconnectedness across time, place and cultural differences. The reclamation of thinkers, writers and artists with the help of Chat takes the form of multiple digressions of remembering—similar to wormholes—in a rhizomatic style. Conversations between the artists occur in the present as if the artists who are recuperated are alive, which further emphasizes what they have in common because they expand on threads of ideas across time. In the discussions between writer and his alter-ego Chat, it is not always clear who is speaking which words and consequently, the effect is that of the back and forth which often occurs in our minds as we consider events and problems. Laferrière's book is the web of writers—past, present, from all over the world—not only French-born (see Fig. 3).

The author's handwriting and drawings often disorient the reader, forcing a new navigation of the reading spaces. Such an arrangement compliments the sense of exile and starting over Laferrière has faced in his life and echoes what was also the case for many of the writers and artists the novel links together.

Both authors' styles are inclusive. We readers are let into the interior experience and therefore feel as if we are close to the concerns. The effect is intimate, inviting and inclusive. Françoise Besson argues in *Ecology and Literature* that writers send letters to the world and this is a peaceful weapon in the fight for speaking up for the voiceless and against violence and inequities. She says poets and writers are the first to be executed in totalitarian systems, "likely because dictators know that they are more powerful than dictator violence, which has always been the weapon of the weak because they can only express their ideas by destroying people instead

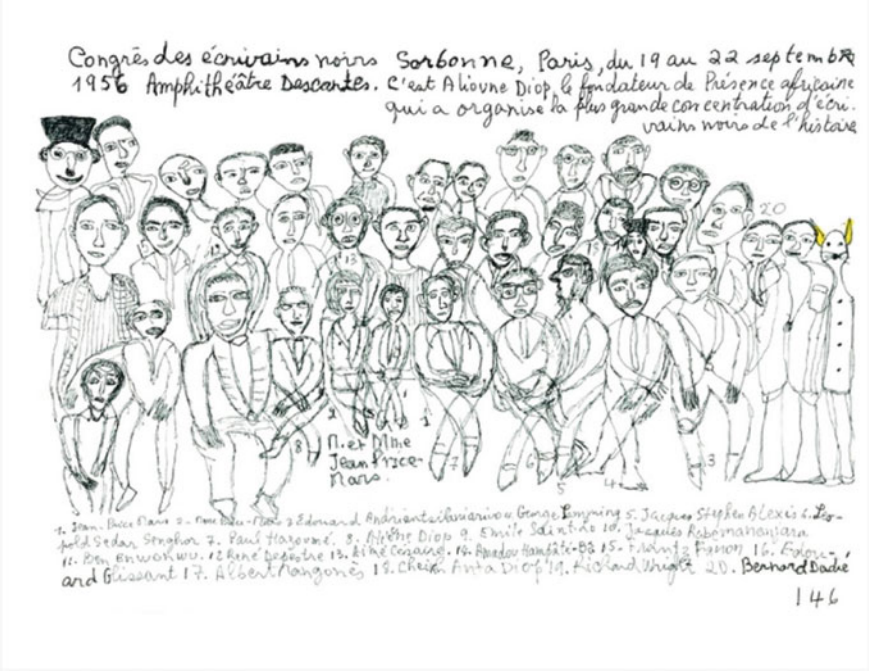

Fig. 3 Congrès des écrivains noirs 1956. Congress of Black Writers (Laferrière, 2018, p. 146)

of convincing them" (Besson, 2019, xii). Since Laferrière himself is a product of the exiled writer experience, Besson's example particularly resonates. Another thinker, Jean-Christophe Bailly, in his seminar *L'immédiatement vivant, suivre les voies du monde animal,*[11] says "we humans all spawn in the world. For us, the form of our spawning is language," and that idea summons the image of Rabuchon Forest's inhabitants spreading life-generating pollen to combat the slow death. His point can also be applied to life-generating intellectual exchange. But life-generating forms require going towards others and engaging with them to keep renewal going with ever-enriching new usages. Too often in culture the impulse is to fix categories of existing, which results in stagnation or worse. These two writers are sending out letters that invite us to relate differently.

Also important to discussions of style is language. Language is oft-discussed in postcolonial studies because of the hierarchical tensions between the colonizing language and the divested languages of the enslaved and colonized. Chamoiseau and Laferrière understand the weight given to language, why it is an important responsibility to use it for good, and how they can do so. Chamoiseau points to the inadequacy and danger of labelling terms by placing these words in the mouth of

[11] Bailly, Jean-Christophe. "Nous frayons tous dans le monde, pour nous, la forme de notre frayage est le langage." https://plh.univ-tlse2.fr/archives-vivant-suivre-les-voies-du-monde-animal--232119.kjsp.

the Malfini: " l'alphabet affligeant des Nocifs—avec lequel ils tentent de désigner le réel du monde"/"the distressing alphabet of the Noxious—with which they attempt to name the reality of the world" (Chamoiseau, 2009, p. 22). We know the damage that has been caused from the structure of language. Indeed, the Afro Diaspora exists because of the potential to weaponize language by placing groups of beings below others. The pollination campaign started by the Foufou in Chamoiseau's book can be seen as symbolic for the potential of all the displaced peoples and groups coming into contact with new landscapes and groups of living creatures to regenerate, the environs as well as themselves. We can also imagine the diverse letters from writers to the world "pollinating" old paradigms for regeneration. Chamoiseau incorporates Martinican terms for animals, flora and fauna without a glossary which obliges readers to do the work of paying close attention to the context in order to catch the meaning. This is similar to what Chamoiseau the *raconteur* models when trying to understand what the Malfini relates to him in his garden. In doing so, the author guards the opacity of his culture. Readers who encounter the unfamiliar language terms become visitors going towards others and are richer for the exchange. For Laferrière, one of the book sections, *Éloge de l'alphabet,* is a treatment of the alphabet, which does not seem unusual given his position as a writer and a member of the *Académie française.* Still, in his reflection on "ces petites lettres qui soutiennent tout l'édifice du langage"/"These little letters that support the whole edifice of language," there is the sense that Laferrière may be disrupting the *Académie*'s traditional efforts at "containing" the French language. His allusion to hierarchies within as he speaks about vowels is in a playful spirit, but leaves us readers wondering if there may be more meaning behind words such as the following: "Ainsi elles se regardent (les voyelles) avec fierté en observant avec une certaine condescendance les consonnes du rez-de-chaussée, en un mot, la classe ouvrière"/"And so, they look at themselves (the vowels) with pride, observing with a certain condescendence the consonants of the ground floor, in a word, the working class" (Laferrière, 2018, p. 21). He also links language to previous conversations about *lucioles* or fireflies (Pasolini, Césaire, Chamoiseau) when he says "La lumière vient des vingt-six lettres de l'alphabet qui sont comme des lucioles qui éclairent la nuit, cette léthargie de l'esprit"/"the light comes from the twenty-six letters of the alphabet that are like fireflies that light the night, that lethargic spirit" (Laferrière, 2018, p. 23). These words convey a concern about the responsibility of what is written, and the potential for stirring a people. Laferrière points to the good action that can emerge from language—using it for good by rewriting (breathing fresh air into) old institutions, ways of categorizing, organizing knowledge and ways of thinking. Laferrière shares his *Académie* moniker Vaillant (brave) in conjuring up the memories of those other brave and hardworking artists who also kept their rendezvous with history. He plays on the love of letters to show the interacting, engaging system of sending letters to the world. The *Académie française*, in want of some fresh air, is getting its wish with the induction of this Vaillant.

4 Conclusion

Both writers present the case for opening up our ways of seeing[12] per Amin Maalouf, one of the cosigners of the *Pour une littérature-monde* manifesto. Indeed, their art opens us up to alternative ways of understanding and to the enriching potentiality of differences. In both works the authors diffract centers of old and perform recalibration of identity and relating in this world. The center of French literature(s) is henceforth everywhere (rather than only mainland France) related by a common language and contact. Even though the writers' art remains informed by cultural specificities, it resonates on the world stage because it is necessary for us humans to decenter ourselves and to relate differently with each other and with the more-than-human in our living world. Elisabeth de Fontenay details in *Le Silence des bêtes* the long history of animals being relegated to the lower echelons of valuation in the culturally dominant philosophical and religious traditions. It is therefore significant that these two authors do not simply use animals as an emblem to illustrate unconsidered peoples, but rather show humans and nonhumans in mutual belonging and exchange in their stories. Expansionist projects of old are replaced by amplitude projects achieved through relation and exchange. The positioning of animals in their art puts them at the forefront of current posthumanist conversations of humankind's relationship with our world. Their contribution to rethinking the "texture homme/monde"[13] helps to regenerate on cultural and material levels. The power of a relational approach in life counts all presences in all their differences, and accordingly opens up larger horizons of understanding and richness.

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[12] Car c'est notre regard qui enferme souvent les autres dans leurs appartenances, etc'est notre regard aussi qui peut les libérer/Because it is our gaze (way of seeing) that often confines others in their affiliations, and it is also our gaze that can liberate them» Maalouf (2004), p. 29.

[13] "Il s'agit moins de préserver la nature que de reprendre conscience de la texture qui lie l'homme au monde vivant dans lequel il est profondément immergé. La pensée au XXIe siècle doit donc repenser la texture homme/monde et *se réapproprier* un certain animisme pour apprendre à vivre et à exister dans ce monde"/It is less about preserving nature than being conscious of the texture that links man to the living world in which he is deeply immerged. Twenty-first century though should therefore rethink the man/world texture and *reclaim* a certain animism to learm to live and exist in this world) (Lestel, 2015, p. 150).

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Human-Animal Relationality: Artistic Travels Through a Subculture's Imaginations

Ninette Rothmüller

Abstract This chapter fuses reflections on historical bestiaries and on Fraser Stables' 2013–2014 art installation *A Bestiary*. Both the historical bestiaries and Stables' contemporary version investigate the relationship between animals and humans. I am specifically interested in the ways that these bestiaries explore, aestheticize, moralize, and depict the human-animal interface through artistic means. This chapter draws upon artistic work by Joseph Beuys that addresses the human-animal interface and theoretical and contextual references such as the joint writing on the human-animal relationship by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, and also feminist theorist Donna Haraway's writings on human–dog companionship. Stables' *A Bestiary* is a contemporaneous bestiary. The process and display of this work engages various histories and anachronistic technologies. Leaving current technologies behind, Stables shot footage for the installation on 16 mm film, subsequently scanning the footage and digitally editing it frame-by-frame. The footage depicts animal tattoos on the bodies of mixed martial arts fighters (frequently called cage fighters), captured during fights and training sessions. Echoing the complexity of Stables' installation—which involves skin, cages, fighting, and control mechanisms—this text investigates postmodern artistic storytelling at the human-animal interface. Within this terrain, this chapter addresses questions of identity, power, and human-animal relationality.

1 Historical Bestiaries: An Introduction

What is a bestiary? Historically, bestiaries or bestiarum vocabula, were books of collections of animal depictions, mostly 'beasts' as the name suggests. Bestiaries date back to the ancient world. However, they were most prevalent in the Middle Ages, a time period that was intensely religious in many regions of Europe. Bestiaries were popular in the British Isles and, for a shorter period around the twelfth century, in France. In the form of moral animal poetry, the richly illustrated bestiary books

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brought assumed or 'known' characteristics of animals together with Christian salvation doctrines. Bestiaries reproduced Christian values using animal characteristics to reinforce the moral message. It is important to note for the context of this article that in Sarah Kay's words:

> Medieval reflection was fraught (as is today's) by competing theories about human exceptionalism within creation. Yet it was also conducted using a Latin lexicon in which the words animal or animans ("living creature") frequently included humans alongside other animals—and without, as yet, any vernacular term for all animals together, either including humans or without them, the broadest available term being "beast" (French beste) (Kay, 2017, 2).

English bestiaries were often written in Latin, which was known amongst scholars at the time, but excluded direct access by the general public. Within bestiaries, certain animals carry definite meanings or symbolic content, such as the lion having reference to royalty and power. However, bestiaries also depicted imagined animals or invented creatures. The oldest known bestiary within the above framework is the Christian Physiologus which, written in Greek by an unknown author, has been dated to the second century AD. Setting the trajectory for bestiaries to follow, it contained descriptions of animals, including birds, yet also imaginary creatures and always provided these with moral content. The Physiologus bestiary was translated into many languages, and some would argue that it is the mother of all bestiaries. Oftentimes, content of the Physiologus bestiary would enter other bestiaries, frequently combined with comments by other ancient authors such as Aristotle or Herodotus, whereby layers of Christian moralizations were added to those earlier texts. One could say that bestiaries provide us with windows into religious beliefs and morality in the European Middle Ages. This notion (of bestiaries as windows) leads to introducing a bestiary of a different kind: the installation *A Bestiary*, by artist Fraser Stables, core elements of which are window-sized golden screens 'through' which visitors of his bestiary can peek into fragments from the world of mixed martial art fighting.

2 A Contemporary Bestiary

When Stables first invited me to write about his installation for a text to accompany his exhibition, I immediately felt very aware that in writing about an art installation that engages mixed martial arts fighting, I would—thematically speaking—be entering a very physical and male-dominated subculture. In many conversations, I listened to Stables reporting on the production process: joys, hurdles, technical challenges, and so on. I also watched raw and later edited footage of animal tattoos, for example of a lion, on Stables' computer screen prior to their exhibition. One could say that my knowledge and curiosity about related themes grew in parallel with his production process. What does Stables' video installation look like? The installation consists of footage of animal tattoos, on the moving skin of fighters, and is projected onto screens that range in size from 28″–60″ wide and 16″–34″ tall. The final footage

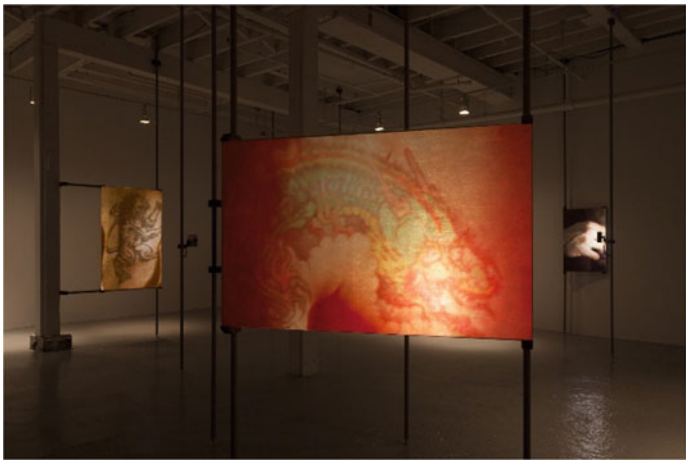

Fig. 1 Fraser Stables. *A Bestiary* (installation view). Five-channel video installation, dimensions variable, 2013. Georgia Scherman Projects, Toronto, Canada

of these stilled and captured animal tattoos is projected from the micro projectors. Through digital editing, Stables isolated and stabilized the position of the animal within each frame, controlling the media. The final footage is projected on aluminum screens that are layered with reflective gold leaf. *A Bestiary* follows a long, consistent, and rich tradition of artistic work addressing the human-animal relationship and/or interface. Within this tradition, it has always been the unique contribution of the arts to investigate these relationships through imagination, thereby also raising crucial political questions regarding, for example, culturally established hierarchies between humans and animals (Fig. 1).

I had listened to first-hand information throughout the development of *A Bestiary.* I also witnessed the production process of the gold leaf projection screens. Yet, none of the stories Stables shared with me during the production phase of his multi-channel video installation had prepared me for what I saw upon entering the installation.[1] A dragon and a lizard, drawn into the skin of fighters, appeared to dance in front of my eyes. I am 5′4″ tall and the projected footage of animal tattoos met me at close to eye level. As the animal tattoos were projected on the small, golden, reflective screens, their visual identity was filled with light. However, the identities of the men fighting remained unknown. Stables had not allowed further identifying information to enter his bestiary. I remember thinking, perhaps one of them is standing next to me as I watch the animals projected on the screens. Perhaps this shirt or that suit jacket covers a lion tattoo? In any case, the filmed bodies of the fighters, all men, remain, for the most part, outside of the golden screens my eyes are ordered to see within. These spaces are the rectangular golden kingdoms of Stables' animal collection. The

[1] Installation location: Oresman Gallery, Smith College, Massachusetts, USA.

images in his kingdom—selected from a larger arbitrary variety that also includes a humming bird, lion, and tiger—is an unusually small collection for a bestiary.

Materially, the use of gold leaf in Stables' *A Bestiary* has connections with historical depictions produced for bestiaries. For example, the bestiary illustration *A Large Bird and a Man*, from the J. Paul Getty Museum collection in Los Angeles uses both tempera colors and gold leaf (dated approximately 1270, and likely produced in Thérouanne following Franco-Flemish tradition).[2] The production and circulation of bestiaries, as is suggested by the date of *A Large Bird and a Man*, pre-date the invention of the printing press. Interestingly, the printing press was invented by someone whose daily work also involved gold. Around 1440, the German goldsmith Johannes Gensfleisch zur Laden zum Gutenberg invented the printing press, an innovation that started the printing revolution. However, as the prime time of bestiaries pre-dates this revolution, animal illustrations accompanying texts in bestiaries were drawn and copied by hand, likely in painstakingly slow processes and oftentimes at different times and places. As a result, illustrations vary and the rendering of each animal always speaks of the illustrator's individual hand: the skill, decisions, and particularities of linework speak to the unseen human who produced the images. Stables' own production process moves through a painstakingly slow manual process involving the digital manipulation of every individual frame of the footage, in order to stabilize the recordings of the tattoos and focus attention on the depicted animals rather than the bodies of the fighters. Once edited in this way, each of the five animals in *A Bestiary* moves in its own little, golden kingdom, and serves as the dominant visible marker of the fighter's identity, as proof of his existence. Each animal, as it moves in front of my eyes, seems to be oblivious of the presence of the other animal that moves on a screen within its close neighborhood. The animals seem to be oblivious to my presence, and yet I can sneak into their lives, holding my hand between the golden screen and the projector, thereby having part of the projected animals move on my skin, as technology negotiates their still and moving states, as they live and move on the skin of each fighter. Despite the layers of separation, this experience feels strangely intimate.

With needles having pierced each animal's shape and color beneath the human skin of the individual fighters, it is reasonable to believe that these animals caused pain at the time of their arrival. Still, their arrival was not uninvited: they are desired companions, adding color and marking individual choices on the skin of each fighter's body: he is the one with the lion, and this one has decided to take a hummingbird with him to his fights. Having arrived, causing pain, now the animals are silent companions. The skin, the surface that historically separated the self from the world,[3] becomes the intimate location at which the relationship between humans and these fairy-tale-like animals (or, as in the case of the upright standing lion, slightly anthropomorphic) live an interdependent relationship. Processes that impact the human skin, such as

[2] For an image of A Large Bird and a Man, please visit: http://www.getty.edu/art/collection/objects/4796/unknown-maker-a-large-bird-and-a-man-franco-flemish-about-1270/.

[3] I am emphasizing that medicine, in the form of pacemakers or memory chips implanted in human brains, has long transcended the skin's historical figure as border between self and world.

sweating, weight loss or gain, aging, sunburns, injury, or illness will leave their traces on both the human and the animal, as the latter lives on a canvas of living skin, its existence dependent on the survival of the person. In the installation, animals move in synch with fighters' movement and the fragments of bodies, in turn, move within the control limits imposed by editing and display technologies that prioritize the presence of the animal.

3 Reading Art—Reading Theory

As part of their project *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, French philosopher Deleuze and French psychoanalyst and political activist Guattari developed the term 'rhizome'. Thinking from this philosophical model (or what Deleuze calls an 'image of thought') one may assert that there is no privileged viewpoint for either the animal or the human in Stables' display. In the installation, with reflective screens rendering the images fugitive and sensitive to viewpoint, the animals (and the largely unseen fighters) are put into tension with a viewer's shifting viewpoint across the installation. Furthermore, in no version of the installation can the screens all be seen from any one position. Based on the botanical rhizome, Deleuze and Guattari's 'rhizome' apprehends multiplicities. In Deleuze's and Guattari's words, "Multiplicities are rhizomatic, and expose arborescent pseudomultiplicities for what they are" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, 8). Deleuze and Guattari utilize the term 'rhizome' to communicate how research and theory can allow for various, non-hierarchical entry and exit points, both in interpretation of data and in data representation. On many levels, *A Bestiary* may be considered as being continuously data interpretation and representation. These modes do not end when the artwork is installed. Rather, the installation *A Bestiary* invites further interpretation (and representation) through, for example, the interaction of the audience: as bodies move between the projectors and screens, and become surfaces for the projection, this raises questions of object/subject distinction and of human-animal relationality.

When fighting, when shooting one's fist towards another fighter, when grabbing them around their neck, waist, or leg, the animal companion is always with its fighter, following the same pattern of movement. Moving in unison, the iconography of the animals and the skin of the fighters (in conjunction with a viewer's consciousness of their excluded physicality) draw lines of visual articulation that speak to, and question, human-animal relationality. In their 'joint' state, fighting humans and animals fight together for as long as the clock moves, as long as the round of fighting lasts. Neither human nor animal can leave the ring before the other. Moreover, if the fighter is injured in the area where the tattoo lives on their skin, so is the animal, bruising changing the color of its fur, feathers, or scales. As much as David Abram's second book, *Becoming Animal: An Earthly Cosmology*, reminds readers, in Robin Wall Kimmerer's words, "of the porosity of the boundary between ourselves and the more than human world" (Kimmerer, 2011). In ways very different, Stables' installation *A Bestiary* does so as well.

Algerian-born French philosopher Jacques Derrida was the initiator of what he called 'deconstruction,' which could loosely be described as a method of critiquing literary as well as philosophical texts, but furthermore also political institutions. Derrida insisted repeatedly on the seriousness and importance of investigating questions of the animal and revising vocabulary traditionally used in responding to this subject. An enthusiastic maker of 'new' terminology, Derrida's intellectual endeavors lead him to replace the word animal with "animot," which he utilized to change and challenge the animal's status in its relation to humans (Derrida, 2002, 2008). In 2012, revisiting Derrida's work, semantic scholar Michelle B. Slater states that, "the emerging multidisciplinary field of animal studies decisively rejects the hierarchically based human-animal distinction. Among recent scholarship, the work of Jacques Derrida […] is exemplary" (Slater, 2012, 685). Settling up with philosophical traditions reaching from Aristotle to Heidegger, in her foreword to Derrida's book, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Marie-Louise Mallet outlines Derrida's position in the following way:

> Moreover, the violence done to the animal begins, he says, with this pseudo-concept of "the animal," with the use of this word in the singular, as though all animals from the earthworm to the chimpanzee constituted a homogeneous set to which "(the hu)man" would be radically opposed. As a response to that first violence Derrida invents the word *animot*, which, when spoken, has the plural *animaux*, heard within the singular, recalling the extreme diversity of animals that "the animal" erases, and which, when written, makes it plain that this word [*mot*] "the animal" is precisely only a word (Derrida, 2008, x).

Derrida's "animot" reminds one of the vast multiplicities of animal beings and of the complex relationality embedded in the human-animal relationship. The term "animot" complicates the traditional human-animal distinction and in doing so opens it up for interpretations, including artistic interpretations. Stables' *A Bestiary* is one such interpretation.

4 Moral Geographies

A Bestiary represents a personal home game by Stables, as he reaches into historic narrations from the socio-geographical place of his upbringing in Scotland. As mentioned, bestiaries were for the most part popular in the British Isles and, for a more limited period, France. Other than Stables' bestiary, I know of no bestiary—contemporary or historical—that includes a hummingbird. The lion, on the other hand, is an animal that appears regularly in historical bestiaries. It is the king of all beasts, and lion chapters were usually complex and long in comparison to other chapters in bestiaries. The lion in Stables' exhibition reminds me of historical depictions on European buildings, including churches and city halls, which is not surprising, as animal imagery were to be found in many places throughout the medieval architectural landscape. Depictions could take on various forms, such as wall paintings, woodcarvings in furniture, woven tapestries, and stone carvings in building walls. Thus, the visual language of the bestiaries, as it is repeated in medieval public or

semi-public spaces, creates an all-embracing visual texture aiming to generate a joint memory of values to be activated within a Christian society.

On another level, Stables' imagery travels between people involved in the making of his work. The lion, for example, reminds me of the lion rampant that acts as a national symbol of Scotland, Stables' home country, and at the same time it also reminds me of the lion rampant that acts as a provincial symbol of Hesse, the German province in which I grew up. Being chosen by the man tattooed, the lion thus not only creates a reference point between the fighter and the artist behind the lens. Within Stables' bestiary, the animals exist outside the pages of a book—the traditional context for medieval bestiaries—and the ordered, gold leaf screens create golden cages for the animals and their visual surroundings. These screens can be read as both the cages and kingdoms of the animals. They also become the terrain upon which the animals write their powerful narrations: repetitively, and each one out of synch with, and seemingly not impacted by, the stories told in the golden kingdoms of their immediate surroundings.

5 Knights, Dragons and Others

The size of each image is controlled by Stables, as is the height of the screen and its placement within the gallery. Stables creates a movement script for the visitors and a strict spatial order for the confrontation between the audience and members of his bestiary. The height chosen for the installation of the screens is, for many viewers (that would on average likely be taller as I am) at upper torso height—the area a traditional shield was meant to protect. Therefore, the golden screens set off another echo of human fighters in history, thus creating yet another layer in how Stables' installation investigates the human-animal relationship. In the case of Stables' show, however, there is no shield between me—the viewer—and the dragon; the shield instead is the golden surface the animal lives on, and the dragon and I face each other unprotected. Displayed on gold leaf, the fighter's skin, like a knight's body, appears layered with a protective shell of metal. The metal in the case of the knight aims to save his life; in the case of the fighter, the metal layering on his skin acts to take his life causing the natural skin color to vanish, while framing him within history and myth.

In addition to the adorned illustrations within medieval bestiaries, gold leaf was used to cover the surface of sculptures depicting animals, often used within the interior design of buildings to visually enhance the powerful positioning of an institution (such as the church) or individuals (such as aristocratic or political leaders) within a societal order. The role of the golden color was thus not in the structure of the building, but in its adornment and enhancement. Stables' layering of the projection screens with gold leaf reaches beyond this historical design practice and at the same time questions, while also making use of, the cultural values attributed to gold. By layering the surfaces of the screens, Stables layers the skin of the animals, whose appearance in color, brightness, and dimensional presence is visually enhanced. In

its symbiotic existence, the skin of the fighter is impacted by the gold leaf as well, in that the golden color takes away from the individual skin tone. With the layering of the surface of the screens, the human skin wears golden layers, and thus Stables' practice serves to question the social status of the fighter. Gold is the color of kings and, at the same time, a fighter competes for the materiality of a gold medal.

A Bestiary was first displayed in 2013, the year that the German contemporary art museum Haus der Kunst in Munich displayed work by the Croatian sculptor Ivan Kožarić. In 1971, Kožarić painted all objects within his studio gold, including artwork, tools, and the studio itself. At the time Kožarić had realized that gold is not "just the color of golden glamor," but also has a "down-to-earth value" and thus the ability to question a value-based belief system (Kožarić, 2013, 192). If so, then Stables' work may also have the potential to challenge the value sets held by viewers. I remember my initial surprise when Stables shared that the footage would be displayed on layers of gold. Something in the tension between cage fighting, tattoos, and lavishly applied layers of gold leaf created a space of curiosity, a space within which I could ask questions. As much as I was surprised by this choice when looking at the work on display, I realized it produced interesting tensions through the way the gold, with its subtle burnishing marks and creases, trapped the animals on these flat surfaces while enhancing the 'natural' colors of the animals all the while prompting questions about the societal status of others, namely the fighters.

6 Beuys' Interspecies Performances

To make a further comparison, the German artist Beuys artist used gold leaf within an art performance that also questioned hierarchies between an animal and humans, and controlled modes of access for the audience members. Beuys' 1965 performance *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* (How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare) took place on November 26 of that year at the Galerie Schmela in Düsseldorf. Beuys, who was also a co-founder of the German Green Party in 1980, embraced shamanism in his practice, as had been done before by other artists (for example, Pablo Picasso). Beuys' practice was, however, also heavily impacted by the world views contained within Austrian philosopher Rudolf Steiner's Anthroposophy (which provides the basis and framework for Waldorf Education worldwide). Questions involving the soulfulness of animals were crucial to Steiner's concepts.

The performance of *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* took place on the opening night of Beuys' solo show at the Gallerie Schmela. Before beginning his performance, Beuys locked the doors of the gallery. Gallerie Schmela, which was located in the industrial Ruhr area, was one of the was one of the most significant galleries in post-war Germany. The gallery contained large windows through which visitors could witness Beuys' performance. Inside the gallery, Beuys cradled a dead hare in his arms. The hare's vulnerable stomach facing up, a position that would likely not be accepted by an alive hare. Beuys positioning of the hare visually fuses the hare with a human infant, which is commonly cradle facing upwards. The hare

is dead, yet its limp body, melted into the shape of Beuys' arms, is not reminiscent of the stiff body of a dead animal. Moreover, Beuys' metallic face, layered with gold leaf, seems lifeless, and the identity of the artist is concealed by the golden mask, making space for the hare to be the center of attention. As the title of the performance suggest, the hare is Beuys' audience. Into his ears, Beuys intimately whispers, as he moves through the gallery seemingly explaining the exhibited art to the hare. In this act, he thereby degrades the humans who had come to see his show during the opening night, relegating them to be mere onlookers on the other side of a window, separated from the sound of Beuys' whispered explanations. In an interview conducted years after the performance, Beuys stated, "I think [a] hare can achieve more for the political development of the world than a human being" (Beuys, 1969, 83). In this work, Beuys thereby fundamentally questioned the hierarchies that might traditionally be applied to the human-animal relationship.

During *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt*, Beuys is locked into the gallery. He had the door key, but it would have required his action to turn the key in order to exit. Audience members in front of the gallery windows, however, can stroll away unhindered, enjoying a freedom of movement not experienced by Beuys. Perhaps Beuys' *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* represents a 'preview' of a future work, namely Beuys' 1974 performance, *I Like America and America Likes Me*, performed in the René Block Gallery in SoHo in New York City. For this human-animal encounter, this time between Beuys and an alive coyote, Beuys shared a fenced of area in the gallery with a coyote for eight hours on three consecutive days. Again, gallery visitors could witness the interspecies performance from outside the fence. Questions of control, human-animal relationality, identity (who is the audience here), and exclusion crystalize in Beuys' *Wie man dem toten Hasen die Bilder erklärt* performance, just as much as they do in Stables' installation *A Bestiary.* Raising such questions, which are at the core of investigating the relationality between humans and animals, without actually pronouncing these questions, is a privilege of art. From here, crucial queries can be further developed. These could involve, for example, questions of ownership, as a mode of relating to each other that humans apply to animals: humans commonly understand themselves to be able to own animals, yet the opposite is not commonly imaginable.

7 Ownership and Companionship

Returning to *A Bestiary*, ownership also becomes a crucial issue in this work. As I stand in the gallery during Stables' installation, I cannot avoid but asking who owns the animals in the cages: the fighters, the filming artist, the tattoo artist, or the animals themselves? Or do I claim ownership, since it is through every gallery visitor's unique gaze that the animals materialize as part of individual meaning-making processes. Is ownership even a question that can facilitate engaging the human-animal relationship? Perhaps ownership isn't the question, but perhaps companionship is. Laying out the history and etymology for the word companion, the Merriam-Webster Online

dictionary lists the following: "Middle English compainoun, from Anglo-French cumpaing, cumpaignun, from Late Latin companion-, companio, from Latin com- + panis bread, food" (Merriam-Webster, 2020). Thus, in the end, companion stems from the Latin 'com-,' meaning 'with' and the Latin 'panis' translating to 'bread' (singular). It is, thus, one bread that is shared with the companion: one source of nourishment. The google dictionary describes the meaning of the noun 'companion' as "a person or animal with whom one spends a lot of time or with whom one travels" (Google Dictionary, 2020). Thinking about the applicability of the term companion, as I come to close my reflections on Stables' *A Bestiary*, I revisit Donna Haraway's, 2003 publication *The Companion Species Manifesto: Dogs, People, and Significant Otherness*. Together with feminist thinkers, such as Rosi Braidotti, Haraway is one of the co-founders of the posthumanities and she is a Professor Emerita in the History of Consciousness Department and Feminist Studies Department at the University of California, Santa Cruz. Although, as the title suggests, her book focuses on dogs, and investigates how humans and dogs are co-constituted, I think that a carefully expanded reading of her work allows reflections on the relationality between animals and humans. Haraway's writing insists that paying attention to and understanding the human-animal co-constitutedness can facilitate human understanding of dogs' (and I would carefully add animals') "significant otherness" (Haraway, 2003, 5). Haraway writes, "Dogs are not surrogates for theory; they are not here just to think with. They are here to live with. Partners in the crime of human evolution, they are in the garden from the get-go, wily as Coyote" (Haraway, 2003, 5). It is, from my perspective, no coincidence that Beuys chose a coyote for his performance in New York City and that Haraway uses the coyote to exemplify a statement about dogs. Coyotes and dogs are closely related species, able to interbreed. I am thinking back about the animals that move in front of my eyes in Stables' *A Bestiary*. Doing so, I realize that within the closely-knit fabric of otherness confronting me: otherness felt towards mixed martial arts fighting, as a form of identity expression that I have never engaged in; otherness felt towards tattoos, as I cannot imagine choosing for needles to pierce my skin; and otherness felt towards the various modes of control entailed by the technological aspects of *A Bestiary*. Within all of these multilayered experiences of otherness, I still recognize the lion, the hummingbird, the lizard, and all other animals living on the skin of unknown humans. In my experience, it is in the moment of recognition, and in the limits of recognition, that Stables' installation presents an opportunity to investigate the human-animal relationship.

8 Conclusion

There is much more to that remains to be said about *A Bestiary* and about the unique capacity of art to open up spaces through which to negotiate human-animal relationality. This article outlined just a few issues that can loosely be related to social geographies, visual historicities, and actors involved on various levels. Stables' installation serves as a reminder of the infinite entanglements of contemporary artistic work

with historical visual modes of representation of the human-animal interface and, furthermore, confronts us with an extremely rich interpretation of these elements. With Beuys, Kožarić, and Stables, I chose examples of art that involve installation and performance art, there are of course many other contemporary forms of artistic investigations, including interspecial sound-scaping and poetry. In line with historical bestiaries being a form of moral animal poetry, and as a means to close with one of my own recent artworks that engages human-animal interaction (and to motivate readers to investigate art that explores this theme), I will end this article by requesting that readers continue by reading my poem *Unknown Roads*, and thereby linger with another artwork that engages human-animal relationality. The poem *Unknown Roads* trots with a dog, as a safe non-judgmental other. The line length and spacing of the poem are dictated by the rhythm of the trot of a dog that I recorded during one of our walks. Perhaps the mixed martial arts fighters in *A Bestiary* also felt the need for a non-judgmental animal other, to accompany them in every single fight, and to remain with them, whether they win or lose.

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The Animal Survives: Sarah Orne Jewett's *A White Heron* Intervenes as Survivor of the Industrialized World

Lauren Perry

Abstract Sarah Orne Jewett's *A White Heron* has been read as a coming-of-age tale and an eco-feminist text, but I argue that the textual intervention is in the field of literary animal studies. Jewett's text focuses primarily on the animal encounters that Sylvia participates in throughout the short story, but by including a young hunter naturalist, also makes a larger statement about the external, rapidly industrializing world. The young hunter has killed and plans to kill many more birds over his life time and is specifically searching for the white heron. Sylvia, only nine years old, originally left her life in the city to come live with her grandmother in the forest explicitly because of her inability to peaceably live with other people. The narrator directly mentions a "red-faced" boy who used to scare her. Sylvia's gradual fondness for the young hunter naturalist eventually leads her to climb a tall tree in search of the white heron. Despite his promise of money and the unspoken potential for love, Sylvia denies the information to the young man. Though obviously hopeful as an environmental text for how Sylvia denies the man and hunter access to the rare bird, it actually constructs a particularly positivist view into a cramped, modernizing world where the first traces of the Anthropocene emerged in the twentieth century. This article analyzes Sylvia's many animal encounters, her climb to find the white heron, the deaths of the birds at the hands of the young hunter, and the overall intervention made by Jewett that despite human damage to landscape, lifestyle, and conceptions of wilderness, the animal will survive and reproduce.

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1 Introduction

Late nineteenth century American literature moved away from its romantic and transcendental past towards a grim, dangerously fast-paced and shifting landscape for the American subject[1]. In the wake of industrialism and massive moves to urban centers[2], a dramatic shift inward began to alter the face of literature and the subjects it tackled. Audiences and readers no longer wanted to be told how expansive and unending the frontier, both figurative and literal[3], was for the United States. Literary naturalism and realism were an aesthetic answer to an uncertain time, and many late nineteenth century texts belong to these movements as well as that of environmental writing. As authors of realism and naturalism sought to access and convey the "real" in order to avoid romanticism, they often wrote their environments, melding the world of wilderness (or what remained of wilderness) with that of the rapidly industrializing human world. It is fitting that the texts of this chapter emerge from the late nineteenth century, a period of predominant naturalism and realism, as Emile Zola described humans as "human beasts" in the perspective of naturalists. The temporal moment that produced the writings of Sarah Orne Jewett insisted on viewing the human as part of the physical reality in which she lived. Part of that world is and always has been the animal counterpart in whatever space the American human finds him or herself. Encountering the animal in this period of bleak realism produces environmental texts that offer a unique intervention: the animal survives. No matter what humans do to destroy their own living quarters and no matter how treacherous the human world becomes, the animals we encounter surface to show us how insignificant our actions are in the face of nature. The arrogance of humanity does not stop at thinking we are the center of the planet's health, but that we can also destroy all other creatures.

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[1] Nineteenth century American literature is marked by its move away from transcendentalism and romanticism in favor of naturalism and realism. Literary theorists like Walter Benn Michaels and Amy Kaplan write about this in their respective texts, *The Gold Standard and the Logic of Naturalism* (1987) and *The Social Construction of American Realism* (1988). Naturalism and realism both favor a more nihilistic view of the American subject. Neither literary style attempts to moralize the actions of their characters, with naturalism describing humans as being the products of their often-hostile environments. Realism attempts to access the "real" by denying overly romanticized portraits of American life, which was viewed as problematic in that it assumed any one author has access or insight into the "real."

[2] Author and photographer Jacob Riis chronicled this massive population shift into tenement housing at the end of the nineteenth century in *How the Other Half Lives* (1890). This groundbreaking text utilized photographic images of the squalor and terrible conditions of low-income tenement housing. Previously unwitnessed by the upper echelons of American society, Riis's work called many human rights workers into actions, while simultaneously polarizing society against the poor for conditions beyond their control.

[3] Frank Norris' *McTeague* (1899) is a prime example of the attempted continuation of movement across frontiers and the violence it brings to American subjects. *McTeague* exemplifies both realism and naturalism in how its plot portrays beastly, unsympathetic human characters beyond redemption. Norris's plot takes place in San Francisco, which was supposed to be a city of economic and social opportunity, yet the protagonist of the story eventually leaves to escape his murderous actions and retreats into the desert.

In a uniquely positivistic yet non-romanticized turn, "A White Heron" interjects the truth that despite human action, the animals of the United States will remain[4].

2 Jewett's "A White Heron"

Encountering an animal is a uniquely raw, individualized experience dictated by circumstance and the type of person encountering a particular animal. As Barney Nelson explains in *The Wild and the Domestic: Animal Representation, Ecocriticism, and Western American Literature* (2000) different kinds of animals evoke a cultural and social worth. Animal encounters have largely been removed from various print editions of texts like Henry David Thoreau's Walden because the animal encounters were thought by editors to be too feminine. Some of his encounters with animals, domestic or otherwise, were completely removed from Walden because they were thought to counter-act his emphasis on life in the woods and living outside society. Editors judged the encounter and its wildness based on the type of animal and Thoreau's response. "A White Heron" (1886) very clearly emulates the tradition of Walden in multiple ways, and what's more, intervenes to assert a future for the environment in spite of men's actions. Encountering a wild animal illustrates the truth that where we exist, animals also exist. Humans have not pushed animals outside our quarters of habitation even when that has been our express goal[5] (i.e. the coyote). Despite all humanity's movement towards an unnatural world where machine does everything nature can but faster and smarter, nature somehow still outsmarts us in that the creatures we have done everything to destroy still exist. The environmentalist has an entirely separate encounter with animals for a variety of reasons. Seeing the animal alive forces even the most realistic environmentalist to see that animals are going to survive no matter what we do to the planet and no matter how closed off we believe human living spaces to be. Jewett intervenes with an unflinchingly positivistic look at the status of animal life in the rapidly industrializing nineteenth century United States. Throughout the many different animal encounters of the text, the two most important are those not described and that in which Sylvia sees that the wild bird is not only living, but that is a procreating and surviving. The brief moment of animal encounter renders moot the fact that the young hunter naturalist continues to kill animals.

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[4] Hunter naturalists like John James Audubon and Theodore Roosevelt insisted on killing animals of every species to preserve them. In many written accounts, naturalists wrote of and expressed a desire to kill certain species of animals before they completely disappeared from the continent, as was the case with Roosevelt and his desire to kill an American Bison. He believed that they were soon to be wiped out, and he was nearly correct in his assumption. Darren Lunde's *The Naturalist* (2017) chronicles these ideas.

[5] Dan Flores's *Coyote America* (2016) describes the failure of the United States government to eradicate coyotes. Coyotes now live in every major city in America and their population continues to grow despite expansive, violent efforts to poison them out of existence.

Jewett's eponymous animal is not the first animal described in her pivotal feminist environmental text. Setting and dramatis personae create a distinctly female wilderness. Jewett's initial descent into the woods creates an aura of secrecy, of timid admission for the reader, barely passable into the realm of tree trunks and shadows. The first character to exist in the world of the white heron is not Sylvia, but rather the cow. Jewett introduces the animal first, before Sylvia or her grandmother, but also importantly marks the animal as Sylvia's, claiming it "her" cow. This marker of animal as property is important for how disingenuous it is, as from the description of the relationship between this young girl and the cow, the cow is clearly owned by no one, and Sylvia is actually doing the cow a favor each day when she milks it. The cow is described as intelligent enough to play hide and seek, which should be read as the animal being fully cognizant of the conditions of her symbiotic relationship with the human. Understanding her tracking device, the bell around her neck, she does not reveal her whereabouts to Sylvia until she is ready to be milked. Jewett's description in these first few paragraphs embodies the destabilization written through this brief, presumably fictional narrative.

What might read on the surface as an idyllic, almost sentimental portrayal of a girl and "her" cow is actually already disruptive of Judeo-Christian assumptions about animals and human-animal relationships. Sylvia relies on the animal for more than just milk; she relies on the animal for entertainment, for intellectual stimulation, for work, and for sustenance, and if those weren't enough, these boons are provided at the pleasure, timing, and whim of the animal. Jewett makes clear that the cow has a better knowledge of the landscape that Sylvia allegedly knows so well, despite the cow being an allegedly domesticated animal, and has even mastered the rudimentary technology attached to her body in order to both mark and track her. The cow is the first animal championed by Jewett as a master of its own life. Biological awareness of female cow milk productivity also comes into play for how the cow is "ready" to be milked in that it is convenient and beneficial for her; she gives the milk because she has no use for it and because she is presumably full and uncomfortable. Jewett makes no mention of the cow wanting calves, seeking a mate, or wanting anything other than solitude in the serenity of the grazing land that only she can navigate. This same agency in female solitude is echoed in Jewett's *Country of the Pointed Firs.*

3 Sylvia's Woods

Jewett's focus on the location of living echoes several important issues of the late nineteenth century. With the closing of the frontier, scholarly, analytical gazes turned toward the movement of people through their various environments. Defining the environment as inclusive of spaces that contain humans and animals requires rethinking the previous barrier between human and animal worlds. Sylvia, for example, moves from the "crowded manufacturing town" where she could not grow to the farm and by extension, the wilderness. She has mobility because she is a young girl, which speaks to perhaps one of the only foreseeable advantages of being female.

Sylvia is not bound by apprenticeship or a job that exists only in the city, but in her grandmother's stead learns to take care of the animals and engage with the landscape. Farming is intuitive, and, like the "deserted pussy" that welcomes Sylvia to the farmhouse when she first arrives, these generations of women are purring in their solitude. The "lonely house" is nonetheless locked, speaking to fears of women's sexual assault and general unstable safety due to the men of the outside world. Jacob Riis' *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) used photography to expose the sordid, filthy living conditions of tenement housing in the larger cities. Jewett's "A White Heron" was first published in 1886 but her awareness of spatial environment illuminates the problem of imagining human city life as being somehow unconnected to the rural lives of people. Jewett plays on transcendental ideas about nature by insisting that "as for Sylvia herself, it seemed as if she never had been alive at all before she came to live at the farm" (Jewett 6). Jewett does not describe the actual farm at all, but rather describes the cat that comes to greet Sylvia upon her arrival. Sylvia was alleged to be "afraid of folks" but what is apparent by the beginning exposition of this story is that regardless of circumstance, setting, or place, Sylvia and the omniscient narrator privilege the animals and their characterizations over anything else. The cat that greets, purrs, and rubs against Sylvia and her grandmother is happy and "fat with young robins." The social surroundings of the cat do not matter, but her encounter with the young girl she does not know is enough to make her purr. She is well-fed, does not need anyone else to hunt, and she willingly shares her space with Sylvia. Throughout the duration of the story, most entities are female. Understandably, the interruption by the young man into Sylvia's safe space is unwelcome. Sylvia confides to the cat that she never wishes to go "home," indicating her awareness that her existence in the forest is a strange one. The expected habitat of a young girl is in the city where there are other young people and means for education. What Jewett constructs is the possibility of an equal yet different education that Sylvia takes on whilst living with her grandmother. It is happenstance that has brought Sylvia to live so much like Thoreau did intentionally. Sylvia does not come to the woods to live deliberately, but through her encounters with the creatures of the forest, she comes to understand her own unimportance as well as that of men with guns.

4 The Hunter Naturalist

When the young man first enters the narrative, hailed by whistle, Sylvia's immediate reaction is worth noting and an important authorial choice for the text. Jewett describes Sylvia as leaving her cow to "whatever sad fate" might await her, carving out a place for Sylvia to experience her own animalistic fight-or-flight instinct while simultaneously proving Sylvia does not have a blind allegiance to animals over herself or humans. Though characterized as friendly and kind, the young man has encountered animals since he was eight years old, which is Jewett's inadvertent description of how long he has been killing animals. Like naturalists before him, many of whom were perceived to be great men like Theodore Roosevelt, the young man has been

killing and "preserving" animals since childhood. Sylvia's grandmother, once he has arrived and is sharing a meal at their house, asks if he plans to put the birds in cages. His reply that instead he "preserves" them challenges an entire set of ideas about human interactions with animals and the wilderness at large. Many practices that humans perceive as being helpful or conservationist are actually the opposite. He has been killing animals his entire life, yet, as the narrative will reveal, that does not equip him to find the elusive white heron nor kill it. The encounters most prominent in the story aside from that of Sylvia and the white heron are the many encounters that end in death at the hands of the young hunter. He is not preserving anything, and it is because of his guns that Sylvia dislikes him and is unable to understand him. As a human being, the young man represents the relentless progress and insistence of the industrial world that carries on no matter what Sylvia thinks or wants. She and her grandmother do not witness the killing of all the birds, but they occur and are nearly meaningless to the young man. As a progressive, the young man cares nothing of the family trauma shared with him via the grandmother, but only seeks to mine Sylvia for her knowledge of birds.

Prior to the arrival of the young man, omniscient narration suggests that Sylvia knew the names of species of different types of birds in the forest. Informed by experiential knowledge of the forest rather than textbook education, Sylvia's knowledge elevates her to an equality with the young man. After all, her knowledge is the power he seeks, though she chooses to remain silent. Sylvia's relationship with the young man that she meets revolves completely around her ability to communicate and understand animals. From the opening of the short story to its close, Sylvia's actions move from animal to animal, never missing a beat in her ability to see them as living beings no different than herself. Even the narrative voice throughout the story investigates complex modes of thinking, reasoning, and emotion within the animals of Sylvia's woods without personifying them or sentimentalizing them. The attitude present in Jewett's short story far predates current conceptions about animals' ability to think far beyond human's prior estimation. Animals feel fear, love, play, and many intelligent animals have their own systems of language that range from echo-location to song to sonar. Jewett knew none of these future scientific facts, but her writing animals with agency and a protagonist who does not question animals as peers reinforces Jewett's literary choice. She uses language to tell the story of a character who barely speaks, yet fluidly understands languages of all different species in the forest. Sylvia does not have guns like the young man, but clearly her ability to learn the animals far exceeds his own. Sylvia is only nine years old in the story, and the young man presumably a teenager. They first meet as Sylvie is walking Mistress Moolie home from out in the woods, and though Sylvia tries to hide, the young man spots her too quickly. If, like her clear refusal to speak openly implies, Sylvia herself might be viewed as an animal of the forest, Jewett conveys that animals who are seen are not trying to hide. Similar to the cow who wanders the forest until it suits her to be found, she allows herself to be seen by anything in the forest because she is not expecting any intrusions.

The interactions that follow from the initial meeting of the young man to the end of the story construct the precarious position of the environmentalist and how she

stands between the destruction of the industrial future, however friendly the mask it wears may seem. The young man, who appears precisely when Sylvia remembers the "young red-faced boy who used to torment her" is the revision of the face of modernity, industrialization, and urban society. He arrives in the forest well-equipped and well-educated, but his interactions with Sylvia and her grandmother reveal his pitfalls. Sylvia's grandmother reveals her somewhat tragic family history, of which the young man takes no notice. He shows up, asking to be fed and housed, shocked at how nice the farm accommodations are. His obvious assumption is that this residence will be lower than his expectations coming from the city, but he is pleased to find a happy, comfortable lifestyle. As Wendell Berry's *The Unsettling of America: Culture and Agriculture* (1977) chronicles the transition from rural lifestyles to urban settings. Closing the frontier along with rapid industrialization moved the flow of the populace back inwards towards city centers to find work in factories and live in tenement housing. Much of the realist and naturalist movement in literature attempts to make sense of the sudden and drastic shift from a century of bucolic, exploratory narratives of the new continental U.S. towards the hostile factory environments of expanding cities. Sylvia represents the possibility of leaving the city. Albeit she is portrayed as strange, she exists in a space unbothered by modernity, technology, and where she exists as a complete being unhindered by status, class, or gender. The young man is only interested in her for what she can provide him, and he blatantly ignores the woes of the human past as is represented in the grandmother sharing family details with him. He does not care for the sentimental memory or the events that led Sylvia to be enmeshed in the wilderness. Sylvia, as the present environmentalist, does not make sense to any of the values or aspirations of the hunter naturalist, but he is kind to her because she clearly knows what his formal education cannot provide him.

The home Jewett constructs in the wilderness, inhabited by the grandmother of the past and the young girl of the present, should invoke several other stand-alone forest homes in New England for the environmentalist reader. The house of Henry David Thoreau and his infamous attempt at modest living in a dwelling constructed by his own hands should come to mind. By creating a temporal void between nine-year-old Sylvia and the grandmother, Jewett makes space for the woman environmentalist voice, especially considering the Sylvia does not end up revealing the white heron to the young man. Omniscient narration allows for the admission that the young hunter finds the New England farmstead home to be quite satisfactory and accommodating. It does not share qualities with those that "share their space with chickens." Jewett invokes the largely male history of the transcendentalist cloistering himself away in the woods, but for reasons that concede to the realist, naturalist style of the time, she is careful not to romanticize Sylvia, her life, or her grandmother. Nonetheless, the structure of her life mirrors many of Thoreau's statements and sentiments. Sylvia lives in the forest not for romanticized, experimental purposes but to escape oppressive socializing, "a red-faced boy who tormented her" and because she was presumed to do better in a life lived in wilderness. In Barney Nelson's *The Wild and the Domestic: Animal Representation, Ecocriticism, and Western American Literature* (2000), she explains that women in the wilderness almost always engendered fear or threat which is why the majority of environmental writing is male and genders itself as such. "The

American wilderness was never imagined by women the same way it was imagined by men" (Nelson, 2000) says Nelson of the early American landscape. Jewett interjects both female youth, quiet and observant, and elderly female presence, which the young man for all his technological, modern knowledge can easily compartmentalize and ask for sustenance. It is, after all, the women's' job to care for the man while he seeks to dominate the wilderness and the animals within it. As Nelson points out, most edited versions of transcendental writing exclude and erase the encounter of men in domestic settings, specifically editing out men's meeting and appreciation for animals. In this way, Jewett's short story subverts both trends illustrated by Nelson. The hunter naturalist seeks out the animal and must go through two layers of female environmental stewardship to access it. The young man asks for physical access to goods procured by these two women, ignores their history, and implores them for information. He offers them money, which details how little he understands the economy of wilderness in which they live. His offer of money serves to signify the empty promises of modernity and industrialization. Currency offers nothing to the environmentalist. Their home is sustained through work and yet they still have more to give. The space of the actual home where Sylvia and her grandmother live is important in its symbolic connection to Thoreau and Jewett's insistence that the inhabitants of the house in the woods are now female.

Male presence in the forest stirs considerably less interest in the female protagonist than any other species of animal. Sylvia's interest is not in the evening conversation, but in how a frog has been deterred from reaching its home underneath the cabin's front steps. Though she contemplates the money and romantic potential presented by the young man, Sylvia's thoughts remain on her interactions with nonhumans. Spending time together in the forest, the young man explains scientific information about birds that Sylvia neither retains nor seems very interested in. her knowledge of the woods and its creatures is innate and derives from her actual relationship with the animals. Sylvia struggles with the desire to please the young man but also does not want to sacrifice the life of the strange bird he seeks. Omniscient narration details an internal conflict because her physical relationship with the young man consists of her hardly ever speaking. Like an animal, she follows him but never speaks first even if the topic conversation veers into a topic in which her knowledge surpasses his. Sylvia's interest in the young man concedes that some progress is enticing, but it is important to remember that Sylvia struggled in the city environment. Her forest home is not uncivilized or unkept. She lives in the tradition of those who chose the woods, especially the writers, but her silence hides a welling debate within her about wanting to pursue societal constructs or "dreams" of love or more concrete promise of economic prosperity. Sylvia has a hard time reconciling the actual intentions of the young man because she likes him so much. In the tradition of Audubon, he must kill the white heron to study it but she only knows for certain that she would like him more without his guns. Her subtly stated opinion is that the bird does not need to be killed to be preserved. Nevertheless, multiple motivations spur Sylvia on to see if she can indeed locate the bird. Sylvia's decision to leave in the middle of the night writes her as both fearless and without the inhibitions of a typical urban child. She has the autonomy and the fearlessness not often attributed to girl children. Her

quiet observations, thanks to omniscient narration, are enough to spur her on to see if where the strange bird lives. Locating the tallest pine in the forest, Sylvia seeks out the White Heron from a higher vantage point. The encounter that follows determines the outcome for Sylvia, the bird, and the young man.

5 Sylvia's Ascension

Sylvia climbing the tree to encounter the actual white heron is the pinnacle moment of significance. Through sticky, stiff hands and branches that scrape and cut her "like talons" the young girl climbs what seems to be the old pine's never-ending staircase of branches of the old pine. She ascends the tree, which Jewett assesses loves her more than any of the other birds, due to her physical toughness and mental perseverance. The physical reality of having to battle the flora of the landscape builds a physically strong character. To ascend that tree is to climb something inherently natural, painful, rife with abundant and undeniable reasons for her to stop climbing. She continues partially to get to a better physical vantage point but also to exhibit her own animal qualities. After all, despite Sylvia's complicated interactions with and feelings towards the humans of the story, upon her initial arrival at the farm, she is greeted by a solitary cat, and it is the lone cat that convinces that Sylvia is in the correct place, that she never wishes to go home. Climbing the tree to get to the heron encounter also critiques the idea that men dominate, explore, and chart the landscape by expanding westward, but it is the girl child who charts the unknown by looking inward; by climbing the tree. While the closing of the frontier threatens the amassing definition of "Americanness," Sylvia climbs upward, to become a bird. This is something John Muir will write about eight years after Jewett, and something Terry Tempest Williams will recreate in several of her novel connections between women and birds. As she predates Muir's action of climbing a tree in a windstorm, Jewett's original action links it forevermore to the pursuit and connection to the animal. At nearly every turn, it is the animal that defines the minuscule plot-points and turns. Once in the tree, after climbing through a painful barrage of impediments, Sylvia gets to see the heron's nest. Several important distinctions are made in this brief sequence of events. Sylvia's climb to survey the environment is dependent upon the survival of nature; the tree must be standing in order for her to see the surrounding landscape. The climax of the plot is impossible if the forests are razed in the name of industrialization or urbanization. We can only see the environment and its animals as they are by truly entering the painful reality of nature. As naturalism dictates, we are human beasts, but we are capable of enduring more than simply plodding trails. Even the young hunter naturalist does not think to scale such a natural giant as does Sylvia, which subverts gender roles by having the young girl climb the tree. When the white heron lands on the tree, an ethereal moment takes place when the bird lands on Sylvia's same branch. She has climbed through a harsh, unforgiving wilderness to find the bird and once it sees her, it considers her worthy of its company and comes to see her eye to eye. Sylvia meets the bird in its habitat, which, arguably, sustains

Sylvia as well. It allows her to survey the forest she calls home, and, in one of her purest moves of personification, the grandfather of the pine tree loves the young girl best of all.

> The tree.. must truly have been amazed that morning through all its ponderous frame as it felt this determined spark of human spirit wending its way from higher branch to branch. Who knows how steadily the least twigs held themselves to advantage this light, weak creature on her way! The old pine must have loved his new dependent. More than all the hawks, and bats, and moths, and even the sweet voiced thrushes, was the brave, beating heart of the solitary grey-eyed child. (Jewett, 2013, p. 84).

The climb is an integral part of the story for it is how she is able to see the heron's nest and meet the heron high in the boughs of the pine. Jewett's suggestion as to how to find the animal you seek will be echoed nearly a century later in his insistence that one must crawl through the desert to see anything. It is in the tree that Sylvia sees many things she was previously unable to or unaware of their proximity to her. She sees the ships at sea, the towns, other animals, but most importantly she finds what she is looking for. The girl has successfully integrated her small frame into that of the tree so that she is barely noticed by the white heron as it lands on a branch near her. "And wait! Wait! Do not move a foot or a finger, little girl, do not send an arrow of light and consciousness from your two eager eyes for the heron has perched on a pine bough not far beyond yours, and cries back to his mate on the nest and plumes his feathers for the new day!" (Jewett, 2013). The heron is a living being. He has a mate and he lives independent of Sylvia or any other human. This moment's importance is enhanced by the drastic narrative shift in which Jewett instructs the girl to "wait! Wait!" and "look! Look!" Thus is the inherent power of the environmental writer; to emphatically push those who have already journeyed far into the realm of the tops of trees to seek the animal. Wait and look are commands less for Sylvia than for the auditor of the story. It is the reader who needs to look and wait; the reader who eventually sees that once located, the heron must not be sacrificed to the hunter's gun because of the encroaching development as viewed from the top of the pine. Civilization will eventually destroy the heron's nest and kill the bird, but Sylvia denies the hunter naturalist access to the bird. In the ultimate move of environmentalist agency, Sylvia keeps the bird's location to herself. Had she not seen with her own eyes, the mystery of why she refused to speak when she had many reasons to, she might have decided to err in favor of the temptations of the industrialized world. Equal parts her tenacity in climbing the tree, her silent nature, and her at ease amongst animals, Sylvia encounters the animal and it lives. The young man leaves disappointed and continues to kill.

A film adaptation of "The White Heron" (1978) actualizes on screen what this woodland girl would look like, act like, and what her actions in the narrative would mean in reality. Because it is a short story, it straddles a line between reading as a parable, meant to teach lessons, or potentially making a cultural critique, which literary scholars today see Jewett as clearly making. Writing for women in the nineteenth century was an act of There is nothing overtly farce or unrealistic about the short story, which is why it belongs to the genre of environmental writing. Adapted to the screen, Sylvia's eccentricities, youth, and reluctance to speak are highlighted for

how odd they might seem. True to the dialogue for the most part, the film interrogates what a real animal and nature-loving child is like; perhaps nearly silent. It is hard to hear the voice of Sylvie so we must look to her actions. The film highlighting the existence of the character compounds the importance of the relationship of the young girl to the animals she encounters. Her one choice, her one actions of not speaking is precisely what saves the white heron.

This reinforces the importance of writing animal encounters, according to Jewett. Sylvia does not live a life where she would record such a story, and even if she did, it would be even shorter than the length of Jewett's concise tale. What cannot be conveyed through film is the attention Sylvia pays to each individual animal. From start to finish, she is searching for the cow, accompanying her back to the house, watching frogs, remembering cats, and reflecting on the many different bird varieties that inhabit the forest. The only item that garners her scorn is the gun; that which would end the life of an animal. The reality of Sylvia's experience with the hunter naturalist makes her seem incredibly odd, but that constructs an important distinction between societal expectations of young girls and what is necessary to protect animals that we so clearly form close bonds with. Sylvia would be an outcast in comparison to the young man, but such is the case of many environmentalist thinkers. Like Jewett herself, they were loners, and their most important relationships were those with the land and her animals.

Of all the powerfully subversive turns of phrase and dismantling of gendered tropes in Jewett's short story, the most revolutionary moment in her literary contribution is the portrayal of the meeting with the white heron. In a scene that melds a physical environmental undeniably raw and treacherous, Sylvia's body itself is removed from the ground, not to be swayed by industrial urban life nor by the quaint past of the bucolic. Not only does she divine a method of surveying the vast landscape for the bird, something the naturalist for all his formal education does not conjure, but she successfully locates the bird after using her strength to ascend into the tree. She does not attempt to destroy the tree or circumnavigate the unpleasant aspects of using the tree to gain perspective. She takes the sap and injuries in stride, and she is rewarded with a view of the creature's nest. By climbing the tree, she makes the tree an environment that is suitable for a young girl. Nothing tragic befalls her when she climbs or descends. It hints that she has climbed trees before. Sylvia meets the white heron in a space as far removed from technology or industrialism as possible. They encounter one another in a tree, on a high branch.

6 Conclusion

What goes unsaid in Jewett's tale is that Sylvia's choice is an odd one. Not many people would make the choice she does to save the heron rather than appease a possible love interest or for economic gain. Jewett therefore writes the inevitable death of the heron in this encounter. Though the story of the white heron is highly possible, no doubt that things of such sorts have happened and will continue to happen

in contemporary ways, but the overpowering truth is that even the title suggests a rarity. “The White Heron” evokes a singularity; that only this one little girl could have made such a choice, and she did so because of her ingrained connection to wilderness. Sylvia gets to encounter the bird on its own branch in a moment that is completely personal and private. The bird does not fear Sylvia, and she will not reveal its location to the young man. It is uncertain whether or not the naturalist will find the bird regardless. It is Sylvia’s refusal to disclose information privy only to her to someone seeking to destroy the animal. If the white heron is killed, Sylvia’s environment begins to change. She will no longer have access to private knowledge, to a perspective of habitats independent of human developments. Writing the animal is destroying the animal for how it is clear that this moment is rare. The past does not have access to these moments because of their own strife and struggle to survive, and the future does not seek to encounter an animal in a way that allows it to live. Thanks to Audubon, Roosevelt, and other naturalists, the pessimistic view that animals should be killed to be preserved in museums, the animals are always already dead objects and never living beings to be considered alongside our human identities.

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Intersectionality-Gender and the Nonhuman

Into the Woods: The Creaturely and the Queer in 20th Century US American Hunting Narratives

Daniel Lanza Rivers

Abstract This chapter analyzes intertextual representations of white American masculinity and its human and nonhuman others as they arise across a referential chain of three 20th Century hunting novels: William Faulkner's *Go Down Moses* (1942), Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967), and *James Dickey's Deliverance* (1970). The chapter locates these texts within two historical, political, and conservationist contexts: first, the emergence of federal wilderness enclosure programs and white men's outdoors and eugenics organizations in the 1910s–40s, and second, within the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the social and environmental movements of the 1960s. Throughout my analysis of textual representations of hunting, racialized and colonial inhumanity, and nonhuman animality in these texts. I develop a queer ecological and critical race theory of "the creaturely." This theory responds to work from Alex Weheliye, Sarah Ensor, and Donna Haraway, and articulates the posture of environmental attunement, interspecies identification, and interracial alliance that emerges in these texts among queer, racialized, and colonized humans and the nonhuman animals and ecologies that make life under the shadow of ritualized violence.

1 Introduction: Men in the Woods

Writing in 1925, Edward A. Goldman of the Bureau of Biological Survey asserted that "large predatory mammals, destructive to livestock and to game, no longer have a place in our advancing civilization" (Alagona, 2013, p. 76). Penned thirty-five years after the so-called "closing" of the US frontier and just nine years after the enclosure of federal wilderness areas, Goldman's words echoed the sentiments of monied white hunters, who had spent the last half-century enclosing the best hunting land as private game reserves, which locals could only access as staff members.

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Working across local, state, and national levels, these elite sportsmen formed the backbone of conservationist discourse during a period of intense wildlife decline, and used their privileged social positions to advocate for "game laws that effectively wrote their own sporting ideals into legal statutes" (Warren, 1997, p. 14). An influential arm of this effort was the Boone and Crockett Club, a hunting and conservation organization founded by Theodore Roosevelt in 1887 and later helmed by eugenicist Madison Grant (Stearn, 2005, 122). The Club was comprised of men from Ivy League backgrounds who promoted a vision of environmental stewardship that emphasized "fair chase" hunting by monied whites and disparaged subsistence and commercial hunting by immigrant, Native, and working-class men as unmanly and environmentally disruptive. Like many elite hunting organizations of its time, the Club advocated for wilderness management laws that instituted fees for noncitizens and made it illegal to hunt for sale—this despite the fact that many sport hunters also ate their catch and sold surpluses on the market (Taylor, 2016).

As hunting shifted from private reserves to federal and state lands in the early twentieth century, white sport hunters continued to play an active role in shaping visions of U.S. American masculinity (Bederman, 1995). The new ideals of manhood they championed synthesized nostalgia for the so-called "closure" of the frontier with emerging eugenicist discourses that articulated white supremacy, heterosexual virility, and U.S. nationalism using the evolutionary the vocabulary of fitness and species progress through sexual selection.

In response to a popular outcry against the decline in wildlife brought by mass hunting in the late nineteenth century, hunting statutes began to propagate, targeting Native, nonwhite, and immigrant men who hunted for subsistence and sale. In the East, these statutes were used to harass Italian and southern European immigrants, while similar policies in the Jim Crow South worked to further restrict Black residents' access to food, resources, and self-determination apart from the stacked deck of the sharecropping system (Bederman, 1995; Taylor, 2016). Rural whites could rely on some leverage in disputes over subsistence hunting, but this advantage was shaped by discourses that ambivalently referred to them as "white Indians" (Montrie, 2011, p. 50). In the U.S. West, Native men who practiced traditional forms of hunting and ecological management faced steep fines, imprisonment, and extralegal violence from whites asserting racialized, settler claims to enclosed environments. This specter of settler violence emerged from and reproduced colonial postures of paternalism that shaped the Allotment Act of 1887 and the "compulsory attendance" policy of residential boarding schools passed in 1891. Together, these policies sought to reorganize and dissolve Native land claims, break with treaty obligations to Native nations, and fracture the intergenerational transmission of ecological and cultural knowledge while making Native labor available to industrial manufacture and white domestic service (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014).

As these racial and settler histories suggest, game management and wilderness enclosure were a piecemeal affair throughout the late nineteenth century, but they began to embody a rising interest in evolutionary logics of competition and fitness

during the early decades of the 1900s. In the public sphere, social Darwinist sentiments interwove popular thinking about masculinity, white supremacy, and the scientific management of fertility with ideals of nature and the recreational outdoors. These latter strains of social and environmental thought found expression in a range of youth development organizations that located white heteromasculine dominance over a Native, racialized, and nonhuman world as a reflection of "nature." Theodore Roosevelt spent the majority of his career positioning himself as the standard-bearer of this shift after his first foray into state politics saw him mocked as effeminate and possibly queer (Bederman, 1995, p. 170). After buying a ranch out West, Roosevelt spent the rest of his career cultivating an image of rugged, white-supremacist masculinity through popular writings and speeches that encouraged US American men to combat the effeminizing influence of city life by committing themselves to a life of "strenuous endeavor" modeled on killing nonhuman animals and embodying imperialist fantasies of pioneer settlement. Within this cultural backdrop, youth scouting organizations established by Earnest Thompson Seton (Woodcraft Indians, 1901) and Daniel Beard (Sons of Daniel Boone, 1905) used mimetic and imaginative practices of "playing Indian" to develop young white boys into men whose gender expression aligned with the disciplined, hardy, and virile ideals of American manhood (Deloria, 1999). A primary way this transformation was accomplished was through the teaching of outdoor skills such as hunting, which were intended to regulate the boys' wildness, harden their nerves, and prime them for entry into the capitalist terrain of modern U.S. society.

Even after the eugenic vocabulary of social-Darwinism fell out of fashion in the wake of the Holocaust, the racial, sexual, and gendered cosmologies of masculinity and nature that emerged during the early twentieth century continued to shape the ways that white US American men would use the sport killing of nonhuman animals to imagine and negotiate their gender identity. By the 1960s, turn-of-the-century conceptions of hunting were infused with new anxieties about dominance and homosexuality that trace their roots to early discourses of heterosexual virility and environmental dominance.

We can see the imprint of these shifting conceptualizations across a citational chain of U.S. American hunting novels that stage encounters between white hunters and a racialized, unruly, and eventually queer outdoors. The first novel in the chain I will consider here is William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses,* which entered the literary marketplace in 1942, amid the reverberations of the early twentieth century outdoorsmanship craze. Using representations of animality and the manly hunt, Faulkner's novel dramatizes the social Darwinist visions of race and nature that scaffolded early sport hunting discourse and inflected youth development ventures that emerged alongside them. The novel stages the recreational interests of a group of white male sport hunters against the survival strategies of Old Ben, a notoriously unkillable grizzly. Along the way, *Go Down, Moses* charts the racial and gendered horizons of U.S. outdoorsmanship through its presentation of Isaac McCaslin, the white southern boy whose tutelage in the outdoors leads him to reject the violent legacies of southern white manhood in favor of an environmentally-attuned sterility.

After analyzing Faulkner's representations of masculinity, animality, and the outdoors. I trace the intertextual afterlives of Faulkner's novel in Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* (1967) and James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970). For Mailer, hunted animals continue to reflect an interface between sexuality and manhood, even as his framing of the outdoors underscores mid-century shifts in popular thinking about public land and anxieties about an emergent gay visibility. In many ways, Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* reads as a prologue to James Dickey's *Deliverance,* which unironically replaces hunted animals with gay assailants who test a group of suburban white men's ability to revive and embody the styles of frontier manliness that trace their roots to early enclosure period. Throughout my analysis of these novels, I articulate a critical framework of becoming creaturely where "the creaturely" charts a mode of interspecies and interpersonal intimacy that actively resists and retreats from heteromasculine and anthropocentric notions of nature and the natural. This posture of becoming embraces the undecidabile interiority of nonhuman worlds and locates animality not as a site of domination and abjection, but as a vector of intimacy-in-surrender that challenges the hegemonic momentum of US men's dominance over nature and the multispecies world.

2 Into the Big Woods: Wilderness Masculinity and Its Creaturely Others in William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses.*

Go Down, Moses' central novella, "The Bear," chronicles a Southern hunting party's yearly attempts to enter "the big woods" and kill the grizzly Old Ben (Faulkner, 1991 [1942]) Faulkner's presentation of these trips revises and refashions the preoccupations of elite sport hunters and boys' adventure societies by positioning Sam Fathers as a Native guide who teaches the young Isaac McCaslin how to navigate the woods through a posture of playing Indian that emphasizes environmental attunement and decenters settler postures of anthropocentric and gendered domination. In addition to being discursively queered as a "barren" member of his ancestral line, Fathers' racialization is entangled with histories of enslavement and articulated through dehumanizing associations that compare his hair to "a horse's mane" and his freedom to that of "a bear in a cage" (1991 [1942], p. 161). Fathers' animalization is part of a constellation of moments wherein the novel articulates racial regimes of chattel slavery and Native dispossession that trace their roots to the scientific racism of the nineteenth century (Allewaert, 2013; Kim, 2015). Another locus of this representational strategy is Lucas Beauchamp, an unacknowledged member of the McCaslin family line whose claims to the estate are obfuscated by deliberate omissions of the sexual violence his mother endured. Lucas is a free black man who was born to enslaved parents, and who works the McCaslin estate as a sharecropper under Edmonds, the reigning head of the McCaslin family. Like Fathers, Lucas' dehumanization is articulated through animalizing associations that liken his

"impenetrable" affect to that of a sleeping horse and his eyes to those "of a bayed animal—a bear, a fox" (pp. 67 & 54). Like the wilderness management paradigms that shape its representations of hunting, *Go Down, Moses* positions animality as a fertile symbolic network that entangles shifting epistemes of race and property with queer abjection from environmental domination, virile masculinity, and the biopolitics of primogeniture.

As Lucas' comparison to "a bayed… bear" suggests, the resonances of racialized inhumanity constellated throughout the novel also shape Faulkner's representations of Old Ben, the grizzly bear whose potential death organizes white hunters' yearly entry into the big woods. Old Ben's masculine naming and physical endurance situate him as a material embodiment of the racial, gendered, and reproductive preoccupations that subtended the predator control debates of the nineteen-teens and -twenties. Isaac's move to relate to Old Ben horizontally—instead of of trying to dominate or kill him—situates Old Ben as a mediating figure between the heteromasculine protocols of southern manhood and Isaac's attempts to move outside these protocols. When Isaac sets out to see Old Ben, Sam Fathers instructs him to leave his rifle behind. Isaac proceeds to lose himself in the woods and stumble across Old Ben's scarred paw print. When he realizes that the creature has been studying him for some time, Isaac is overcome by "an abjectness" and "a sense of his own fragility and impotence against the tireless woods" that functions as an anti-masculine posture of environmental attunement and surrender (Faulkner & Down, 1991 [1942], p. 192).

Isaac's encounter with Old Ben rehearses a common trope in hunting stories, which positions contact with a nonhuman predator as an initial step toward mastering the wilderness by killing the creature. In fact, the textual details of Isaac's encounter recall a similar moment in Theodore Roosevelt's 1885 publication, *Hunting Trips of a Ranchman,* which finds Roosevelt coming "across the huge, half-human footprints of a great grizzly, which must have passed by within a few minutes" (Haynes & Haynes, 1979, p. 123). In a manner similar to Isaac's shifting perception of the big woods, Roosevelt recalls, "It gave me rather an eerie feeling in the silent, lonely woods, to see for the first time the unmistakable proofs that I was in the home of the mighty lord of the wilderness. I followed the tracks in the fading twilight until it became too dark to see them any longer" (ibid). Published early in his career, Roosevelt's narrative performance of tracking and killing this grizzly was part of his broader attempt to position himself as a virile embodiment of U.S. manliness (Bederman, 1995). In *Go Down, Moses,* Isaac's white hunting companions reflect this Rooseveltian attitude toward nonhuman animals as they pursue Old Ben as a "head bear," whom they've failed to kill because they "ain't got the dog yet" (Faulkner & Down, 1991 [1942], pp. 190–195). The party's reliance on canine power to hunt Old Ben deviates markedly from the standards of elite hunters, and instead it restages colonial histories of conquest and enslavement in the Americas, which relied on canines' capacity for attachment, discipline, and violence to position dogs as living

technologies whose selective breeding amplified settlers' ability to control space and wield violence against the colonized and the enslaved.[1]

Isaac's quest to relate horizontally with Old Ben, by contrast, decenters the human as Isaac learns to recognize the print of Old Ben's "trap-ruined" paw better than that of his own shoe (185). Donna Haraway has described the practice of "becoming companion species" as a practice of multispecies alliance that "creates a category of its own" by cultivating responsibility within "the belly of the monster of inherited histories that have to be inhabited and transformed" (2003, p. 96). Throughout *Go Down, Moses,* Isaac learns to become companion species by recalibrating his perception of, and investment in, the big woods in ways that bend his personal development away from the postures of interspecies domination that position Old Ben as a crucible of virile heteromasculine mastery. In later stages of the novel, this attunement broadens to incorporate a rejection of the biopolitical hierarchies of racial and sexual violence that have excluded Lucas Beauchamp from the McCaslin family and its streams of inheritance. This process, which I call becoming creaturely, lends itself to a provisional and mostly individuated posture of attunement and alliance with racialized kin and more-than-human environments. As a posture of becoming, the creaturely engages in a mode of queer ecological futurity that shares resonances with the nonreproductive environmentalism that Sarah Ensor has called "spinster ecology." For Ensor, spinster ecology "envision(s) a mode of environmental futurity separated from the imperatives of biological reproduction," which is "attentive to affects customarily considered too weak or quiet to be politically efficacious," but which nonetheless "practices an avuncular form of stewardship, tending the future without contributing directly to it" (2012, pp. 409–410). Though the creaturely shares aspects of spinster ecology's emphasis on the muted politics of nonreproductivity, it also engages directly with the dehumanizing regimes of species that frame nonwhite bodies as "less-than-human." In his analysis of the racializing logics that have scaffolded chattel slavery and its afterlives, Alexander Weheliye directs us to conceive of racialization as a "conglomerate of sociopolitical relations" that naturalize the perception of race as a biological truth by parsing humans into categories of "fully human" and "less-than-human" (2014, p. 3). In Faulkner's novel, Isaac becomes creaturely by embracing an anti-white supremacist and anti-heteronormative posture that turns him toward the woods as a space of escape and possibility that is emphatically presentist. Isaac's process of tethering to the big woods thus derails him from the prevailing regimes of U.S. American manliness and aligns his life with an ecosystem that is losing ground to the encroachment of modern industry, including a railroad that passes the woods *en route* to a western timber company.[2]

Though Old Ben resists and evades the hunters for many seasons, he is finally brought down by the white hunter Boon and Lion, a dog whose embodiment of

[1] For more, see Johnson (2009). You should give them blacks to eat: Waging inter-American wars of torture and terror. *American Quarterly. 61*(1). 65–92.; Shukin (2013). Security bonds: On feeling power and the fiction of an animal governmentality. *ESC. 39*(1). 177–198.; and Freccero (2011). Carnivorous virility; Or, becoming-dog. *Social Text. 29*(1). 177–195.

[2] See Charles A. Aiken, "A Geographical Approach to William Faulkner's "The Bear," *Geographical Review,* 71:4, 1981, 446–459.

instrumentalized coevolution is reflected in his "strange ... blued gun barrel" fur (Faulkner & Down, 1991 [1942], p. 209). In the moment of Old Ben's death, Lion takes hold of the bear's throat and Boon flings himself astride the bear, "as if he had hurled himself onto the mule" and stabs, "his left arm under the bear's throat where Lion clung" (231). The racializing, colonial, and interspecies violences entangled in this scene give way to Sam Fathers' death, and Fathers collapses the moment Old Ben Falls. Fathers' death is followed by Lion's own, marking the beginning of a retreating frontier motif that relegates Fathers to a trope of noble vanishing that facilitates Isaac's spiritual rebirth. The spiritual death of the big woods hangs over the remainder of the novel as Isaac returns home, confronts Edmonds about Lucas' Beauchamp's exclusion from the McCaslin inheritance, and then retreats to the big woods.

The novel's close finds Isaac visiting Sam Fathers' grave and figuratively replacing his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, with a snake whom he addresses as "Grandfather" (314). This decision to become creaturely through non-reproductive alignment with the big woods reflects Faulkner's own ambivalence about actively dismantling the Jim Crow state, and also stands in marked relief to Boon's descent into a spiral of frustrated conquest over the nonhuman. After encountering the snake at Fathers' grave, Isaac hears a sound like the "hammering of a gun-barrel against a piece of railroad iron" and follows it to find Boon sitting among a group of squirrels, holding a jammed rifle (314). Sighting Isaac, Boon warns him off, saying, "Don't touch a one of them! They're mine!" (315). At the scene's close, Faulkner leaves Boon untethered and tool-less in the woods, unsure of his own shame, but propelled forward by the specter of its possibility while the group of squirrels looks on.

3 Are We not Men?: Mailer and Dickey Queer the Woods

The United States had been engaged in the Vietnam War for roughly nine years when the Wilderness Act of 1964 became law. By mid-century, national parks and wilderness spaces had become sites of scientific inquiry and conservation, and federal powers over game and land use were extended by the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 and the Endangered Species Acts of 1966, 1969, and 1973, marking what would become a 109% increase in conservation organizations between 1968 and 1986 (Alagona, 2013, pp. 99–100). Throughout this time, white American men continued to seek narrative and material escape in wilderness spaces, but the function of these spaces shifted from eugenic refuges for virility into imagined refuges from the challenges to white male hegemony brought by the social movements of the 1960s.

Published during the late 60 s and the turn of the 70s, Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam* (1967) and James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970) revise Faulkner's hunt and restage the universalized "big woods" as a wild outdoors that is suffused with Cold War anxieties about masculinity, US military might, and the rising visibility of homosexual men. Both novels participate in a chain of intertextual references

as Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam?* restages Isaac's nonreproductivity through an entangling of homoerotic and interspecies intimacies, and Dickey's *Deliverance* offers readers a wilderness-excursion that is bereft of animals and haunted by queer assailants who lurk behind the tree line. The entry of homoerotics into the hunting milieu here reflects a national turn toward retrofitting public park spaces to suit the norms heterosexual family making. These initiatives organized campsites around a panoptic paradigm that ensured visibility from the road and likened campgrounds to suburban cul-de-sacs (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erikson, 2007, 19). These adjustments were ostensibly meant to court normative and suburban visitors, but they had the added effect of expanding park staffs' daily mission to include policing and expelling hippies, who were believed to use these spaces for drug use, and gay men, who were known to use the recreational outdoors for cruising and public sex.

Both of these texts mobilize the frontier, the hunt, and the nonhuman to present the frontierized wilderness as a thoroughly imaginary stand-in for enlistment in the Vietnam War. As Mailer and Dickey's narratives collapse distinctions between nonhuman animals and queer men, they position queerness and animality as vectors of domination that constitute the excluded horizons of a straight masculine nature.

4 Queering the Outdoors in *Why Are We in Vietnam?*

Norman Mailer's *Why Are We in Vietnam* relocates the ritual bear hunt of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* to the Alaskan wilderness and rewrites Isaac and Sam Fathers as the adolescent Texans DJ and Tex. In a satire of the racial appropriations and stylistic innovations of the Beats, DJ intervenes throughout the novel with stream of consciousness interludes, or "Beeps," that revise Isaac McCaslin's rejection of the Jim Crow South into a partial and diffused critique of Cold War imperialism and Texan manliness. This revision arises most notably in Beep 8, when DJ muses on the conflict between relating with others through love, which he describes as "a dialectic, man, back and forth," or through hegemonic channels, which he characterizes as "direct current, diehard charge, no dialectic man, just one-way street, they don't call it Washington D.C. for nothing" (Mailer, 1967, p. 126). This tension between horizontality and hierarchy explicitly retains and reinterprets Faulkner's opposition between Isaac's move to become creaturely and the white hunters' violent domination of Old Ben. Mailer also relocates Faulkner's bear hunt from the big woods to Brooks Range, a recreational zone populated by exotic creatures, including grizzlies, that have become "crazy" after being wounded and abandoned by sport hunters (p. 66). Throughout the trip, DJ and Tex deride DJ's father, Rusty, for his attempts to use bear hunting to bolster his standing with his co-workers back in Texas. As they distance themselves from the other hunters, their encounters with the landscape and its creatures become a vehicle for sensing intimate and relational possibilities that depart from the hegemonic protocols of Cold War masculinity. In a revision of Sam Fathers' move to smear Isaac's face with deer blood after his first hunt, Tex and DJ shoot a wolf and drink its blood, tasting the "anger in the wolf's heart," and finding

themselves psychically attuned to the histories of violence that have shaped Brooks Range (p. 70). This psychic sensitivity blooms after DJ's father takes false credit for shooting a prized grizzly, and the boys doff their hunting gear in what DJ describes as a "purification ceremony" (p. 175) Free from the eyes of the hunters with "no other man for fifteen or twenty miles," they begin to spar with a tortured cocktail of homoerotic aggression (200). Tex tells DJ, "I… never sucked a cock in my life, but I'm going to make you the first. I'm going to suck your cock and bite it off" (p. 179). And DJ remarks, "Oh, man, you'd be a cha-cha faggot if you wasn't so ugly" (p. 179). This tense interplay between eroticism and homophobia is interrupted when a passing moose catches their attention and gives a "deep caw" that hails the boys by name (197). Like Isaac's first encounter with Old Ben, this moment engenders a shift in consciousness. Jacques Derrida has argued that brushing up against nonhuman animals' interiority can introduce a cycle of uncertainty in which, "I no longer know who, therefore, I am (following) or who it is I am chasing, who is following me or hunting me. Who comes before and who is after whom? I no longer know which end my head is" (2008, p. 10). This obscured perception is what prompts Timothy Morton to advocate for referring to nonhuman animals as "strange strangers," in a move that underscores the undecidability of animal worlds and the diagonal lines they trace through normative postures of anthropocentrism (2012). And as we've seen in Mailer's text, the queer desires between men that are experienced during a period of rising visibility can engender what Michel Foucault calls a psychosocial "desire-in-uneasiness" (1996, p. 309). As crossings between queer and interspecies desire arise at the climax of Mailer's novel, they reveal an iteration of the creaturely that articulates homoerotic, homosocial, and interspecies longings for significant otherness outside the normative regimes of frontierist heteromasculinity.

In Mailer's novel, the boys' encounter with the moose pushes them beyond their mocking fear of each other, and they find themselves infused with a "magnetic disturbance" that opens the way for homosexual contact as the narrator notes, "In the field of all such desire D.J. raised his hand to put it square on Tex's cock and squeezed" (202). But even as DJ and Tex begin to have sex, their desire is overwhelmed by a panic that whomever is penetrated will take violent revenge on the other, and this fear fractures their relational intimacy and routes them toward a violent militarism. Mailer writes, "something in the radiance of the North went into them, and owned their fear, some communion of telepathies and new powers, and they were twins, never to be near as lovers again, but killer brothers" (p. 204). This turn from intimacy to violence is amplified by the revelation that DJ's "beeps" are transmitted from the night before he and Tex ship out for Vietnam (p. 25). And so a novel that hardly mentions the Vietnam War offers an answer to its own question, suggesting that the nation's prolonged entrenchment in a war that was twelve years old at the time of the book's publication was a direct reaction to the growing visibility of social movements and queer lifestyles that challenged the hegemony of heterosexist paradigms of masculinity and nature. In so doing, Mailer's novel locates the oppositional posture of becoming-creaturely as a queer way of being, one that disrupts the social Darwinist logics of white imperial and anthropocentric domination embedded in the ritual of the hunt.

5 Queer Predators and the Return of the Frontier in James Dickey's *Deliverance*

James Dickey's *Deliverance* was wildly popular during the time of its publication, nearly snatching a Pulitzer for fiction and spinning off a film adaptation that gained $46 million at the box-office and garnered three Academy Award nominations.[3] For a hunting novel, *Deliverance* is marked by a notable absence of nonhuman predators, instead featuring a group of primitivized, working-poor, and predatory white homosexuals who stalk a group of white suburban men through an isolated stretch of the Appalachian wilderness. The novel's narrator, Ed, tells the reader that he and his friends enter this wilderness to see whether they "measure up" to their fantasies of outdoorsmanship in a place where no social "issues" can find them (Dickey, 1970, pp. 84 & 49). Throughout the novel, the group's canoe trip is continually likened to a Vietnam deployment, both through Ed's assertion that he "would have followed (Lewis) anywhere," and through his sustained anxiety about an attacker who can "flow as naturally as a snake or fog, going where we went, watching what we did" (p. 128). This military allegory is blended with resonances of settler violence through the homages to frontier exploration encoded in Lewis' name; in the centrality of bows, arrows, and canoes; and in Bobby's complaint that "this woods scene… is for the Indians" (p. 100). Reflecting on the novel's cultural work, Fredric Jameson argues that Dickey's protagonists experience nature and their assailants as "unconscious synonym(s) for underdevelopment," but I contend that this view misses the fraught aesthetics of settler violence and erasure that give this novel its coherence (1972, p. 186). Jameson's reading of the novel's rape scene as "posited as much on the conditioning and the shock potential of your audience as on any genuine deeper content or logic" similarly neglects a careful engagement with *Deliverance's* constellated references to homosexual panic and the erotics of the masculine body (ibid). Consistent with the tradition of hunting novels that precede it, *Deliverance* figures the wilderness as an imaginative proving ground where hierarchical postures of masculinity can be regenerated through violence, and where—in an intertextual nod to Mailer—queer erotics threaten to unman the hunters from within and without.

These threats surface most obviously in the specter of the so-called "hill people," who serve as nonnormative and violent embodiments of queerness and nativeness to the region. Dickey's hunting troupe encounters these locals early in the novel when the men stop to ask them for directions, and Lewis observes such strict obedience between a son and his father that he remarks, "we're lesser men" (Dickey, 1970, p. 47). Fears of these nonnormative men activate further layers of heteromasculine anxiety after Bobby is violently raped by an unknown assailant, and Ed speculates that Bobby has been "tainted" by the assault, and that he looked "willing" to let anything be done to him (128). Ed's suspicions about Bobby, and his ensuing quest to kill the escaped second assailant, are juxtaposed against the pleasure he takes from Lewis' body. Studying Lewis' naked form in the river, Ed notes, "I looked at him, for I

[3] Figure retrieved from *The Numbers*, Deliverance (1972) http://www.the-numbers.com/movie/Deliverance (Accessed 01.15.20).

have never seen him with his clothes off. Everything he had done for himself for years paid off…. I could tell by the way he glanced at me; the payoff was in my eyes. I had never seen such a male body in my life" (p. 102). In relief to this visual pleasure, Ed's ascension to a kind of frontier lawman is bolstered by a sensational fusion with the inanimate elements of the material environment—the mountains and river—which he describes as tapping into "some supernatural source of primal energy" (p. 224). By narrating Ed's transformation into a normatively masculine frontiersman in this way, *Deliverance* elides the undecidability of animal worlds in favor of a frontierized and militarized fantasy of self-sufficiency, one that positions Ed as a predictable white arbiter of justice in a queer and unruly outdoors.

6 Conclusion: The Creaturely and the Queer

Beginning in the late-nineteenth and continuing through the twentieth century, the bricolage of frontier and wilderness associations woven into notions of white heterosexual U.S. masculinity have positioned nonhuman animals, racialized humans, and queer men at the imaginative horizons of the disciplined outdoors. The imaginative and material manifestations of this environmental paradigm can be seen across an intertextual chain of hunting novels, beginning with William Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* and continuing through Norman Mailer's, *Why Are We in Vietnam?* and James Dickey's *Deliverance.* Taken together, these novels embody and reproduce a genealogy of interlocking tropes that discursively racialize and queer nonhuman animals by conflating predation with the excluded horizons of virile, white, heteromasculinity. Throughout these stories, the manly ritual of the hunt becomes a flexible terrain where manliness can also be countered, queered, and reencoded with interracial and interspecies alliances that reflect anti-masculine, anti-heteronormative, and anti-white supremacist longings for new relational intimacies among men and with the more-than-human world. Within this nexus of representation, animals become sympathetic figures whose unruliness and vulnerability are invested with counterhegemonic desires to dismantle and escape from the merciless, commercial, and imperial legacies of frontier manliness.

In the early twentieth century, these novels represent these possibilities through a departure from eugenic and frontierist notions of human and more-than-human nature prompted by white hunting and youth development organizations. During the 1960s, the creaturely appears in a citationally-legible but revised iteration that positions queer manliness and animality as the constitutive horizons of Cold War masculinity. Across both, the creaturely functions as a vector of imagination and anxiety that embodies the unruly outside of white hunters' control over public lands, and the animals and humans who make life there.

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Madness, Femininity, Vegetarianism: Post-anthropocentric Representations in Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* and Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor*

Katarzyna Nowak-McNeice

Abstract This chapter explores the limits of fictional depictions of animal rights activists deemed 'mad' or 'crazy' because of their femininity and their preoccupation with nonhuman animals, who resist the oppressive carnist systems of representation and try—with varying levels of success—to function outside the parameters of heteronormative, non-neurodiverse, patriarchal structures. The aim to discuss the possibility of challenging and escaping the overlapping discriminatory apparatuses of ableism, carnism, and sexism, and representing such a scenario in literary fiction as well as in film. The examples used to discuss the issue of exclusion on the basis of gender and species are Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead* (2018) and Agnieszka Holland's *Spoor* (2019), which serves as an example of a movie adaptation in which the idea of madness is related to political reality and animal rights activism. What emerges from this contrast is a multifaceted representation of the fictional madness—strictly connected with animal rights activism. The main argument in this chapter is that different media allow for different levels of non-anthropocentric representations of nonhuman animals, with adaptation (fiction to film) proposed as a possible scenario for liberation of representation mechanisms.

1 Introduction

The mutually reinforcing connections between madness and femininity have been well theorized: in her groundbreaking study *The Female Malady* Showalter (1985) demonstrated these links and showed the resulting insuperable impasse for Victorian women: one could either accept the notion of femininity and with it, accept one's madness; or one could reject it, and because of such nonconformity and rebellion be rejected by society as mad. Arguably, many face these paradoxical demands today; and when femininity and madness are combined with the notions of vegetarianism

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and animal activism, they expose what Adams (2010) dubs the "interlocking oppressions": a combination of speciesism and sexism. Adams calls for a recognition of these modes of violence, and it is in this feminist-vegan spirit that the readings of Tokarczuk's (2018) *Drive Your Plow over the Bones of the Dead* and Holland's (2019) *Spoor* are offered here.

Taking the concepts of femininity, madness, and animal activism as its departing points, this chapter aims to discuss the possibility of challenging and escaping the overlapping discriminatory apparatuses of ableism, carnism, and sexism, and of representing such a scenario in literary fiction and its adaptation to the film medium, in order to propose a posthumanist reading of representations of nonhuman animals in fiction and film as potentially post-anthropocentric. It focuses on the idea of adaptation as a possible mode of engagement with the notions of animality and humanity as monstrous, illustrating this possibility on the example of Tokarczuk's novel and Holland's film adaptation of the text: both the novel and its film adaptation feature characters whose violently externalized rebellion poses a threat to the gender and species hierarchy, ossified within the speciesist, patriarchal, and carnist structures of society.

My claim that the readings offered here will be in the spirit of posthumanism grows from an understanding of it which aligns with Barad's: Barad (2007) explains that posthumanism means a recognition of the crucial role that nonhumans play in "naturalcultural practices" which is to say "everyday social practices, scientific practices, and practices that do not include humans." More importantly, perhaps, Barad stresses a certain rebelliousness of the term itself: the "use of 'posthumanism' marks a refusal to take the distinction between 'human' and 'nonhuman' for granted" (p. 32). This refusal—which parallels the refusal to accept the notion of femininity that stigmatizes mental illness—has broader implications: posthumanist rejection of hierarchical divisions between humans and nonhumans means interrogating not just the idea of human superiority, but the very notion of humanity itself.

The female animal activist considered "mad" or "crazy" is a figure that has received some critical attention: Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey (2018) in their study *Animaladies* dissect the nature of (mostly negative) emotions and judgments that such a figure attracts. Explaining the eponymous animaladies, they point to the inextricable entanglement between malady, animals and women and they offer an insight into the aim of analyzing such a figure of dissent: animaladies is a term that points to "the dis-ease of current human–animal relationships, and the idea that acknowledging these maladies was a necessary catalyst for positive change (p. 18). In an essay included in the same volume, Frazer and Taylor discuss the negative connotations connected to the figures of women animal activists, pointing to the roots of the medicalized attention they received: at the beginning of the twentieth century, the term "zoophilpsychosis" was invented, to describe—and pathologize as a mental illness—a seemingly excessive attention to nonhuman animals displayed by patients, of whom the vast majority were female. Frazer and Taylor add, "To some extent this notion lives on," and they point to the term "crazy cat lady" (p. 193); Probyn Rapsey adds to this list "the 'hysterical' vegan, or 'crazy' activist" (p. 25). Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey explain the need to focus on these figures, even if such an attention

might be ridiculed or dismissed: "pathologizing human-animal relationships blocks empathy toward animals because the characterization of animal advocacy as mad, 'crazy,' and feminized, distracts attention from broader social disorder regarding human exploitation of animal life" (p. 19).

But even if a woman animal activist can be theorized and turned into a symbol and her madness into a method of resistance, literary figures who perform such functions are so far rarer. If we aim to offset the rarity of mad women-animal activists in fiction, we might want to look at a larger picture of representing nonhuman animals in fiction: albeit nonhuman animal figures abound, the underlying assumptions as to their merely utilitarian function makes it impossible for them to signify anything beyond the narrowly defined difference. McHugh (2009) warns against what she calls "a disappearing animal trick" which means analyzing animal figures in terms of metaphors, that is, "always as figures of and for the human," which "is a process that likewise ends with the human alone on the stage" (p. 24). Elsewhere McHugh (2011) offers some more optimistic remarks about narratives representing nonhuman animals, claiming that "stories can (and indeed always) do more than represent selves at the expense of others" (p. 217). This is where I see the potential of post-anthropocentric representations of nonhuman animals: through attention given to nonhumans, interpretations and readings of literary texts become the practice of a questioning and undermining of the traditional humanist model, based on human exceptionalism (whose obsolescence is signaled in the prefix post- in post-anthropocentric representation).

Such attention to nonhumans, which prepares the ground for their post-anthropocentric representations, derives from the spirit of "entangled empathy," Gruen's term, which, as the critic explains, "resists the division between reason and emotion and seeks to not just enhance our pursuit of justice but provide us with meaningful, caring 'crazy'—in the sense of counter-normative, excessive ways to enrich our relationships in that pursuit" (2018, p. 28). Seeing ourselves "entangled" and perceiving the other with sympathy allows us to step outside of the binaries (human–non-human, man—woman, rational–mad/crazy) that lie at the foundations of the humanist subject. My claim is that counter-normative subjectivities—such as the narrator of *Drive Your Plow* and even more so the narratorial voice in the movie *Spoor*—represent and dramatize the tension between the demands of the heteronormative, non-neurodiverse, dominant culture and the subversive undercurrent, exposing the exclusivity of humanist subject and forcing the dominant (the normative, the hegemonic, the anthropocentric) to acknowledge the "mad," resistant, centrifugal forces of the margin.

In this chapter, I focus on the literary and filmic representations of a character who accepts and exploits the label of a madwoman; my main claim is that the adaptation illustrates the different possibilities afforded by different media, such as novel and film, and it offers a possibility of post-anthropocentric representations of humans and nonhumans. I argue that seeing adaptation in terms of survival (after Hutcheon, 2013, and Leitch, 2012), and as monstrous (after Grossman, 2015) allows us to preserve and reclaim the links between 'madness' and femininity, while respecting neurodiversity, endowing it with empowering potential; what is more, it allows us to see adaptation

in terms of survival, creative potential and extension of life (of a text, of an idea, and of a literary trope), rather than derivative imitation and sterile repetition. My own extension of their arguments would be to see adaptation as mad: in this light, not only does an adaptation become endowed with creative and rebellious spirit, but the adapted text is also seen as extended and evolved, and its subversive potential realized.

2 *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*: Rebellious Femininity and Animal Rights Activism

Drive Your Plow is difficult to categorize: critics have described it as an "astonishing amalgam of murder mystery, dark feminist comedy and paean to William Blake" (Perry, 2018), a "philosophical lament disguised as a whodunit" (Ahsan, 2019), or an "ecological thriller" and a "*wunderkammer* of human and animal struggle and interdependence" (Weber, 2019); while making these different, at times contradictory claims, none of the critics is wrong. The novel comprises all these categories and genres, and in the blend lies its strength in reaching beyond the traditional, human-centered representations. Its philosophical underpinnings withstand scrutiny, as one finds references to thinkers whose examination of nonhuman animals have proved seminal: one hears echoes not only of the philosophical writings of William Blake, but also of Jeremy Bentham, Isaac Bashevis Singer, and Mahatma Gandhi.[1]

The main premise of the novel is characteristic of a crime story: there are people being murdered, and the search for the perpetrator moves the plot forward. The events take place in a small helmet where most houses are summer residencies, depopulated in winter. The narrator Janina explains the murders taking place in the wilderness as the revenge that animals are taking on humans for centuries of mistreatment—this theory, which Janina offers to the police investigators and anyone who would listen, is the main reason for her rejection of mainstream society: hunters and meat-eaters, whose lifestyle is legitimized by the church and all the other institutions of power. Janina is variously called by others in the text "crazy" (p. 48), "a madwoman" (pp. 78, 96, 129, 169), "a crazy old woman" (p. 177), and a "crazy madwoman" (p. 27), but even though she is hurt by these disparaging terms, she strategically accepts the label. Her taking on the accusation of "madness" that society hurls at her is a tactic that ultimately aims to disarm the critics—the majoritarian society—who must question the grounds for their own "sanity" and "rationality."

A similar rhetorical strategy is famously used by Thoreau in his dictum that under an unjust government, the place for a just man is in jail ("Civil Disobedience"); by the same token, in an insane world, the position for a rational person exposing the world's

[1] I discuss the philosophical underpinnings of Tokarczuk's novel in an essay "Madness, Femininity, Resistance: Pushing the Borders of Representation, on the Example of Laura Restrepo's *Delirium* and Olga Tokarczuk's *Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead*" included in a volume *Functional Diversity and Creativity: the Limits of Fiction* (Peter Lang, 2021 - forthcoming).

insanity is one of a madwoman. As Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey explain, "Reclaiming the 'crazy' is an important tactic" as it allows for a reevaluation of subject categories and an examination of the criteria for subjectivity and humanity. Gruen and Probyn-Rapsey highlight the fact that "'Crazy' projects reclaim a label, reverse the gaze, and (…) are attuned to the risk associated with being seen as mad and as angry, as unable to adjust to injustice" (p. 23). In this way, reclaiming the label of craziness, much like what happened with the terms "queer" or what is happening right now with the term "feminist" (for example in Poland, Tokarczuk's country of origin and the setting of her novel), means not only blunting the criticism of social rejection, but endowing the act of acceptance of the label with radical subversive potential. As Janina, the narrator, accepts the label of a "madwoman," those who see themselves in opposition, that is, those who perceive their own position as one of "rationality," are asked to examine the categories of "madness" and "sanity." Thus the novel issues an invitation to rebel against the stale unquestioned beliefs and positions: against the stigmatization and hypocrisy of the carnist, heterosexist, ableist and speciesist society.

Such a rebellion is easily understood within the feminist paradigm of the reversal of the gaze, but what is at stake is not only who looks at whom and who labels whom "mad"; the narrative rejects the patriarchal systems of representation, simultaneously inviting us to look searchingly at the very categories of humanity and animality. Redirecting the focus of inquiry away from what is considered a hysterical, pathologized attention to humanity's other means simultaneously pointing it toward human abuse of the nonhuman. It means questioning human exceptionalism which has brought us to the point of near-extinction and man-made ecological catastrophe on an unprecedented scale. Thus, redirecting the gaze away from the human is in itself a post-anthropocentric tactic.

The narrator is more than just a "crazy old woman" who sees the unjustness of the world. She is a complex, dynamic character: a teacher and former civil engineer, a translator and an astrologer, a recluse who takes on characteristics of a telluric goddess ("you are *created* for life underground" she is told by the doctor who treats her skin problems (p. 148)) and a hippie-era- style lover; but perhaps more importantly, she is the character who always turns toward nonhumans (which is the main reason why she is considered "mad"). Grusin (2015) explains what it means to turn toward the nonhuman: it means "not only to confront the nonhuman but to lose the traditional way of the human, to move aside so that other nonhumans (…) can make their way, turn toward movement themselves" (p. xx-xxi). This post-anthropocentric strategy: facing the nonhuman, and making space for their expression, is used in *Drive Your Plow*. Janina includes her dogs in her family, calling them her daughters, and observes the wild animals co-existing in the habitat with humans. Even in the way she describes herself, she takes such a turn: "I was widening my estates, like a solitary She-Wolf. I was thankful to leave behind the views of the houses and the road. I would go into the forest—I could wander around it endlessly" (p. 103). By pinning the mainstream views to the landmarks of civilization: "the views of the houses and the road," that is to say, the point of view related to, and deriving from, a particular position, a

stationary one, and one linked to the set routes, she suggests an alternative: the forest—route-less, un-domesticated, and free.

But the condition of a lone she-wolf is not one that the narrator chooses: it is when her nonhuman family members are killed by the hunters that she becomes a solitary figure. Janina calls her dogs her daughters, including them in her posthuman family, and unashamedly professes love for them. This connection between humans and nonhumans goes against the dominant vision of what a family unit should be, authorized by the church. The affect, and the widening of the scope of a family unit, are grating to the mainstream society; in the movie adaptation *Spoor*, the opening scene presents a priest preaching about the hierarchical structure of animals, with nonhuman ones subservient to the humans, and rejecting the narrator's understanding of the entanglement between species as mad: to the representative of the church, the nonhuman animals have no soul and no chance of salvation, and a human love for them amounts to blasphemy. Using words coded for deviation and abnormality, Haraway (2003) comments on the love between humans and companion animals: "Significantly other to each other, in specific difference, we signify in the flesh a nasty developmental infection called love. This love is an historical aberration and a naturecultural legacy" (p. 3). Including "infection" and "aberration" in this description means a recognition of the non-normative character of the affection between humans and nonhumans (in this instance dogs), and its subversiveness.

The entanglement between humans and nonhumans is represented in a variety of ways: the narrator includes companion animals in her family; she observes wild animals and identifies as one of them; and she also includes the nonhumans in a wider vision of the world that she is professing. When protesting the killing of animals (by hunters for sport and in factory farms), she asks her human interlocutor:

> But what about the deluge of butchered meat that falls on our cities day by day like never-ending, apocalyptic rain? This rain heralds slaughter, disease, collective madness, the obfuscation and contamination of the Mind. (…) The world is a prison full of suffering, so constructed that in order to survive one must inflict pain on others. Do you hear me?" I said. But now even the cleaner, disappointed by my speech, had set about his work, so I was only talking to the Poodle. (p. 76)

When the human fails to respond, dismissing the narrator's questioning as that of a crazy old woman, she nevertheless finds her audience: the nonhuman animal companion of the human she was originally addressing. The mere recognition of the nonhuman here, and its inclusion in the discourse, signals a post-anthropocentric shift in an understanding of subjectivity. A dog can be, and indeed is, at the receiving end of the discourse. The fact that we cannot know what the dog's perception is, further stresses and reinforces the post-anthropocentric character of the interaction: the human feelings or thoughts are not projected on the nonhuman animal; the nonhuman is not reduced to a mere screen for human reflection.

Such a withdrawal of projection is a tactic signaling the necessity to go beyond a human understanding of the world and always assuming a human perspective. Derrida (2008) states decisively that this is our obligation as humans:

> War is waged over the matter of pity. (…) To think the war we find ourselves waging is not only a duty, a responsibility, an obligation, it is also a necessity, a constraint that, like it or

> not, directly or indirectly, no one can escape. (…) And I say 'to think' this war, because I believe it concerns what we call 'thinking.' The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there. (p. 29)

The question of pity becomes a decisive one: we, as humans, need to see ourselves as living an equally pitiable life as nonhumans, and it is only in our recognition of humans as animals, and in our acceptance of the responsibility to reflect on the consequences of such a recognition, that we can situate the beginnings of philosophical inquiry. We stand naked before our nonhuman companions: this is the baseline for an examination of our humanity; and both *Drive Your Plow* and *Spoor* recognize this requirement.

3 The "Madness" of Film Adaptation

The movie makes the connection between humans and nonhumans visually convincing: when we see the animals returning the gaze of the humans, we must at least provisionally accept the explanation that the animals become endowed with agency and that they take to the killing of their oppressors. The extreme close-ups of mouth and eyes turn the human characters into nonhumans, estrange them, and blur the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals (which is also visible in the film poster for the Polish release of the movie, under the original language title *Pokot*), suggesting a monstrosity that does not apply to nonhuman characters. The nonhumans: deer, boar, dogs, insects, are all presented as looking, and reacting. The visual suggestion that the adaptation professes is that the nonhumans are agents in their own right. The novel presents the philosophical references underlying such a view; even if they might be lost in the movie, the film and the novel explore different opportunities afforded by each medium.

My argument on adaptation aligns with Hutcheon's (2013) and Leitch's (2012), who use the idea of the monstrosity of adaptation to point out its creative potential and discuss an adapted text's success in terms of biological survival and adaptability. Hutcheon in *A Theory of Adaptation* states: "This is how biology thinks about adaptation: in terms of successful replication and change. Perhaps cultural adaptation can be seen to work in similar ways" (p. xxvi). The replication of the main argument proposed by *Drive Your Plow*, and its visual amplification in the movie version allow us to think of *Spoor* as an adaptation that is successful in an evolutionary way: it adapts to a demands posed by a different medium and modifies its strategy to survive and to withstand critical inquiry. Similarly, Grossman (2015) in *Literature, Film, and Their Hideous Progeny* claims that "*any* adaptation might be considered 'monstrous,' that is, isolated from its predecessors because it is born of new concerns, new desires to express ideas in a different medium, with a changed-up narrative reflecting shifting cultural priorities" (p. 2). Grossman points out that seeing adaptations as monstrous means recognizing their originality; what is more, "these 'hideous progeny' are, at least potentially, original, asking new questions about fundamental issues of human

and textual identities, just as Mary Shelley's Creature leads us to rethink our understanding of what is human" (p. 2). When it comes to *Spoor*, far from being an unoriginal and parasitic repetition, the film adaptation of the novel becomes a powerful, monstrous extension of the argument presented in the novel, using visual language and elements of music to amplify the message.

Conceptualizing the adaptation as "monstrous" parallels the language practice associated with other labels such as queer or feminist. Grossman expresses the wish to "reclaim the suppressed language of monstrosity in order to expose the extent to which the label 'monster' is really an insistence on a particular, usually exclusionary, perspective" (p. 18). The idea of monstrosity takes on an interesting meaning in relation to *Spoor* and its adapted text, *Drive Your Plow*: the crime in both texts could be viewed as "monstrous," but the dominant perspective of the narrator makes the reader and the viewer ask themselves who, in fact, is the monster? The compassionate human taking revenge for the slaughter of her nonhuman family members, or mainstream society, sanctioning the killing of countless animals for food and entertainment with the authorization of a higher power? Both texts accept the viewpoint from the margin, suggesting the possibility that the nonconformist "madness" is indeed the only ethical mode of conduct in an unjust world.

Another interesting aspect of the film adaptation of Tokarczuk's novel is the use of music in *Spoor.* The movie, just like its adaptation source, is narrated in Polish. Perhaps owing to its wide distribution (it was selected as the Polish entry for the Oscars, albeit not nominated) and the prestigious awards that the film has gathered (e.g. the Silver Bear at the Berlinale Film Festival), the subtitling is easily available; nevertheless, some elements are not translated and arguably, untranslatable (or barely so). One such element is music: in *Spoor,* music is sporadically used, but the song that reappears at various points (and also can be heard in the background of the trailer) is a traditional hunting song, which is perfectly understandable in the context of a movie making a strong argument against hunting animals. The subtitles, however, do not make it possible for the non-speakers of Polish to understand either the content or the context of the song, which in itself raises interesting questions about message transference and the facilitating of an audience's understanding. The song in question is titled "We are going hunting" and a quick internet search would convince one to see it not only as a traditional song, but as an ancient song (if not medieval, as some would have it, then at least seventeenth century, which is a widely accepted, albeit erroneous, dating). Some sources—most of them hunting clubs and hunting associations—claim its antiquity to be several hundred years; however, as Władysław Dynak (1989) authoritatively proves in his essay devoted to the song, it cannot be said to have been composed earlier than the nineteenth century. The fact that the hunting circles would promote the song's antiquity is in itself an indication of its power and popularity; I want to stress, though, that the message of the song is not entirely about the joys or benefits of hunting; it is slightly more complex than this, which adds to the complexity of the combined message conveyed by the film.

The I-speaker in the song "We are going hunting" is a hunter who aims his discourse at a fellow hunter. He is announcing "we are going hunting" at the beginning of each stanza, sketching different scenarios, but the conclusion stresses the

distinction between them: we both go hunting, we both hunt animals (each stanza enumerates a different animal: "there comes a hare, go release the greyhounds and catch the hare, my companion," the I-speaker urges his comrade, then repeating the pattern, "There comes a roe-deer" and "There comes a sable"), but ultimately, the I-speaker gets the main prize of the hunt, which is the girl. For a non-hunter, the absurdity of releasing greyhounds after a girl is obvious, but as Dynak points out, it is equally absurd to expect the dogs to chase and tear apart animals whose fur is highly valued. The point, then, is not that the song illustrates some realistic depiction of a hunt, but rather, that it illustrates the principle of competition between the "companions" and, one may add, sexism and speciesism laid bare by the lyrics. All these aspects of the song would be entirely lost on a non-Polish speaker (and perhaps also on a speaker of Polish who is not disposed to question tradition).

4 Conclusion

Tokarczuk's novel is an example of a text which creates a space for a post-anthropocentric representation of nonhuman animals. Its narrator understands that accepting a nonhuman definition of a subject and a family means her rejection of the mainstream society, and she understands that the aim of the speciesist, ableist, sexist categories is to hurt her, silence her, and force her into a conformist position. She resists the patriarchal, carnist society in a way that is deemed "mad" and "monstrous"; however, her rebellion is a necessary act of freedom whose meaning can only be understood in relation to the post-anthropocentric position she occupies: it is only when we see ourselves as animal, and when we acknowledge our entanglement with other animals, that we begin to see our responsibility to lead others to freedom. By not constructing nonhumans as screens for human emotions and thoughts, Tokarczuk's novel manages to present an option of a post-anthropocentric representation of the nonhuman animals, with whom we are always already entangled. *Drive Your Plow* is an invitation to recognize the madness of the limits of representation of the human subject, and to embrace this madness and entanglement.

The film adaptation allows for a conceptualization of acts of rebellion against the patriarchal, carnist social structures which shape the perception of cultural norms and the figure of a feminine, non-normative rebel attempting to dismantle them. *Spoor* can be read as an example of a monstrous adaptation: monstrous in the sense of a creative and provocative evolution of the arguments and tropes presented in the novel, going beyond them, asking original questions about human nature, femininity, and madness. The film adaptation, when perceived as "mad," becomes a possibility of a non-anthropocentric representation of characters who are typically silenced in a novelistic version, thus showing that adaptation in itself can be a challenging, subversive, and original presentation of ideas and tropes functioning for ages in fiction.

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The Bird and Eye: Kinship with Birds as Proto-ecofeminist Discourse of Liberation in George Meredith's *The Egoist*

Keri Stevenson

Abstract This chapter argues that George Meredith's 1879 novel *The Egoist* constructs a proto-ecofeminist discourse of liberation for its protagonist, Clara Middleton, by presenting in her a growing awareness of kinship with birds and her ability to gaze on them and the world with open eyes. The novel uses both literal and metaphorical birds to frame this kinship, including moments when Clara feels empathy for birds and when another character with a strong interest in them provides the ultimate means of freeing Clara from her unwanted engagement. Bird metaphors and Meredith's dialogue with the Darwinian concept of sexual selection also create a method of mocking Sir Willoughby Patterne, Clara's suitor who believes he can win her by becoming irresistibly attractive to her biological female sexuality, and casting his scientific pretensions as blind. Although only proto-ecofeminist, as Clara is the only female character in the novel to be truly liberated by animal kinship, Meredith's writing demonstrates the potential of linking animals and women together as a tool for freedom rather than oppression.

1 Introduction

One central but not critically-noticed moment in George Meredith's novel *The Egoist* comes when Clara Middleton, the heroine, betrothed to Sir Willoughby Patterne and desperate to dissolve the engagement, remembers gazing into the eyes of a mother bird on a nest: "She had been taken by playmate boys in her infancy to peep into hedge-leaves, where the mother-bird brooded on the nest; and the eyes of the bird in that marvellous dark thickset home, had sent her away with worlds of fancy" (Meredith, 1979, p. 42). To look at an animal, specifically a bird, in this novel sets Clara free. In a world where Clara strives desperately for freedom, unable to obtain it because the eyes of most of "the world" cannot see why she would not want to marry a handsome, rich man like Sir Willoughby, this is a great gift, and an intersection of birds and the gaze, both necessary for Clara's liberty. However, given the dense,

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allusive quality of Meredith's novel, where animals appear more as metaphors than mimesis, it is easy to miss. Meredith *does* write *The Egoist* as "an episode in the vast process of natural selection, a drama which anatomizes the spiritual and physical decline of one species and the rise of another" (Williams, 1983, p. 53), and makes the metaphors that deal with natural selection and its processes in his novel so thick on the ground that literal moments might hardly seem to compete. Yet Clara's encounter with the mother bird, although foundational, is not solitary. Other moments where Clara engages with literal birds are present in the novel, while the bird metaphors are outlining the feminist struggle for freedom that is at the center of Meredith's text. Literal birds and metaphorical birds work together in *The Egoist* to empower feminist liberation and disempower the male egoism that would see them both permanently grounded.

Willoughby Patterne is ostensibly the center of Meredith's novel, the Egoist of the title, and Meredith spends a considerable amount of time carefully, as Woolf puts it, "turn[ing him] slowly round before a steady fire of scrutiny and criticism which allows no twitch on the victim's part to escape it" (2020). However, Buchen has pointed out that there are multiple egoists in the book (1964, p. 255), and Clara is one of them. Clara, who is actually Willoughby's second fiancée after he has been rejected by Constantia Durham, is at first enamored of him, but becomes horrified as she learns what being the wife of an egoist would mean: the end of any separate existence from Willoughby. When Willoughby "lecture[s] her on the theme of the infinity of love," Clara "listen[s] gravely, conceiving the infinity as a narrow dwelling where a voice droned and ceased not" (Meredith, 1979, p. 39). Clara, described a few sentences earlier as someone "with a natural love of liberty" (Meredith, 1979, p. 39), then seeks several means to break free of Willoughby without seeming inconstant, a stereotype of women she flinches from. She looks for help in Laetitia Dale, the woman Willoughby courted before her; Vernon Whitford, Willoughby's cousin; her father, Dr. Middleton, who is too busy being seduced by Willoughby's offer of port wine to help her; and Horace de Craye, a friend of Willoughby's who has come to attend the wedding and who finds himself enchanted by Clara. In the end, Willoughby's supposedly secret proposal to Laetitia and his dread of having the neighborhood find out frees Clara, and only Clara's kinship with birds keeps up her spirits in the meantime. She manages to escape and go to the Alps, a long-held dream; the book ends with her on the journey in the Alps with Vernon, her eventual husband. The presence of birds ultimately helps to remind her of her kinship with the earth and teaches her to look beyond her egoism.

2 The Struggle to Reach Avian Kinship: Clara

I would call this discourse of birds and women that ultimately frees Clara and teaches her to look beyond her egoism *proto*-ecofeminist, as the discourse of ecofeminism, the "basic premise [of which] is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the

same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature" (Gaard, 1993, p. 1), did not begin until late in the twentieth century, long after Meredith's publication of *The Egoist* in 1879. Yet Meredith was one of the first novelists to link women and nature explicitly together for the benefit rather than the casting-down of both, because he was one of the first novelists to embrace a nature-oriented view of looking at the world. Unlike some British novelists dealing with the wake of Darwinism, Meredith did not reflect grimly on the foundations of faith being destroyed; "[h]is advantage," notes his biographer, Jones, "was that he did not need to free himself from the religious dogmas that he had easily discarded" (1999, p. 127). While Tennyson claimed that the human mind was beyond the explanatory power of evolution (Jones, 1999, p. 130), Meredith was already Darwinian and did not need to deal with the distance that nineteenth-century British Christian faith had imposed between humans and the natural world. He was also one of the first feminist novelists, responding to the movement for women's rights in mid-Victorian England that created "not precisely the character, but the fearful situation of Clara Middleton. She appeals to us…as a human being caught in an inhuman system of commodity relationships…Meredith's intuition of the suffocating web that can be woven about a young woman by playing on these "virtues" of hers is a tremendous imaginative achievement" (Adams, 1979, p. viii). Meredith expressed in his famous essay "An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit," which provided a large part of the inspiration for *The Egoist,* that "[W]here women are on the road to an equal footing with men, in attainments and in liberty…there, and only waiting to be transplanted from life to the stage, or the novel, or the poem, pure Comedy flourishes" (1980, p. 32). Meredith's own statement, then, identifies the presence of comedy as a coefficient of women's liberty, and *The Egoist* is written with the Comic Muse hovering over the book.

Constructing a world that was suffused for him with the importance of both nature and women's liberty, Meredith's discourse can easily be seen as proto-ecofeminist. Where it differs from modern ecofeminism comes down, perhaps, mostly to the fact that Meredith's discourse works to liberate a single female character, Clara Middleton, from the clutches of a man, Sir Wiloughby Patterne, who despises both nature and women, who sees them in fact as the same thing. Sandilands (1999) argues that

> ..liberation has increasingly come to signify the ability of a social group, a collective subject position if you will, to represent itself in a way that is not simply the negative reflection of the judgments of the dominant group…A certain version of community is invoked, which frequently involves the signification of the group to be constituted in terms of their particularity…ecofeminism, in its call for women's knowledge of nature to serve as a template for future human/nature relations, is exemplary in this respect. (p. 44)

Clara does not start a movement or feel herself as part of a collective or a community, at least in part because other women she confesses her distaste for Willoughby to do not understand her. In fact, Laetitia Dale, who ends up as Willoughby's wife, says of Clara's behavior close to halfway through the novel, "To me it is the conduct of a creature untamed" (Meredith, 1979, p. 145). Laetitia shrinks from the wildness she feels in Clara, and although she later changes her mind about Sir Willoughby and comes to see him more from Clara's point-of-view, she never makes the full jump

to either Clara's gaze or Clara's liberty. "Without [her] conceiving in him anything of the strange old monster of earth which had struck the awakened girl's mind of Miss Middleton" (Meredith, 1979, p. 269), Willoughby sinks in Laetitia's regard, and becomes someone she "admire[s] piecemeal" (Meredith, 1979, p. 269), splitting him into separate parts. So far Clara influences Laetitia, but she cannot bring Laetitia with her to fly free or feel as Clara does about marriage to Sir Willoughby or about birds. The most Clara can share with her closest female friend in the story is a partial gaze.

Then again, Clara is at fault herself for close to half of the novel, so focused on her own plight that she impatiently disdains kinship with the birds who are among the few literal, as opposed to metaphorical, animals in the story. When the narrator notes, "There sung a sky-lark," Clara's reaction is telling. ""Not even the bird that does not fly away!" she said; meaning, she had no heart for the bird satisfied to rise and descend in this place" (Meredith, 1979, p. 130). She is unable to look beyond her own disdain for Sir Willoughby's land to realize it may be quite congenial habitat for a bird. Skylarks are highly important to Meredith, the center of his poem "The Lark Ascending," published in his 1883 collection *Poems and Lyrics of the Joy of Earth* four years after *The Egoist*, and mentioned in several of his early poems as well. Holmes, speaking of Meredith as a Darwinian poet, says,

> Meredith's lark, on the other hand [as opposed to Shelley's in 'To a Skylark'], is very much of this Earth, so he writes about it in familiar idiomatic English…Meredith too uses similes, likening the [lark's] song to water rippling, dew trembling, rain on a wind-blown aspen tree, and so on. But the bird itself is never in doubt. It is a fellow creature. It lives in the pastoral, arable, partly wooded landscape that is its typical English habitat. (2009, p. 173)

This might be a description of the landscape of Willoughby's grounds, which include "rolling richness of foliage, wood and water, and church spire, a town and horizon hills" (Meredith, 1979, p. 130). Clara refuses to share the lark's eyes and see that the landscape is good no matter how withered an egoist its owner; she has "no heart" for it, and the landscape that she "gaze[s] over" as she listens to the bird is one she is blind to. Only later in the novel will she become free to share heart and eyes with birds, although the memory of the mother bird on her nest that she traded gazes with shows the potential is already within her.

In Chap. 21 of the novel, as Clara tries and fails to resign herself to either marrying Willoughby or being thought a jilt by the world, a mental crisis arrives. She tries to write a letter to a friend she plans to seek refuge with; it appears insufficient. After tearing it up, she goes to the window and looks out at the birds below,

> watch[ing] the blackbird on the lawn as he hopped from shafts of dewy sunlight to the long-stretched dewy tree-shadows, considering in her mind that dark dews are more meaningful than bright, the beauty of the dews of woods more sweet than meadow-dews… That is how quick natures will often be cold and hard, or not much moved, when the positive crisis arrives, and why it is that they are prepared for astonishing leaps over the gradations which should render their conduct comprehensible to us, if not excuseable. She watched the blackbird throw up his head stiffly, and peck to right and left, dangling the worm on each side his orange beak. Specklebreasted thrushes were at work, and a wagtail that ran as with Clara's own rapid little steps. Thrush and blackbird flew to the nest. They had wings. The lovely

> morning breathed of sweet earth into her open window, and made it painful, in the dense twitter, chirp, cheep, and song of the air, to resist the innocent intoxication. (Meredith, 1979, p. 169)

Clara has literal birds that give her back her strength, that have her "own rapid little steps," that can reassure her with pure natural fact—"They had wings"—that she will somehow win free. As Clara's gaze turns outward through the window, she ceases to be so self-absorbed, such an egoist. This is the thing that ultimately makes her different from Willoughby and the other egoists in the novel: Clara bothers to look, and when she looks, she sees. "Watch" is repeated twice in this passage, both in reference to the blackbird, and in the middle of these references comes the short passage in which the narrator renders Clara's behavior sympathetic, "if not excuseable." The gaze of the character and the narrator passes out through the window to the blackbird, then inward to Clara's heart, then outward again. Though there are twenty-nine chapters of crisis still to come, this moment shows that Clara's mental world cannot be separated from the natural world, that in many important respects she *is* a bird, and that running and flight will both belong to her once more.

Clara also has a confederate whose familiarity with live birds is a comfort to her: Crossjay, Willoughby's ward and Vernon's student, with the last half of his name marking him as one of the corvids, which come in at the top of the bird intelligence scale and are known for their curiosity (Ackerman, 2016, p. 33). Crossjay is a great collector of birds' eggs and nests, and he goes to see a collection of stuffed and taxidermized birds that he can describe in detail: "stuffed birds of every English kind, kingfishers, yaffles, black woodpeckers, goat-sucker owls, more mouth than head, with dusty, dark-spotted wings, like moths" (Meredith, 1979, pp. 27–28). Viewing a collection of dead birds rather than live ones, he represents the collection impulse that might be viewed as separating and stilling the impulse to kinship; Ritvo argues in *The Animal Estate* that Victorian systems of collecting and classification are means of domination, since "they embodied a sweeping human claim to intellectual mastery of the natural world" (1987, p. 12). But Crossjay is also the one who knows the most about living birds, since "But the habits of birds, and the place for their eggs…he soon knew of his great nature" (Meredith, 1979, p. 27). That Crossjay possesses this knowledge of living birds, much more than most people in the book have, is one of the first things we learn about him. He also is the one who most sympathizes with Clara, and who gives her the means to speak her kinship to birds aloud for the first time; when she has been running with him and he tells her after the run that "And you don't pant a bit!," Clara returns, "Dear me, no; not more than a bird. You might as well try to catch a bird" (Meredith, 1979, p. 58). We know from the narrator that Crossjay, in fact, regularly succeeds at catching birds, so this particular moment is important not so much for its literal truth as for Clara's recognition of the liberty of flight—the term that the narrator gives her run (Meredith, 1979, p. 58). Crossjay is her companion of the moment, the tool not of her liberation but of her recognizing her potential liberation.

Crossjay also gives Clara someone to care about when she is shrinking into herself in despair over not being able to escape Willoughby. Clara is worried that Crossjay

will be ruined by Willoughby's careless affection toward him, including taking him away from his studies to become a Navy officer and giving him more spending money than he ought to have (Meredith, 1979, p. 27). It is in speaking up for Crossjay that Clara first begins to push back against Willoughby (Meredith, 1979, p. 69), and it is also Crossjay who is the ultimate means of her liberation, by overhearing Willoughby propose to Laetitia while he is still technically engaged to Clara (Meredith, 1979, pp. 329–337). Willoughby ultimately gives up the engagement in dread that Clara will spread the story to his neighbors—something Crossjay has already begun to do.

Crossjay, who reminds Clara of her playmates who introduced her to the mother bird on the nest (Meredith, 1979, p. 58), at last settles down to study for his career in the Navy, giving up a measure of wildness in return for liberty. Neither Clara nor Crossjay are ruined by Willoughby, and they rely on each other to avoid it. The collector of birds' nests is also a boy who promises to leave eggs in the nest where he found them; "I always do drop a couple [eggs] back. I promised Mr. Whitford I would, and Miss Middleton too" (Meredith, 1979, p. 351). Clara goes free and ascends to the heights, the Alps, that she dreamed of as a symbol of freedom before she was engaged to Willoughby; she in fact ends the book clearly heading toward Vernon Whitford, but actually unmarried, and spared from the laughter of Meredith's Comic Muse, who "is grave and sisterly" (Meredith, 1979, p. 425) as she sits next to Vernon and Clara. The assertion of kinship with birds leads Clara, ultimately, to assertion of sisterhood with the Comic Muse herself, the controlling device of the whole book. For Meredith, assertion of kinship *leads* to liberation, a predictable route for him to take while so deeply rooted in Darwinian thought. According to Holmes, "Darwinism fundamentally alters our relationship with the rest of the natural world. To say that, after Darwin, we are animals does not make this transformation quite clear enough…After Darwin, it is a matter of kinship. Focussing narrowly on us, on human beings, we are now properly animals by nature as well as by kind" (2009, p. 154). Clara, from being trapped in a place and mindset that allowed her to reject a lark's natural rising from and returning to its habitat, is now capable of seeing herself as an animal who can have that same kind of liberty of flight, and choosing her own habitat, also high, also free.

3 Avian Metaphors as Mockery: Willoughby

The other side of ecofeminism, its insight that the oppression of women and nature is shared, is represented in the book by Willoughby—again rendering Meredith's novel more proto-ecofeminist than truly ecofeminist by taking place on the individual level rather than the societal. Still, Willoughby is backed by the societal perception that he is a good mate for Clara, and which renders incomprehensible her backing away from him. Gruen argues that, "The categories "woman" and "animal" serve the same symbolic function in patriarchal society. Their construction as dominated, submissive "other" in theoretical discourse(…) has sustained human male dominance" (1993, p. 61). Willoughby thinks of women and animals as the same. His twisted view

is represented by how he ignores the similarity of his own behavior to literal birds behaving under Darwinian sexual selection and by the bird metaphors that are applied to him. Where Clara returned the gaze of a bird as a young woman and learns to look outward again, Willoughby never considers that his dominating view might not be correct, and his gaze is most often described with metaphors of the mirror. Willoughby epitomizes the idea of human exceptionalism as "the claim that humans are, merely by virtue of their species membership, so qualitatively different from any and all other forms of life that humans rightly enjoy privileges over all of the earth's other life forms" (Waldau, 2013)—with one glaring exception. Willoughby does not account women as human, and thus enforces, without meaning to (if only because it is the means of taking another fiancée from him), the alliance of Clara with birds and her drive to freedom.

Willoughby believes he is in control of both animals and women because of his superior knowledge of science. He does not allow literal animals—except horses, and then only briefly mentioned—a place anywhere near him, but accords metaphorical animals plenty of mental space. He, however, is a man utterly trapped by the metaphors that consume him and ignorant of biological realities. He believes in sexual selection, and also that it will compel Clara to choose him. All the examples he uses when picturing himself as the superior male animal are of birds who perform a mating dance or song:

> A deeper student of Science than his rivals, he appreciated Nature's compliment in the fair one's choice of you. We now scientifically know that in this department of the universal struggle, success is awarded to the bettermost. You spread a handsomer tail than your fellows, you dress a finer top-knot, you pipe a newer note, have a longer stride; she reviews you in competition, and selects you. The superlative is magnetic to her. She may be looking elsewhere, and you will see—the superlative will simply have to beckon, away she glides. She cannot help herself; it is her nature. (Meredith, 1979, p. 33)

The "handsomer tail" directly indicates a peacock, an example that Darwin also uses in *The Descent of Man* when discussing sexual selection and the female's choice of the "superlative" male; he states that "Now when the peacock displays himself, he expands and erects his tail transversely to his body, for he stands in front of the female, and has to shew off, at the same time, his rich blue throat and breast" (1875, p. 396). Darwin also spends time detailing birds' feathers arranged in shapes such as top-knots, their songs, and their dances; birds receive four chapters in *The Descent*, twice as many as non-human mammals. But Willoughby pictures these ornaments as captivating the female, until "[s]he cannot help herself." Here, he twists metaphors of birds in the service of captivity instead of liberation, and ignores the fact that females, even in Darwin's highly patriarchal and Victorian framing of the ideas of sexual selection, still make the choice to mate.

It is possible to see the bird metaphors in criticism the same way Willoughby does. Smith, in his seminal article on Darwinism in *The Egoist,* "The Cock of Lordly Plume," argues that "Willoughby woos both Clara and Laetitia by harping on his romantic vision of a love able to shut out the world and create an unchanging bower of bliss. Yet Willoughby's "poetry of the enclosed and fortified bower" is "incomprehensible … if not adverse" to Clara…Darwin discusses the courtship and mating of

bower-birds at length in *The Descent* as a paradigm of mutual love, yet he acknowledges that "the male is the principal workman"…in building the bower and that it is the male who entices the female inside" (1995, p. 68). This presents the bowerbird's bower as a force of imprisonment, but in fact, it is a result of Willoughby twisting yet another metaphor, and the critic appearing to consider that version as the clearer and truer one. The bowerbird male's bower is *not* a nest, much less a prison, but a hollow structure, often with an avenue leading to it, constructed "for the sole purpose of attracting mates" (Endler, Gaburro and Kelley, 2014, p. 1); the female and male mate on the ground where it stands if the female chooses him to fertilize her eggs, and one theory suggests that "The origins of bower building, however, can be best explained as a trait that attracts females because of the *protection* [emphasis added] it provides them from forced copulation by bower owners" (Borgia, 1995, p. 542). Female bowerbirds in the wild are influenced by the male's display, but free, and in fact are frequent escapees into liberation. If Willoughby's use of a bower metaphor is indeed meant to echo a bowerbird, it is not *his* version of it that corresponds to biological reality. The bower instead affirms Clara's kinship with birds, and the likeness of female animals—both birds and mammals—in preferring freedom from obnoxious male courtship.

Not only do metaphors obscure the biological reality of birds for Willoughby, the avian metaphors Meredith's narrator uses are actively hostile to him—one of the many places in the narrative that metaphorical and literal animals work together to deny that Willoughby's version of reality is the true one. The narrator notes that Willoughby, excited by the prospect that he might keep Clara from marrying his rival Horace de Craye, "flap[s] his arms, resembling for the moment those birds of enormous body which attempt a rise upon their wings and achieve a hop" (Meredith, 1979, p. 401). The maneuver renders both Willoughby and his excitement utterly ridiculous, a bird unable to fly—which every other bird mentioned in the narrative, imaginary or real, can do—and a man striving to imitate a gesture (signaled by the word "flaps") that is more properly avian. Meredith's proto-ecofeminism also makes the bird metaphors that apply to other men subtly mocking, if the reader knows something about the literal species. Horace de Craye, who is convinced that Clara is really in love with him when she is in fact in love with Vernon, is "the falcon…in spirit as well as in his handsome face," and his cleverness is of the sort that "[h]e who can watch circling above it awhile, quietly viewing, and collecting in his eye [has]" (Meredith, 1979, p. 354). de Craye here seems to unite the perspectives of the bird and the gaze as well as the moment when Clara matches gazes with the mother bird on her nest, and—as this metaphor appears when he is plotting on how to take Clara away from Willoughby and make her his own—to be the hunter who can capture Clara, as well. However, biology tells a different tale. Male falcons of all species are up to a third smaller than the female, and females are preferred in falconry because of their ability to take larger prey; in fact, "[t]raditionally, falconry reverses the sexual stereotypes. The females are considered strong and calm; the males swift and edgy and emotional" (Bodio, 2015, p. 11). de Craye is not a successful hunter, up against a woman who has more kinship to birds than he does; he misses his strike, and even on a metaphorical, stereotypical level, the comparison to a male falcon is less flattering,

and far less macho, than it seems on the surface. Meredith's dense network of bird metaphors in this book completely shuts out men who hold themselves superior to women; discussing how these men tend to refer to women, Smith notes that "In Darwin's view women are like birds, able to choose the cock of lordly plume; but Meredith shows that an alarming number of men convert women into birds only to hunt them down" (1995, p. 77), whether or not the hunt is successful.

4 Conclusion

Willoughby, along with de Craye on a smaller level, cannot see the real woman, or the real animal, for being swarmed by visions of imaginary ones. Thus Meredith's novel, despite its elegant and relentless use of animal metaphors, ultimately mocks those who miss the real lark for the figuration of flight. Clara is the one who can see the literal animals and ally with those, like Crossjay, who love them, and follow their way to liberation. Gazing into the mother bird's eyes is a synecdoche of the novel as a whole, and it is fitting that Clara uses her gaze to find out other birds, as well. If we "are always looking across ignorance and fear" (Berger, 1992, p. 5) when we meet the eyes of an animal, that fear does not need to control us, and does not succeed in controlling Clara the way it does Willoughby. There is "a power ascribed to the animal, comparable with human power but never coinciding with it. The animal has secrets which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountains, seas, are specifically addressed to man" (Berger, 1992, p. 5). And, with the secrets of flight, to women as well.

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