

Otherness: Essays and Studies 5.2

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September 2016

Edited by Sune Borkfelt

Special Issue:

Animal Alterity

Otherness: Essays and Studies

Animal Alterity

Volume 5 • Number 2 • September 2016

Welcoming the interdisciplinary study of otherness and alterity, *Otherness: Essays and Studies* is an open-access, full-text, and peer-reviewed e-journal under the auspices of the *Centre for Studies in Otherness*. The journal publishes new scholarship primarily within the humanities and social sciences.

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ISSN 1904-6022

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CONTRIBUTORS

Audrey Appudurai is an Australian artist and biologist interested in the scientific, artistic, and cultural pursuit of non-human animal experiences. Audrey has a BSc (Hons), and a PhD through SymbioticA and The Neuroecology Group at The University of Western Australia (UWA). Audrey's PhD research focused on the scientific, artistic and cultural exploration of lungfishes and their visual perception. She simultaneously conducted scientific and artistic experiments to uncover, represent and interpret the visual experience of these animals, and discussed the general anthropocentric and discipline-specific limitations that inhibit a deeper understanding. As an artist, Audrey has exhibited her work in many Western Australian galleries including the Perth Centre for Photography (2015), Kidogo Art Institute (2015) and UWA.

Dylan Hallingstad O'Brien is an independent scholar with a B.A. from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minnesota. His honors thesis and much prior work have focused on formulations of nonhuman subjectivity in animal theory. His current research interests include the senses and embodiment, human-animal intersubjective relationships, and the place of the visual in theory.

Rachel Levine is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto. Rachel's major research is a long-term ethnographic study of human-pet relationships in circumstances of urban vulnerability: social isolation, chronic poverty, homelessness, and public service reliance. Rachel's larger interest is in identifying the quotidian ways in which social inequality intervenes on human bonds with non-human animals and the natural world.

Andrea McDowell teaches Business Communication for the Albers School of Business and Economics at Seattle University, where she has also taught Russian and Soviet Literature and Film for the Department of English, as well as graduate courses for the SU College of Education. Andrea received her undergraduate degrees in Russian Studies and Journalism from the University of Missouri–Columbia, and her MA and PhD in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Indiana University–Bloomington. She also holds an MS in Higher Education and Student Affairs Administration from IUB. In addition to teaching, she is the Administrator of the Seattle University Institutional Review Board, which oversees and approves all research involving human subjects. She became vegetarian as a result of her dissertation on animals in Russian and Soviet literature, and she seeks every opportunity to combine her personal and scholarly interests on human–animal relations and animal rights.

Laura Jean McKay writes about humans and other animals. She is the author of *Holiday in Cambodia* (Black Inc. 2013), a story collection that explores the electric zone where local and foreign lives meet – shortlisted for three national book awards in Australia. Her work has appeared in *The Best Australian Stories*, *Award Winning Australian Writing* and *The North American Review*. Laura is also the winner of the Alan Marshall short story award, an Asialink and Martin Bequest Scholarship recipient and is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Melbourne, Australia. www.laurajeankmckay.com.

Richie Nimmo is Lecturer in Sociology at the University of Manchester, where he teaches human-animal relations and environmental sociology. His research interests are interdisciplinary in nature and tend to cluster around the intersections of human-animal studies, posthumanism, materialism and science studies. Richie is the author of *Milk, Modernity and the Making of the Human* (2010), and editor of *Actor-Network Theory Research* (2016). He has contributed numerous book chapters and published articles in journals including *Distinktion*, *Society and Animals*, and *Humanimalia*.

Justyna Poray-Wybranowska is a doctoral student in the English Department of York University in Toronto, Canada. Her background is in postcolonial literature and animal studies. Her doctoral research project examines how representations of the environment in contemporary literature, film, and digital culture affect people's perceptions of vulnerability to climate change and the eco-social instability that it entails.

Susan Pyke teaches at the University of Melbourne with the School of Culture and Communications and the Office for Environmental Programs. She writes in the shared fields of creative writing, literary criticism and ecocriticism. Her most recent critical essays can be found in *Being-in-Creation: Human Responsibility in an Endangered World* (2015, Fordham University Press), *Southerly* (2013) and the *Australasian Journal of Ecocriticism and Cultural Ecology* (2013). Her most recent creative work is a short story, "Meltemi", found in *Australian Love Stories* (2014). She is a regular reviewer for *Plumwood Mountain*. For more details on publications see <https://unimelb.academia.edu/SusanPyke>. Susan's blog is found at <http://suehallpyke.com>.

Dana Rehn is a PhD Candidate in Art History at the University of Adelaide, Australia. She specialises in the social and cultural history of early modern European esoteric art. A comprehensive study on the canine-human motif in German Renaissance society and visual culture is the focus of her forthcoming doctoral thesis.

Introduction:

Thinking through Animal Alterities

Sune Borkfelt

“No! You silly savage!” said Josephine. “No, you wild beast. ... I might as well have a baboon, or a bear. You are Tarzan of the Apes; ... I can assure you that if mankind thinks of you, it thinks you are the missing link. You ought to be shut up and exhibited here in the Zoo ... with the gorilla on one side and the chimpanzee on the other. Science would gain a lot”.

Such are the words with which John Cromartie, the protagonist of David Garnett’s short novel *A Man in the Zoo* (1924, 6-7), is answered when he asks his beloved Josephine to marry him. As the two have been strolling from cage to cage through the London Zoo, she has found his reasoning about both interhuman and human-nonhuman relations increasingly difficult to understand, creating a distance between them until she finally explodes in a cascade of slurs suggesting he is unfit for human society and should be locked up like the animals in the zoo.

It is no coincidence that in emphasizing the distance she perceives between John and herself, Josephine turns to ideas of beastliness. As she calls John a ‘wild beast’ and opposes him to ‘mankind’, she draws on a long tradition of phrasing Otherness along a binary where the ‘animal’ stands in opposition to the supposedly ‘human’, and suggests that – like savages or the very animals in the zoo have been

subdued, exhibited, studied – so should John, since his behaviour and thinking mark him as an outsider to the common British social norms she lives by. And yet, even her insults reveal a certain ambiguity; for as John is painted as an Other in animal terms, he is also conceptualized as, perhaps uncomfortably, close to the self. As much as the animal insults are derogatory, the descriptions of him as a ‘missing link’ and as ‘Tarzan of the Apes’ also imply the closeness of nonhuman animals to human ones, indicating how humans have often tended to view those of their characteristics deemed least desirable as betraying our own animality. In our attempts to know the ‘animal’, therefore, also lies an attempt to know ourselves – both because the nonhuman animal is the Other that can mirror the human self and because, paradoxically, it *is* also a part of that self.

The quest to know the animal other is, however, neither easy nor ethically straightforward, given that the ways in which we may go about this are rooted in a firmly human epistemology; our ideas of what it means to ‘know’ anything, animal or otherwise, will necessarily be human, and any assumption that human forms of knowledge are the only forms would seem to be an anthropocentric notion. This may well lead to the conclusion that any attempt to know the ‘nonhuman animal other’ will necessarily have an element of colonization to it from the onset.

In addition to this comes the, perhaps even more basic, phenomenological (and behind this ontological) question of what it is actually like to be the nonhuman animal, so famously asked by Thomas Nagel (1974). As he writes of his chosen nonhuman subject, ‘Even without the benefit of philosophical reflection, anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally *alien* form of life’ (ibid., 438), and even where the animal in question occurs to us as perhaps somehow less alien, truly knowing what it is like to be that other animal is not possible – at least if one follows Nagel’s thinking on the

subject. Thus, there would seem to be both phenomenological and epistemological divides between human and nonhuman animals, which represent not just theoretical, but also practical and ethical, obstacles in nonhuman-human relations. Social theorist Zygmunt Bauman contends ‘that what we call “the others” we live with ... is what we *know* of them’ (1993, 146), and to act ethically towards the more anonymous others in our lives, our ethics therefore need to extend beyond our knowledge, and beyond the proximity that determines this knowledge. There is, in other words, a risk that basing our ethics purely on what we (think we) know of the ‘nonhuman animal other’ may lead us to an unjust evaluation of the relevance of animal ethics.

Emmanuel Levinas amply illustrates this when he essentially excludes animals from his ethical consideration of the Other by claiming that ‘The being of animals is a struggle for life. A struggle of life without ethics. It is a question of might’ (2004, 50). As others have argued, the contention that ethics and morality are exclusively human is fallacious (e.g. De Waal 1996; Bekoff and Pierce 2009), but this is not necessarily the point. Rather, by his refusal to go beyond his basic conception of what animal life is, that is, to give nonhuman animals the benefit of the doubt or allow for the animal experience that lies outside his knowledge, Levinas upholds and justifies an all too common line of thinking about nonhuman animals, which situates them beyond the kinds of consideration afforded to human others; the nonhuman animal becomes othered even from our thinking on otherness. It is no wonder, then, that scholars concerned with the question of the animal have argued that animals are the ‘ultimate other’ and are ‘placed in a constant, almost irredeemable state of alterity’ (Wolch and Emel 1995, 632; Elder, Wolch and Emel 1998, 74; Borkfelt 2011, 137). It follows that given this deeper alterity in which we place nonhuman animals, the animal question as such, and the increase in concern over the marginalization of the nonhuman (both inside and outside of academia), therefore

strike at the heart of concerns about the concept of otherness and its influence on ethics.

Despite the epistemological and phenomenological issues involved, it may well be that there is an ethical imperative to apply our imaginations – albeit perhaps carefully – to thinking about the animal other. Indeed, even Nagel, for whom knowing what it is like to be a bat turns out to be ultimately impossible, implies that we should still try and states clearly the importance of not dismissing or denying animal experience:

The fact that we cannot expect to ever accommodate in our language a detailed description of ... bat phenomenology should not lead us to dismiss as meaningless the claim that bats ... have experiences fully comparable in richness of detail to our own [...] And to deny the reality or logical significance of what we can never describe or understand is the crudest form of cognitive dissonance (1974, 440-41).

As such, the mere attempt to contemplate (or to represent) nonhuman animal subjectivity has ethical relevance in and of itself. It is in this contemplation of the subjective experience of the animal that Jacques Derrida, too, finds relevance. Although, or perhaps rather because, the animal is an ‘absolute other’, he writes, ‘nothing will have ever given me more food for thinking through this absolute alterity of the neighbour or of the next(-door)’ than finding he is being watched, naked, by a cat (2008, 11). Thus, considering the world of the animal as absolutely other allows contemplation of alterity itself and of human Others as well.

Their convergences on issues of ethics, ontology, phenomenology and epistemology are not, however, the only things that otherness studies and animal studies have in common. As reflected by the diversity of the contributions to this issue, the two fields also share an interdisciplinarity that allows for a multitude of different perspectives on their subjects without compromising the fields as such.

Since much thinking about the otherness of nonhuman animals revolves around ideas of their likeness or difference in relation to humans, discussions on the issue often have at their centre the question of whether the nonhuman animal is – whatever likenesses may be – fundamentally different in ethically and existentially important ways, or is – whatever their differences – fundamentally alike in the ways that should matter most in questions of ethics, ontology and epistemology. In **‘From Over the Horizon’**, **Richie Nimmo** challenges this essentially dualist way of thinking about the significance of proximity and alterity, and proposes that an appreciation of distance between human and nonhuman does not necessarily connote a lack of appreciation for the nonhuman animal. Since, in the modern scientific tradition, anthropomorphism has often been considered little more than self-indulgent sentimentalism, and thus anathema to ‘proper’ knowledge, scholars across animal studies – from philosophy to cognitive ethology – have made an effort to reconceptualise and defend some forms of anthropomorphism, arguing for instance that it is the normal response to other animals and is essentially similar to the way in which we understand our fellow humans by focusing on assumed ontological similarities. Yet, Nimmo argues, the anthropomorphic focus on similarity and proximity can mean ‘eradicating distance and alterity’ and losing perspective of how otherness should be acknowledged rather than colonised for truly ethical relations to emerge. Nimmo proposes instead an ‘intimacy at a distance’ or ‘liminal intimacy’ in which ‘animals are both like and unlike, present yet always partially absent, familiar yet unknowable, near to us yet far away’ and exemplifies this concept through specific instances of human-animal relations.

With the rise of animal studies, critical animal scholars have found themselves needing to consider the pedagogy of teaching on human-animal relations. While those of us teaching on nonhuman animals in various contexts can sometimes draw on

important work done in teaching on issues concerning marginalized or suppressed humans, teaching from the point of view of critical animal studies can also present its own challenges. For instance, whereas often in academia one may find that a majority of students state humanist concerns with marginalizations or binaries based on, for example, ethnicity or gender, questioning the human/animal binary or inviting a discussion of nonhumans as victims of discrimination will sometimes be met with greater confusion, if not actual resistance. Detailing an example from his own university teaching experience in Japan, **Dylan Hallingstad O'Brien's 'Other(ed) Rabbits'** explores critical pedagogical issues in animal studies teaching. Focusing on a unit of a media course where students watched and discussed the 1978 animated film version of *Watership Down*, O'Brien discusses the possibilities and outcomes in using otherness as a frame for teaching human-animal relations and getting students to reflect critically on representations of nonhuman animals. Finding that students engaged richly and critically with human-animal relations within this frame, O'Brien's work suggests a clear potential in joining animal studies and otherness studies in university teaching. In addition, student responses posit important questions for future research, concerning for example correlations between gender and responses to the consumption of nonhuman animals, and suggest a possible need to re-evaluate previous theoretical ideas about responses to the visibility of practices related to uses of nonhuman animals, and the knowledge structures tied to such visibility and response.

Knowledge structures are also at the heart of **Audrey Appudurai's** article on **'The Lungfishes from a Historical Perspective'**, if in entirely different ways. Using different cultural and historical configurations of knowledge about lungfishes, Appudurai demonstrates not only how the stories we tell about animals affect our ideas of their lives, but also how animals whose natures defy the stories we want to

be true can become further othered through their failure to fit within existing categories of knowledge. As their name implies, lungfishes are such animals that initially defied neatly separated categories of fish and land animals. Tracing their history through indigenous knowledges, cryptozoological ideas relating the animal to the monstrous, Western scientific classifications and modern conceptions of lungfishes within categories of the exotic and popular, Appudurai ultimately connects the cultural history of the animal to her own research into the visual abilities and *umwelt* of these particular animals, unearthing how this, too, is unavoidably informed by preconceived ideas and cultural history.

As lungfishes and other nonhuman animals have sometimes been relegated to the category of the monstrous, so have humans, and often through reference to nonhuman animals and animality. A story about this particular kind of othering through animalization is what emerges from **Dana Rehn**'s article '**Going to the Dogs**'. Centred on an analysis of German Renaissance prints depicting dog-headed races, or *cynocephali*, Rehn traces how such depictions of the monstrous served to other and demonize the foreign and non-Christian in opposition to the civilized, the European and the Christian. Used for instance in depictions of Muslim Ottoman Turks, Mongols, or New World 'savages', the image of cynocephali could be used to suggest ties to biblical demons and monsters of the apocalypse, to cannibalism, or to sinful behaviours such as bestiality, while also conversely used to further ideas of conversion and absolution from such sins. By tracing these artistic developments as tied to the religious and ideological ideas of their time, Rehn's article demonstrates and exemplifies how ideas of little understood human outsiders' otherness connect historically and conceptually with the monstrous through ideas of the imagined 'animal other'.

In a more contemporary American setting, dogs and the monstrous are still connected and hold symbolic significance tied to otherness, although in new and different ways. In their article ‘**American Bully**’, **Rachel Levine** and **Justyna Poray-Wybranowska** analyse connections between ‘pit bull’ type dogs and American identity constructions. Once symbolic of American strength and bravery, the pit bull was gradually vilified as it was tied to racialized images of crime and the War on Drugs, and became the stereotypical image of aggression in dogs, before once again being reconfigured through the images used by today’s breeders and owners. Focusing on the online marketing of a new pit bull ‘breed’ labelled the ‘American Bully’, Levine and Poray-Wybranowska analyse the ways in which celebration of the dogs’ ‘extreme’ physique and muscularity are coupled with new, more benign images of the dog, as it is used in reshaping the connotations formerly attached to both the dogs and their owners. As inhabitants of animal bodies ‘intentionally constructed to resonate with public fears’, American Bully dogs fashioned as friendly and relaxed come to paradoxically serve to advance the reconfiguration of otherness in a claim to social normativity for human groups formerly and presently disregarded as deviant.

Whereas the stories considered in the articles by Appudurai, Rehn, and Levine and Poray-Wybranowska, are presented as knowledge and truth, and thus demonstrate the ways in which configurations and reconfigurations of otherness shape our realities, the stories analysed in the final three articles of this issue present themselves as fiction, yet reveal an indubitable relevance to lives lived. It is a persistent idea, in animal studies as well as other disciplines, that the poetic imagination may give us ways of knowing the ‘wholly other’, or the ‘fundamentally alien’, in the words of Derrida (2008, 11) and Nagel (1974, 438), respectively. Indeed, while he finds it to lack engagement with the philosophical and theoretical explorations that should follow, Derrida (2008, 7) turns to a poetic way of thinking to

make up for the lack of consideration of animal subjectivity he finds in philosophy at large and, albeit in a footnote, Nagel may have thought along similar lines when he conceded that ‘It may be easier than I suppose to transcend inter-species barriers with the aid of the imagination’ (1974, 442n). Moreover, pitting herself against Nagel’s overall conclusions in what has become one of the most widely read texts for literary animal studies, J.M. Coetzee’s protagonist Elizabeth Costello takes her faith in the ethical potential of literature much further, when she argues that ‘there is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another. There are no bounds to the sympathetic imagination’ (1999, 35). For Costello, while our imaginations may indeed bring us closer to the nonhuman phenomenological experience that Nagel ponders, the basic nature of (shared) being – rather than the actual emotional or physical experience of that being – is all that is required for the kind of imagination into nonhuman life that is of ethical relevance, and we find such imagination in literature. As she posits with reference to her own fiction about James Joyce’s character Marion Bloom: ‘If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think myself into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life’ (ibid.). Imagination has the power to transcend boundaries, including those between species, and this carries ethical possibilities and relevance.

The approaches to transcending boundaries can vary greatly, however, as can the ethical outcomes. The physical and conceptual boundaries transcended when a professor in Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog* (1925) turns a dog into a man through experimentation are at the centre of **Andrea McDowell’s** article “**“I ona byla chelovekom” (For the Dog was Once a Human Being)**’. Whereas other scholars have previously largely dismissed the importance of the animal presence in the story, McDowell focuses on the narrative shifts and use of free indirect discourse in the

novella to highlight the importance of its animal voice, and ties this to the historical and literary contexts from which the story arose. Read in this way, a moral obligation is discerned from the story, making it a reminder to protect those more vulnerable than oneself, whether human or nonhuman.

Colin McAdam's novel *A Beautiful Truth* (2013) is a work that also explores ethical issues as well as the question of imagining oneself into the being of another through an emphasis on shared ontology, in this case the 'apehood' that we share with the novel's chimpanzee protagonist. In her article '**Crossing the Threshold**', **Laura Jean McKay** explores the novel's depiction of animal otherness while drawing on and expanding theoretical work on territorialisation by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, and sets up an analytical and conceptual framework that allows for discussions of novels that challenge human/animal binaries through an interplay between notions of territory and agency. As McKay also points out, fiction about nonhuman-human relations often depicts territories that allow for different kinds of interaction between species than does reality, and thus explores notions of nonhuman otherness through such territorial imaginings. Where human and nonhuman territories overlap, it is the unfathomable otherness of the nonhuman that means the territory of other species is misunderstood (if an effort to bridge the gap is made at all), and the nonhuman often ends up the victim of encounters. This is also the case in McAdam's novel, whose main character is moved between territories shared by humans, giving readers ideas of how chimpanzee territorialisation may work, as seen through the eyes of the simian other.

In the final essay of this issue, '**Divine Wings**', **Susan Pyke**'s ecocritical readings of poetry by Emily Brontë along with Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book*, connect the themes of territory and nonhuman otherness to current ecological crisis and climate change. Here, human failure to escape anthropocentric perspectives

and embrace a more posthuman understanding of our place in the world leads to the fragile state of that world. Yet the imaginary avian (and near-angelic) territories of literature offer different paths, which allow for recognition of the vulnerability of all through the fragility of others as readers' empathic imaginations are challenged to, if not understand, then embrace and accept their strangeness. In this way, while the texts of Brontë and Wright stem from different cultures and different centuries, both offer posthuman perspectives in Pyke's readings, whether through harsh seasons or a no less harsh apocalyptic outlook. This leaves the fragility of avian lives open to the reader, and thus, despite bleakness, there is hope. In Pyke's words, 'Humans have the option to look and respond to nonhumans in more inclusive ways'.

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From Over the Horizon: Animal Alterity and Liminal Intimacy beyond the Anthropomorphic Embrace

Richie Nimmo

Introduction

The opposition between a vision of human-animal difference and a vision of human-animal similarity frames much of our thinking about nonhuman animals. The former has it that while human and nonhuman animals may be alike in certain respects, they are nevertheless fundamentally dissimilar in terms of some defining qualities, or the characteristics deemed most important or most relevant to the context of comparison, whether their cognitive, affective or social capacities, their sentience, self-consciousness or subjectivity, their symbolic or linguistic abilities, their basic physiology or intrinsic moral worth. This is the discontinuity thesis, which posits not just difference but an irremediable distance between human and nonhuman animal, an existential schism or ontological gulf separating two different forms of life, corresponding to distinct modes of existence. In this vision, animals are always to some degree absent, unknown and unknowable for human beings, hence animal otherness or alterity is irreducible. The contrasting position has it that whatever their specific differences, humans and nonhuman animals are essentially similar kinds of being, fundamentally alike in terms of the characteristics or qualities that are most important or most relevant for the purposes of human-animal comparison. This is the continuity thesis, which posits not just similarity or likeness but a fundamental ontological proximity and co-

presence of human and animal lives, wherein different species are understood as diverse but related forms of a common mode of existence in a shared lifeworld.

Many of the central discussions and concepts in human-animal studies are shaped and underpinned by the tension between these ways of thinking about animals and human-animal relations, between notions of animal alterity and proximity. This article traces this tension through the concepts of anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism, which are so pivotal for debates in the field, noting that discontinuity positions are frequently aligned with anthropocentrism and evaluated negatively, while continuity positions are aligned with anthropomorphism and evaluated positively. It is argued that this is too simplistic, and that the ontologies of presence and absence, knowing and unknowing, that underpin conceptions of human-animal continuity and discontinuity are more complex than this dualistic vision allows. Therefore, rather than aligning animal ontologies under two overarching ethical poles, this article will unearth some of the ways in which ontologies of proximity and distancing can take unexpected forms, and argue that a counter-intuitive case can be made that ontologies of distance, absence and discontinuity, far from being indissolubly linked with anthropocentrism, may in fact proffer a different kind of non-anthropocentrism and a distinctive vision of human-animal intimacy. Moreover, it will be argued that this provides an important corrective to the colonisation of difference and the erasure of alterity that is an unintended consequence of the ontologies of co-presence and proximity that underpin both the practice of anthropomorphism and its theoretical articulations.

The Sceptical Renunciation

Anthropomorphism is one of the most pivotal concepts in the field of human-animal studies. The word refers to the misattribution of human characteristics to nonhuman entities, and its early usages referred mainly to the tendency to imagine

gods and deities in human form (Malmorstein 1937, cited in Daston and Mitman 2005, 2; Taylor 2011, 266). It acquired a broader meaning and became more prominent in the context of the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution, whence it was deployed to castigate those who persisted with the practice of attributing human-like motivations and intentions to natural phenomena, in ignorance or defiance of the emergent scientific worldview with its stricter distinction between human subjects and natural processes (Sax 2011, 31; Evernden 1992). This use of anthropomorphism as a disparaging accusation of intellectual naivety, self-indulgence, superstition or infantilism, and thus as something to be scrupulously avoided by anyone who considered themselves rational and sensible, became deeply inscribed within modern and scientific ways of thinking. It remains the dominant normative use of the term, ensuring that ‘something of the religious taboo still clings to secular, modern instances of anthropomorphism’ (Daston and Mitman 2005, 2).

The modern renunciation of anthropomorphism was closely bound up with the scientific revolution, which saw the rise of a more consistently human-centred worldview, in which human beings were increasingly hailed as the source of all meaning and value, and nonhuman entities in all their diverse forms correspondingly ascribed the status of ‘things’, whose value was reduced to the instrumental value of providing resources for human exploitation (Thomas 1983, 29; Steiner 2005, 135; Nimmo 2011, 60-61). This trajectory is clear in the history of the use of animals in experimental science, for example, where the powerful taboo against anthropomorphism was used to cultivate a form of extreme scepticism that was ready to deny animal consciousness and suffering against all evidence of the senses. The paradigmatic example of this attitude is the 17th century philosopher and scientist René Descartes, who – notwithstanding some attempted revisionist accounts – is widely regarded as a decisive figure in establishing anthropocentric scepticism concerning animal consciousness as a

core element of respectable scientific practice, and who was therefore ‘pivotal in elaborating the foundations of a view of radical discontinuity between humans and animals’ (Crist 2000, 211). In his Philosophical Letters he develops the view that the mind or ‘soul’ is exclusively a possession of human beings, thus:

There is no prejudice to which we are all more accustomed from our earliest years than the belief that dumb animals think. Our only reason for this belief is that fact that we see that many of the organs of animals are not very different from ours in shape and movement. [...] I came to realise, however, that there are two different principles causing our motions: one is purely mechanical and corporeal; [...] the other is the incorporeal mind, the soul, which I have defined as thinking substance. Thereupon I investigated more carefully whether the motions of animals originated from both these principles or from only one. I soon saw clearly that they could all originate from the mechanical and corporeal principle, and I thenceforth regarded it as certain and established that we cannot at all prove the presence of a thinking soul in animals (Cited in Crist 2000, 211-12).

The corollary of this for Descartes, as Gary Steiner (2005, 135) outlines, is that:

Nature is taken in its essence to be pure corporeality, which for Descartes is fully explicable in terms of inert mechanism. Whatever is pure corporeality or mechanism is not worthy of moral respect [...] To the extent that Descartes considers animals to be mechanism and nothing more he is committed to the view that animals can be used like any natural resource, without moral scruple.

Though the overt brutality that tended to accompany this and which characterised the scientific treatment of animals in Descartes’ time is now culturally effaced and hidden from public view, a disdain for anthropomorphism remains very much entrenched in scientific discourse and knowledge-practices and is still widespread in late modern technoscientific societies. As Lynda Birke (1994, 46-48) has argued, the cultivation of an attitude of anthropocentric scepticism remains a key element in notions of scientific ‘objectivity’ and in the construction of scientific identities, as manifest in the emotional distancing techniques that are incorporated into routine practices wherever animals are used in research laboratories. While in

the context of intensive animal agriculture the Cartesian view of animals as ‘pure corporeality or mechanism’ which ‘can be used like any natural resource, without moral scruple’ (Steiner 2005, 135), has been materially realised in the mechanisation and industrialisation of mass slaughter. The clear historical and philosophical connections between anthropocentric ontology and cruel or exploitative practices have in turn driven a sustained critique of anthropocentric orthodoxy throughout the field of human-animal studies, central to which has been a reappraisal of anthropomorphism as a vital critical resource for thinking against the grain of anthropocentrism.

Numerous scholars from human-animal studies, as well as natural scientists sympathetic to more interpretatively nuanced approaches to studies of animal behaviour and cognition have contributed to a concerted rethinking and rehabilitation of anthropomorphism in an attempt to contest its status as little more than sentimental delusion (Arluke and Sanders 1996; Mitchell, Thompson and Miles 1997; Asquith 1997; Crist 2000; Alger and Alger 2003; Irvine 2004; Hearne 2007; Vitale 2011). This is not just a matter of theory or data; proponents of the new anthropomorphism are able to draw upon a vast and intricate history of anthropomorphic forms of thought and belief among non-Western cultures and peoples, as well as some spheres of modern and contemporary human-animal relations and interaction where anthropomorphism has continued to thrive. Indeed, as James Serpell puts it, despite its intellectually maligned status, ‘anthropomorphism is the normal and immediate response of the vast majority of people to animals’ (1996, 172). In modern societies anthropomorphism is most visibly prevalent in the practice of living with domestic companion animals or ‘pets’, where the animals are often regarded and treated as individual subjects or nonhuman persons with their own unique personalities and biographies (Serpell 1996, 106-7; Fox 2006; Charles and Davies 2008). Extensive efforts have been made in recent decades to re-evaluate such everyday anthropomorphisms as

legitimate knowledge-practices which, though empirically fallible in any specific instance, are not a priori less valid than the forms of anthropocentric scepticism that remain embedded in the modern scientific worldview.

In a broad sense the reappraisal of anthropomorphism is consistent with work on 'situated knowledges' in science studies, which challenges the doctrine that science is the universal and exclusive legitimate form of knowledge, by showing how science is not monolithic but multiple and heterogeneous, and just one of many possible ways of knowing, the efficacy and appropriateness of which are always socially and politically situated and relative to context (Haraway 1988). We would not tend to believe that science should be the arbiter of the meaning of a poem, whether a work of art is beautiful or significant, or how to judge a person's character. Indeed the social interpretations that constantly enable us to make sense of the meaningful actions and intentions of those around us have little to do with science; hence to treat such phenomena as akin to data in a scientific experiment, with our own interpretations treated as hypotheses, would be to misapply scepticism in a manner that would profoundly blinker and inhibit us by excluding the interpretive competence that is intrinsic to our ability to participate in social life, and which has evolved in organic interconnection with our existence as social beings. For the proponents of anthropomorphism, the same kind of inappropriate application of scepticism characterises anthropocentric notions of human-nonhuman discontinuity, wherein we repress or refuse to acknowledge the interspecies intersubjectivity that is otherwise tangible, experientially given and open to view in our embodied encounters with other animals. Anthropomorphism, it is argued, though fallible, provides a vital way for us to free ourselves from this self-imposed myopia.

One prominent form of the discontinuity thesis against which the new anthropomorphism pits itself, is the conviction that human language is unique in facilitating the kind of abstract semiotic communication that makes our

immersion in a social world of intersubjective meanings and symbolic interactions possible, so that language ‘has constituted the “official” barrier between humans and nonhumans’ (Irvine 2004, 120; Trachsel 2010). This in turn makes possible a dualism in which language-endowed human beings are grasped as social and cultural subjects whereas nonhuman animals are held to inhabit the object-world of nature, or viewed as proto-humans in a state of animality from which humans are deemed to have ascended, entering into a qualitatively different state of being in an evolutionary process which is cast as both progress and liberation. This idea and the fundamental human/animal distinction it entails has recurred time and again throughout the history of Western philosophy (Steiner 2005). Critics have pointed out that the consistent result of such thinking is to reinscribe the core ontological structure of Descartes’ philosophy, in which humans alone are subjects possessed of mind and subjectivity, in what is otherwise a mechanistic universe, with animals thereby relegated to the status of ‘beast machines’ lacking any ‘inner’ subjective experience (Crist 2000, 211-217; Plumwood 2002).

Another form of neo-Cartesianism that flows from this is the social constructivist approach, which is essentially agnostic about animal subjectivity but follows a sceptical rationale whereby, because we cannot verify our beliefs about the ‘inner’ experiences of animals in the way that is deemed possible with other human beings by means of language, our beliefs about animals must therefore be regarded as purely speculative and very likely to be projections of our own conceits onto the animal. This view was given one of its most influential expressions by the sociologist Keith Tester, who controversially argued that:

Animals are nothing other than what we make them. Society invests animals with moral significance and presses codes of normative behaviour. Society uses animals to understand itself. [...] Animals are a blank paper, which can be inscribed with any message and symbolic meaning that society wishes (1991, 42, 46).

This is underpinned by a Kantian epistemology entailing a conception of phenomenal meaning as separate from and autonomous of a noumenal realm of ultimately unknowable things-in-themselves. Thus the animal as it exists in-itself is forever absent to us and unknowable, it is argued by social constructivists like Tester, so we should refrain from making ontological statements about animal subjectivity at all, or at least admit that our anthropomorphic perceptions of animals are as self-referential and potentially self-deluding as our tendency to see human faces in the clouds.

The Anthropomorphic Embrace

The interconnected tenets of scepticism, dualism and constructivism have been challenged by scholars who have drawn upon the turn to corporeality and the senses across the social sciences to stress the material, multi-sensory and profoundly embodied nature of interaction. Emphasising the many extra-linguistic dimensions of meaningful communication, including gesture, bodily comportment, facial expression and vocal intonation, language has been decentred as the privileged medium of communication and repositioned as just one element in a much broader spectrum of embodied interaction and communicative inter-corporeality. Arluke and Sanders for example argue that ‘language is overrated as the primary vehicle of cognition and coordinated social interaction [...] The presumption that language is essential in order for an actor to experience empathy with others, construct viable lines of collective action, and engage in cognitive activities is, at best, debatable’ (1996, 79). In this vision, it is not just language that carries meaning and facilitates understanding, but rather, living bodies are themselves semiotic and replete with meanings, and language itself is material and bodily, consisting of material inscriptions, corporeal performances and embodied communicative actions (Shapiro 1990; Sanders 1993; Arluke and Sanders 1996; Myers 2003; Alger and Alger 2003; Sanders 2003; Irvine 2004).

Within sociological human-animal studies these approaches have been developed predominantly through ethnographic studies of human relationships and interactions with domesticated animals, either companion animals or working animals. This focus is unsurprising given that this is the sphere in which human-animal interactions are most readily accessible and amenable to both observation and participation for most people; those who live or work with animals have the opportunity to establish the routinised forms of interaction that give rise to the kinds of embodied understandings that are given such emphasis in these approaches. The possibility of meaningful interspecies understanding is thus posited as relying upon a sustained and iterative mutual accommodation at the point of encounter between different forms of life, in the context of regular interaction. It follows that there is little of significance to say about the nature of more fleeting encounters, perhaps with unfamiliar animals, in terms of this approach. Put simply, one must gradually learn to understand an animal, and that learning process is essentially bodily and kinesthetic - one learns to perceive and to feel the meaning of an animal's behaviour, its qualities of movement, its vocalisations and expressions, firstly by learning the corporeal 'grammar', as it were, of the species, and then by learning through embodied interaction the more idiosyncratic 'habitus' of the individual animal (Shapiro 1990; Sanders 1993; Brandt 2004). Only then can we claim to know an animal, not because we have penetrated an otherwise inaccessible interiority and gained knowledge of the animal's 'mind', but because we are entangled sufficiently in the animal's embodied life to grow intimately familiar with its way of being in the world and with its intrinsically communicative corporeality or embodied consciousness; thus:

The understandings we derive in our encounters with companion animals are found largely in our connection to them built up over the course of the routine, practical, and empathetic interactions that make up our shared biographies [...] In

other words, through understanding the bodies of animals we actively construct a view of their minds (Arluke and Sanders 1996, 78).

Those keen to underline its significance as an alternative to anthropocentric scepticism will often refer to this interactionist, phenomenological and intercorporeal model of interspecies knowing as a form of anthropomorphism. But properly understood it is not so much a reassertion of anthropomorphism as a challenge to the dominant framework in which this concept is embedded. Strictly speaking, the term ‘anthropomorphism’ presumes that certain human characteristics are exclusively human, and the central point of this work is to challenge precisely that, to show that mindedness, intentionality, subjectivity and self-hood, social communication, culture and complex cognition, are not exclusively human but distributed throughout multiple species. A growing abundance of empirical research in cultural primatology and cognitive ethology affirms a strikingly similar conclusion (De Waal 2001; Boesch 2003; De Waal and Tyack 2003; Bekoff 2004).¹ It follows that the interpretative understanding of an animal’s behaviour in ‘human-like’ terms may not necessarily involve the projection of uniquely or essentially human characteristics onto the animal, as ‘anthropomorphism’ presumes, but rather an openness and attentiveness to characteristics that are in fact shared with the animal, which is an important distinction.

Extending this logic, Kay Milton (2005) has suggested that such interspecies interpretive practices are better referred to as ‘egomorphism’ in order to jettison the Cartesian baggage of ‘anthropomorphism’. For Milton, egomorphism denotes not the projection of *human* characteristics onto nonhuman animals, but the perception in other animals of characteristics of *oneself* as a living being, that are to some extent shared with other forms of life. Others have

¹ For a more in-depth engagement with ethological and primatological studies of animal being and subjectivity and with the relationship between scientific and interpretative ways of knowing animals, see Nimmo (2012).

proposed the term ‘critical anthropomorphism’ as a way to distinguish careful practices of embodied interspecies interpretation grounded in interaction and informed by relevant knowledge of the animal’s physiology and natural history, from ‘sentimental anthropomorphism’ as the careless attribution of erroneous human motivations to an animal on the basis of inattentive observation (Fisher 1991; Burghardt 1991; Irvine 2004). Frans De Waal (1999) similarly distinguishes between ‘anthropocentric anthropomorphism’, which ‘naively attributes human feelings and thoughts to animals based on insufficient information or wishful thinking’ (260), and ‘animalcentric anthropomorphism’, which uses human experience as a sensitising metaphoric tool with which ‘to look at the world from the animal’s point of view, taking its *Umwelt*, intelligence, and natural tendencies into account’ (266).²

These more nuanced understandings are undeniably valuable; not only because they explicitly problematise the anthropocentric assumptions embedded in ‘anthropomorphism’ as usually understood, but also because they retain the possibility of using the term in a critique of practices of interspecies meaning-making that are characterised by an inattentiveness to animal being. What even these more nuanced understandings still share with less sophisticated forms of anthropomorphism, however, is the attempt to bring animals near, to render them familiar and knowable, in order to establish their essential likeness and continuity with ourselves, in an assertion of ontological proximity which is taken to be the foundation either of ethical relations or of knowing per se.

A common argument in this connection is that anthropomorphism – though perhaps limited or flawed – is ultimately inescapable, and provides our only way of relating to other animals, because as human beings we will always perceive nonhuman animals in terms of what we know, and what we know is only

² The concept of ‘*Umwelt*’ is developed in the work of Jacob von Uexküll (1909) and refers to animals’ unique sensory perceptions of their environments.

ourselves and our own experience. As John Kennedy laments, ‘anthropomorphic thinking about nonhuman animals is built into us. We could not abandon it even if we wished to’ (1992, 5, cited in De Waal 1999, 264). But by implicitly separating epistemology from ontology – questions of how we come to know the world from questions of the nature of the world that shapes our knowledge – and privileging the former, this reinscribes the dualism of noumena and phenomena which is the essential architecture of scepticism; though anthropomorphism is posited as a partial solution, a sort of analogical bridge to others, this is really no more than a compassionate twist on the same conceptual framework. It also assumes that we truly know our own selves, our own being, which presupposes the sort of relatively unified, coherent, self-transparent – in short, *knowable* – self, that is central to Cartesian rationalism and the obverse of its scepticism. But there seems little reason why such sceptical logic, once employed, should not equally apply to our own being; when we ‘introspect’ do we not face a complex maelstrom of fleeting sensations, fragmentary impressions, half-formed thoughts and contradictory emotions on which we impose meaning, no more immediately graspable and coherent than the world beyond? Thus to avoid reinscribing the architecture of anthropocentrism and the Cartesian humanist subject in these ways, we must eschew the initial separation of knowledge from world that underpins the sceptical insistence upon inescapable self-referentiality.

The identification of an underlying anthropocentric architecture does not exhaust the critique of anthropomorphism, however. For while it is true that a commonplace motive for raising the charge of anthropomorphism pejoratively is to enact a Cartesian-rationalist policing of the human/animal boundary, this is not always the case, as Val Plumwood argues:

The question of anthropomorphism can often be raised with some greater validity in the context of the denial of difference which is a key part of structures of subordination and colonisation to which animals are subject. The charge of anthropomorphism may then legitimately draw our attention to a loss of

sensitivity to and respect for animal difference in humanising representation (2002, 59).

This speaks to the core concern of this paper, namely, that even in its more sophisticated and critical re-articulations, anthropomorphism ultimately manifests a humanising and colonising dynamic, asserting proximity and similarity at the cost of eradicating distance and alterity. There are important resonances here with the work of Emmanuel Levinas (1969) and Jacques Derrida (1999, 2000), for whom alterity is understood not as difference in positive terms, but as necessarily absolute and irreducible. The implications of this overarching conception of alterity as radical otherness are sometimes overlooked by scholars focused more narrowly upon what each of these writers had to say specifically about animals and ethics. What is most of interest in this case, however, is that for both thinkers, despite their differences, alterity must ultimately be either respected in its incommensurability, or negated by transformation into the self-same (Levinas 1969, 121). As Susan Sencindiver explains: ‘For Levinas and Derrida, the hospitality towards the other is unconditional, the ethical obligation infinite; and to prevent converting and vitiating the other, defined by and for itself, into an other-than-self, they contend that otherness must always be recognised as Altogether-Other’ (2014, 1).

It follows that the attempt to assert relatedness through continuity with the other and to establish and measure the extent of similarity and difference with respect to self and other, is to bring the other into the orbit of the self in a kind of ontological narcissism that negates the very alterity it seeks to recognise and understand. Significantly, this inverts the usual logic whereby establishing continuity with the other is taken to be the essential ground of ethical relations, and ‘othering’ is regarded suspiciously as a preparation for unethical transgression. On the contrary, on this Levinasian view, it is precisely the acknowledgement of the other as other, as absolute and incommensurable, hence

as existing in-and-for-itself rather than in-relation-to-oneself, that is the true ground of ethical relations. Indeed the presumption that the other is knowable, similar beneath their difference, and essentially 'like me', is a quintessentially unethical relation as it subsumes the other to one's own horizon of understanding.

If the impulse for this kind of colonising appropriation of alterity was intrinsic to relations of intimacy, as might well be supposed, then this would present an insuperable problem, and could perhaps justify the kinds of liberationist stances that regard all forms of human-animal intimacy as forms of domination. That is not the intention here however; rather, I want to articulate a different kind of intimacy, which I believe exists at the margins of contemporary human-animal relations, and which – though subordinate and liminal – has not entirely disappeared. It is an intimacy predicated not upon co-presence but instead upon the maintenance of distance, rooted in an intuitive recognition that the intimacy of proximity tends to inadvertently colonise otherness and render it invisible or mundane, transforming alterity into identity. This suffocating movement is eschewed by what I want to call liminal intimacy, or intimacy at a distance, for which closeness lies not in possessing or bringing near, nor in knowing as such, but instead in a relational being-with-otherness that is comfortable with degrees of unknowing. The following sections seek to further articulate and develop this by exploring some parallel and related ideas across a range of literature and examples.

Intimacy and Distance

In his influential essay *Why Look at Animals?*, first published in 1980, John Berger argues that, prior to what he calls 'the rupture' of modernity and industrialization, animals 'were with man at the centre of this world' (2009, 12), before articulating a striking narrative of the gradual disappearance and marginalisation of animals from human life, by which he means their ontological

and existential disappearance. In outlining the multiple dimensions and technologies of this disappearance, Berger argues not just that animals have been made culturally and physically distant, or that they have been removed from our lives, in the way that Keith Thomas (1983) for example argues that animals were progressively removed from view in everyday life by the processes of urbanisation. On the contrary, for Berger animals are more centrally in view than ever before. In zoos, aquariums, safari parks and animal documentaries, for example, we often have a less obstructed view of animals than would be conceivable without the assemblage of numerous technologies, and yet the animal itself is irremediably out of focus; indeed the clearer our view of the animal the more invisible it becomes. The key to this paradox, for Berger, is that the existential significance of the animal has been almost entirely negated, because what he calls ‘the look of the animal’, meaning our relational awareness of the animal’s unique phenomenological and experiential world, comparable to our own yet different in ways that can never be entirely known, has been dissipated along with a sense of the animal’s autonomy and agency. The significance of the animal’s gaze has been marginalised in proportion to the extent that animals have become always the observed rather than the observers:

In the accompanying ideology, animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are (Berger 2009, 27)

If any development might appear to contradict this thesis then the obvious candidate would be the proliferation of domestic companion animals; how can animals be said to have ‘disappeared’, when increasing numbers of people live together more closely in non-instrumental relations with animals than ever before? But Berger dismisses pets as ‘creatures of their owner’s way of life’,

which cannot offer the 'parallelism of their separate lives' that was central to the existential relationship with animals prior to 'the rupture'. This is because 'in this relationship the autonomy of both parties has been lost' (2009, 25); the owner has become psychologically dependent upon the animal for certain aspects of his or her self-identity, Berger suggests, while the animal has become almost entirely physically dependent upon the owner.

There are many aspects of Berger's argument that are problematic. His sweeping view of human relations with companion animals, for example, is difficult to sustain in light of numerous studies grounded in ethnographic research which have suggested that 'pet-keeping' encompasses diverse forms of human-animal relations, by no means all of which resemble Berger's model (Fox 2006; Charles and Davies 2008; Podberscek, Paul and Serpell 2000). It also implies too sharp a conceptual distinction between the wild and the domesticated in a way that ultimately rests upon a humanist conception of human beings as separate from nature. I do not want to endorse or defend these aspects of Berger's essay, nor many of its historical and empirical claims. But underlying his account there is nevertheless a nuanced sense of how proximity may paradoxically abolish a kind of intimacy that is predicated upon distance and alterity, which I think is worth retaining. It is valuable because in making the case for distance, difference, and what Berger calls 'the parallelism of separate lives' (2009, 15, 25) it pulls against the tendency to rather uncritically equate anthropomorphism with human-animal intimacy, and anthropocentrism, conversely, with distance. Indeed, it would be unsurprising according to this latter way of thinking if Berger were to disdain anthropomorphism as a consequence of his dismissive attitude toward pet-keeping relations, but this is not his position; on the contrary, Berger regards anthropomorphism as a residue of a relationship between humanity and animals that has been lost:

Until the nineteenth century, anthropomorphism was integral to the relation between man and animal and was [...] the residue of the continuous use of animal metaphor. In the last two centuries, animals have gradually disappeared. Today we live without them. And in this new solitude, anthropomorphism makes us doubly uneasy (2009, 21).

So the familiar conceptual schema is not operating here; rather than physical and social proximity and the sharing of time, space, and lived activity being equated with intimacy, the closeness which these factors would seem to facilitate is negated by the wider asymmetrical relationship in which the human being effectively controls the animal's conditions of existence. This control, and the erasure of the animal's autonomy and agency it involves, is held to destroy the possibility of an authentic encounter with animal alterity as such, and thus to hollow out the intimacy that might otherwise accompany the proximity of shared lives.

In its apparent reliance upon some underpinning notion of animal 'freedom' as absence of human control, this might be read as a romantic critique of animal domestication, and again perhaps as broadly consistent with some variants of a liberationist approach to human-animal relations, wherein 'the wild' becomes translated into 'the free'. But Berger is quite clear that the 'rupture' he refers to, and which initiated the epochal marginalisation and disappearance of animals, took place in the modern era – he refers in particular to the transformations of the nineteenth century – and not with the Neolithic revolution or the historic domestication of animals (2009, 21-23). Indeed, if there is a hero at all in Berger's narrative, it is not the hunter-gatherer of human past or present, who eschews the domination and control of animals through domestication, but the peasant, who lives closely with domesticated animals. For Berger the relationships between peasants and their animals combine proximity and distance, or presence and absence, in a way that is very difficult for the modern urban

sensibility to comprehend, because we have come to utterly counterpose these concepts and to separate out the ways of seeing they are bound up with; thus:

Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged there and here. [...] This – maybe the first existential dualism – was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected and worshipped, bred and sacrificed. Today the vestiges of this dualism remain among those who live intimately with, and depend upon, animals. A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and so difficult for a stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and*, and not by a *but* (2009, 15).

Many contemporary students of animal ethics would have no compunction in calling this an unsustainable contradiction. It may well be, but interestingly Berger sees this contradiction as a kind of ‘wisdom’, the basis of which he believes ‘is an acceptance of the dualism at the very origin of the relation between man and animal’ (2009, 36). A note of caution here, since ‘dualism’ has during the last quarter of a century become almost wholly negative in its connotations, as one theoretical paradigm after another has sought to overcome this or that dualism. As Berger uses it here, however, it does not signify the unwarranted separation into two discrete domains of something that should properly be grasped more holistically or monistically, but rather the holding together of two logically contradictory ways of thinking about something, rooted in an intuitive recognition that the complexity and multiplicity of the thing exceeds linear logical reasoning. Rather than a failure of critical thinking then, dualism as used here – and a better term perhaps would be liminality – denotes a certain kind of subtle sensibility which, rather than faithfully following through the logic of either one or the other side of the duality, thereby negating the other, is instead content to live with their co-existence in dynamic tension. Thus, animals are both like and unlike, present yet always partially absent, familiar yet unknowable, near to us yet far away; this duality is intrinsic to the sensibility of being-with-otherness that I call liminal intimacy.

Autonomy and Alterity

Although Berger focuses on peasants as ‘the only class who, throughout history, has remained familiar with animals and maintained the wisdom which accompanies that familiarity’ (2009, 36), his argument is haunted by hunter-gatherers, and has some interesting parallels in Tim Ingold’s (1994) ‘indigenous’ account of the shift in human-animal relations bound up with the transition from nomadic hunter-gather subsistence to settled pastoralism, which he posits as fundamentally a shift from relations of trust to relations of domination. At the heart of this is the question of animal autonomy or agency, or more accurately, the human perception of the animal’s power or lack thereof to make a difference to them in ways that matter. According to Ingold many hunter-gatherer cosmologies involve a belief that an animal is not simply discovered by the hunter during a hunt but chooses to present itself to him as part of an ongoing reciprocal relationship between that species and the hunter (9-10, 14-15). If the animal is treated disrespectfully, subjected to cruelty or avoidable pain, or if its meat is either wasted or not shared equitably among the community, then the animal has the power to withhold itself from the hunter in future, so that he may go hungry. Hence despite a successful hunt culminating in the killing of an animal, when understood in terms of the hunters’ own cosmology this is not a relationship of domination, but one of trust, since the animal retains agency in the relationship:

The hunter hopes that by being good to animals, they in turn will be good to him. But by the same token, the animals have the power to withhold if any attempt is made to coerce what they are not, of their own volition, prepared to provide. For coercion, the attempt to extract by force, represents a betrayal of the trust that underwrites the willingness to give. Animals thus maltreated will desert the hunter, or even cause him ill fortune. This is the reason why [...] the encounter between hunter and prey is conceived as basically non-violent. It is also the reason why hunters aim to take only what is revealed to them and do not press for more (Ingold 1994, 14-15).

For farmers, in contrast, however affectionately the animals may be treated and cared for, they are essentially subject to the farmer's control. There is no belief that the animal has the power to withhold what the farmer requires of them, hence there is no reciprocity in the relationship, rendering trust redundant (16-17).

It should hardly need to be said that we do not have to endorse the specific characterisations of hunter-gatherers, farmers, peasants or pet-keepers posited by either Berger or Ingold, in order to recognise that at the heart of these accounts is a perceptive argument about the pivotal importance of conceptions of animal autonomy in human-animal relations. For Ingold the erasure of animal agency involved in domestication constitutes the negation of trust and the imposition of domination, as reciprocity is replaced by dependence and control (1994, 16). While for Berger the progressive marginalisation of animals which occurs through industrialisation and the proliferation of the Cartesian machine-view of animals destroys the notion of animals as autonomous beings with parallel lives that enabled animals to offer a unique 'companionship to the loneliness of man as a species' (2009, 15).

What risks negation in the transformations outlined in these accounts is not just agency and autonomy, I want to argue, but also alterity. Ingold's farmers do not need to trust the animal because by virtue of their domination of the animal they presume knowledge of every relevant facet of the animal's existence. Similarly, with Berger's pet-keepers, the owners assume that there is no relevant dimension of the animal's life and experience that is not transparent to them, rendering the human-pet relationship not a companionship in the existential sense but a relationship of co-dependence. In both cases the erasure of alterity is intricately bound up with the imposition of relations of control, domination or dependency; but I would argue that, rather than merely their corollary, this erasure is an actively constitutive element of these relations. In other words, the negation of otherness is a performative way of seeing which contributes to the enactment of

a certain kind of human-animal relationship. Thus, while it may be more or less prevalent in different kinds of structural human-animal relations, the erasure of alterity is potentially present in a range of interspecies relationships and practices. From this point of view, the well-intentioned anthropomorphic impulse to bring animals near risks an unwitting enactment of the modernist tendency to treat the world as ‘raw material for humanization’ (Haraway 1991, 198).

Liminal intimacy in contrast is predicated upon the maintenance of a tension between knowing and unknowing, familiarity and strangeness, in which intimacy consists in respecting, living with and even cultivating distance and alterity, rather than seeking a closeness that would obliterate these; it implicitly recognises the fragility of authentic encounters with the other, and the colonising tendencies intrinsic to proximate intimacy. An example of this is the practice of indigenous Sámi reindeer pastoralism discussed in Hugo Reinert’s (2014) ethnography in the Norwegian Arctic. Reinert explains that ‘as a result of their mobile and largely free-ranging life, reindeer occupy an ambiguous position [...] appearing neither fully domesticated nor fully wild, the animals slip between descriptive and normative categories’ (2014, 50). While this is perceived by non-herders as a problematic lack of control which leads to the reindeer ‘consuming crops, breaking fences, disturbing livestock, disrupting gardens, invading urban space, colliding with cars or buses, and so on’ (50), for the herders themselves ‘the apparent lack of control also represents more than an absence; it involves active effort and the extension into new conditions of a positive ethical commitment on the part of herders to the reindeer they herd’ (50-51).

Reinert understands this in terms of the way in which pastoral Sámi animal ethics incorporates ‘situationally specific rules that take into account both the mobile, liminal quality of the animals themselves, and the varying degrees of control humans can (and should) exercise over them’ (51). This in turn is part of ‘a framing overall responsibility, to protect the autonomy and independence of the

reindeer; that is, to preserve their ability to exit the coordinates of human control. [...] Behavior that damages this ability [...] is understood, to some degree, as a violation of the unspoken pact between humans and reindeer' (51). One manifestation of this is that herders are reluctant to provide animals with artificial feed, even in very harsh winters and when food is scarce, for fear of making the reindeer too dependent on humans over time and slowly depriving them of their autonomy; this would be 'a sort of disrespect, or violation, which risked transforming the reindeer into something they were not, jeopardising their integrity and independence' (52). Reinert grasps this as an ethics of 'cultivated distance', which 'patrolled and delimited the presence and influence of the humans, in deference to the maintenance of a partial entanglement: an entanglement whose partiality, vitally, must be preserved', and in which 'distance was managed and cultured, as an element of moral obligation toward certain nonhuman others' (52).

A somewhat different articulation of a kind of non-proximate or liminal intimacy is found in Priska Gisler and Mike Michael's (2011) discussion of the history of the horseshoe crab, or *Limulus Polyphemus*. With reference to Donna Haraway's (2003; 2008) concept of 'companion species' as a way to think about relational processes of hybrid emergence, or 'becoming-with' animals through mutually constitutive 'intra-actions' (Barad 2007), Gisler and Michael point out that the iconic companion species in Haraway is canine, and suggest that the horseshoe crab 'is not, for most people, a good candidate for the status of companion species' because 'the seeming distance between human being and horseshoe crab – evolutionary, historical and social – suggests associations that are thin, alien, and highly distanced, as opposed to the thick, "intimate", short (though always complex and surprising) associations that characterise the relations between human and dog' (2011, 131). They therefore argue that the

concept of companion species needs some reworking and extension in order to be fully applicable to *limulus*.

In particular, for Gisler and Michael ‘companion species’ implies a kind of active reciprocity which is difficult to identify in the relations between people and horseshoe crabs; instead with *limulus* there is what they refer to as a ‘more elongated’ and extensively mediated companionship, or ‘a distanciated co-presence’ (2011, 132). Moreover, for Haraway the temporal and affective dimensions of interactions between companion species are marked by ‘surprise’, the unexpected that arises in interaction, rendering it unpredictable and eventful in ways that are both ‘dangerous’ and ‘delightful’; indeed this possibility of ‘surprise’ is a consistent feature of ethnographic accounts of human-canine play, and is often identified as central to what makes such activity meaningful as intersubjective interaction (Shapiro 1990; Sanders 1993; Bekoff and Byers 1998). In human relations with the horseshoe crab however, ‘the intensity, speed, and reciprocity of interaction necessary for such surprise is somewhat less in evidence’ (Gisler and Michael 2011, 133). Gisler and Michael suggest that this therefore requires a modified notion of reciprocity, alongside an attentiveness to a different modality of affectivity, which ‘lies not within the sentimental anthropomorphising of animals but in a deeper understanding of the interactions between human and nonhuman’ (ibid.). They propose that central to this deeper understanding is what one might tentatively call ‘wonder’, encompassing ‘a sense of the sublime, of bemusement, of coincidence, of “ungraspability”, of ambiguity, of irony’ (ibid.). Crucially, in the relations of ‘distanciated co-presence’ or ‘companionship at a distance’ that enframe this sense of ‘wonder’, the irreducible otherness of the nonhuman is not colonised by an intimacy of proximity but maintained, respected, and infused with a sense of awe.

A final example of human-animal relations that might be thought of as involving a form of liminal intimacy can be found in honeybee apiculture or

beekeeping. As I have argued elsewhere (Nimmo 2015, 186-189), though an account of beekeeping as simple animal exploitation is of course possible, it involves glossing over many of the specificities of beekeeping practices and of honeybees as a form of life, for the sake of critical consistency. Examined for their own sake, bees in managed hives do not fit easily into the categories of either 'wild' or 'domesticated', and there is a long cultural history of representations of beekeeping not as a kind of farming but as a more hybrid and mutual endeavor involving a form of interspecies exchange – or in Haraway's (1992, 86, 90) terms a 'conversation' – that is mediated through the space of the managed beehive. As Claire Preston (2006, 34) points out, bees 'consent to inhabit artificial hives which have been devised for them, but their relationship to man is better conceived as symbiotic, with each species benefitting from certain behaviours and capabilities of the other'. Though bees have sometimes been understood as a kind of 'livestock', as 'fuzzy herbivores with wings' (Buchmann & Nabhan 1997), this is belied by a closer look at the beehive itself, which notably is not the equivalent of a factory farm or a fenced-in field, but is better grasped as a human-nonhuman assemblage that mediates a negotiated intra-action between species (Nimmo 2015, 189).

Notably beekeepers typically describe their activities in terms that are distinct from those of either farmers or pet-keepers, and in which the language of control is characteristically absent. We may be sceptical of this, but if we want to maintain that the inter-corporeal understandings and everyday knowledges of pet-keepers and others who live and work closely with animals should not be dismissed in the name of scepticism, 'objectivity' and detachment, then we should surely practice the same forbearance with respect to beekeepers and not be too quick to dismiss their lived ontologies out of hand and to assert a superior understanding on the part of the critical theorist. With this in mind, it is significant that the complexity of honeybee colonies and their highly sensitive

interrelationship with the local environment means that there are always more contingencies at work in determining the fate of the colony than the beekeeper could hope to master. Thus beekeepers routinely make exhaustive preparations and take all possible precautions, hoping that this will be enough to see their bees thrive, produce abundant honey, and survive the winter, but there is no guarantee of this; bees cannot be compelled to produce honey, and even the most seasoned beekeepers will have encountered disappointment and failure, sometimes inexplicably (Nimmo 2015, 186-192). Consequently beekeepers tend to be acutely and respectfully aware that in their interactions with bees they are engaging with a dynamic and living alterity that is always partly unknowable. Or as one beekeeper eloquently puts it, ‘the bees know what they are doing: our job is to listen to them’, which means ‘never thinking of them as if they were mere machines created solely for our benefit, instead of highly-evolved, wild creatures, with whom we are privileged to work’ (Chandler 2009, 34).

Conclusion

This article has critically examined how the tension between visions of human-animal similarity and continuity, and visions of human-animal difference and discontinuity, has tended to frame thinking in human-animal studies around the pivotal concepts of anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism, underpinning a recurrent equation of the continuity thesis with anthropomorphism and of discontinuity with anthropocentrism. The genealogy of this has been explored by retracing the process through which widespread anthropomorphism in ways of perceiving and thinking about animals was suppressed and rendered taboo by the rise of a more consistently human-centred worldview associated with the scientific revolution, Cartesian rationalism and industrial modernity. This involved a sceptical denial of animal subjectivity and a policing of anthropomorphism that has been bound up with the rationalisation of cruel and

exploitative human-animal relations and practices in the modern era. Against this background numerous scholars in human-animal studies have been driven to engage in a reappraisal of anthropomorphism as an alternative to the human-centric orthodoxy. This has often involved challenging the linguacentrism that has served to entrench anthropocentric notions of human-animal discontinuity, stressing instead the profoundly embodied nature of communication and interaction as forms of inter-corporeal intersubjectivity which do not necessarily exclude nonhuman animals. It has also been accompanied by some efforts to develop distinctions between more 'critical' and 'sentimental' or 'anthropocentric' and 'animal-centric' forms of anthropomorphism.

While acknowledging the value of these more critical understandings, this article has argued that the equation of continuity with anthropomorphism and discontinuity with anthropocentrism results in an oversimplistic alignment of these positions in terms of contrasting ethical poles. It has suggested that a more nuanced understanding is needed, which is sensitive to how these positions are underpinned by ontologies of presence and absence that are irreducible to a binary framework. In particular, in its overwhelming focus on the critique of anthropocentrism, human-animal studies has tended to underplay the problems of anthropomorphism, which has typically been treated as a relatively benign source of potentially erroneous interpretations of animals, rather than as a way of knowing that is more seriously problematic. Addressing this, this paper has argued that anthropomorphism is not just human-centric in its own right, but that it involves an ontology of co-presence and proximity which, by seeking to bring animals near in an ontological sense, manifests a colonising dynamic that inadvertently erases difference, otherness and alterity. A different conception of intimacy has been articulated as an alternative, which is not the intimacy of proximate knowing but a more counter-intuitive intimacy at a distance, or liminal intimacy, understood as a relational being-with-otherness that is comfortable with

degrees of unknowing and which maintains a dynamic tension between presence and absence, similarity and alterity.

The article has sought to further articulate this by exploring some parallel and related ideas and arguments across a range of literature and several examples: These have included John Berger's (2009) narrative account of an 'existential dualism' at the heart of the human-animal relationship, which he believes has all but disappeared in the modern epoch along with a sense of animals as the autonomous subjects of separate lives; Tim Ingold's (1994) analysis of the transition from hunter-gatherer subsistence to pastoralism as a transition from reciprocal 'relations of trust' to 'relations of domination'; Hugo Reinert's ethnographic account (2014) of how an 'ethics of cultivated distance' shapes Sámi reindeer pastoralism in the Norwegian Arctic; as well as Priska Gisler and Mike Michael's (2011) analysis of the sense of 'wonder' that infuses the relationship of 'distanciated co-presence' or 'companionship at a distance' that characterises human relations with the horseshoe crab. The final example was that of beekeepers' understandings of their bee colonies as expressions of a dynamic and living alterity that always partially exceeds our horizon of understanding.

Common to each of these examples is some notion of human-animal relations in which the intimacy of mutual being-with-otherness-at-a-distance emerges as a lived alternative to the colonising tendencies of proximate intimacy, restoring the sense of animals as in some sense absent, autonomous, and irreducible to human understandings. In these examples this otherness is not a basis for indifference, objectification or negation, as in the dominant framing of discussions around anthropomorphism in the field, which equate distance and discontinuity with anthropocentrism. On the contrary, difference in these cases becomes the condition of possibility of a companionship at a distance that eschews the anthropomorphic embrace wherein the price of human-animal continuity is a world without radical otherness. Instead, for these liminal ways of

thinking and being with animals, the extent to which the animal is like or unlike us loses its central importance; what matters is that the animal exists, that its existence is entangled with but radically irreducible to our own, and that we are privileged to encounter and partially share this other existence, albeit at a distance.

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Other(ed) Rabbits: Using Otherness as a Frame to Teach Critical Approaches to Human-Animal Relations in Japan

Dylan Hallingstad O'Brien

Introduction

With the rise of animal studies, increasing attention has been paid to the teaching of human-animal relations. Particularly within critical pedagogical approaches to teaching human-animal relations from human-animal studies (HAS), and also critical animal studies (CAS) scholars, it has been suggested that instructors should strive to deconstruct prevailing ideas of human-animal relationality (Corman and Vandrocová 2013; Pedersen 2010), and engage students in a critical dialogue about human-animal relations. The hope of such engagement is to teach students to think critically about how nonhuman animals are treated differently as a result of their species, and the social construction of such conditions.

In conversation with pedagogical discussions pertaining to animal studies, this paper critically reflects on the experience of using otherness as a frame to teach students about human-animal relations, and address the epistemic and symbolic roots of such relations, within the context of a Japanese university. In reflecting on using otherness to teach a critical approach to human-animal relations, this article observes two important results: 1) a gendered engagement with nonhuman animal otherness and 2) a large amount of students expressing concern for nonhuman animals, and

suggesting that modes of othering nonhuman animals are negative, and should be done away with. In light of these observations, this article concludes with a set of implications, namely 1) that otherness, within this context, was an effective frame for teaching human-animal relations in a way that promoted creative and critical engagement with the nonhuman animal condition¹, and 2) that future critical pedagogical work concerned with human-animal relations may want to consider the limitations of explanatory models centered on making “visible” the nonhuman animal condition and structures related to this condition’s determination as a means to effect change in human-animal relationality.

Constructing a Unit on Nonhuman Animal Otherness

Through critical reflection and detailing the construction of this unit and student² response to it, this article critically examines a unit on nonhuman animal otherness in an introductory level film studies course in a basic education grouping, taught in English at a university in Japan³ within the broader context of pedagogical work on teaching human-animal relations. The roughly 30 students in the course were fluent in English, and ranged from first to fourth year standing. The course consisted of eight films and essay assignments, with each film addressing a specific form of othered identity (race, gender, species, social class, etc.). The course met twice

¹ To clarify, I am positing that otherness served as an effective framework independent of a value judgment on the negative positions taken by students. That is, I am suggesting effectiveness due to the depth, analysis, and insight student essays presented, not because students evaluated otherness negatively.

² In awareness of the ethical dilemmas in a post-facto report of a class to the public at large, any and all identifying/individuating information has been removed. While students who took the class may be able to read this paper and realize which course this paper refers to, all other identifying information has been removed.

³ It is important to keep in mind that, contrary to some prior critical pedagogical analysis of teaching on nonhuman animals and human-animal relationships, this article explicitly details a singular unit as opposed to analysis of an entire course specifically on nonhuman animals. Rather, this article attempts to outline from a critical pedagogical standpoint the teaching experience of using otherness as a framework to promote critical reflexivity regarding representations of nonhuman animal others in students.

weekly, once to view a film and have a small discussion, and the other day to listen to a lecture from the presiding professor and then break into small groups to discuss the film and think through that week's essay prompt with their peers.

As the course's teaching apprentice, I worked with the presiding professor prior to the beginning of the course, helping to pick films, readings, and build individual units.⁴ As I had previously prepared and given lectures on two separate occasions under the supervision of a professor, I was offered the chance to provide one unit's small lecture under his supervision and have a larger role in the design of a specific unit of the course. I remarked that I would feel most comfortable teaching about nonhuman animal identity, given my past research and familiarity with prominent pedagogical discussions.

Before continuing, it will likely provide clarity to offer a very brief outline of my understanding of nonhuman animal otherness, and remark succinctly on the generals of students' conception of nonhuman animal otherness. My own standpoint on nonhuman animal otherness is broadly informed by understandings of nonhuman animals' lived experience as phenomenologically distinct from humans (and other nonhuman animals), unknowable in its exactness, with otherness resultant in part from the impossibility of knowing the lived experience of nonhuman animals (e.g. Nagel 1974). Also key to my own understanding of nonhuman animal otherness, and subsequently my conception of anthropomorphism, is the human/animal binary pair with its distinct legacy in what has been considered broadly "Western" thought, with "animal" being considered the negative of human and devoid of certain qualities, and with the figure of the animal foundational to conceptions of the human. Also important to note prior to elaborating on the unit is that student conception of

⁴ To clarify, during the course I was not responsible for grading at any point. As part of my duties as a teaching apprentice, I would read through essays prior to the presiding professor, commenting and drawing attention to positive points of individual papers, alongside suggesting themes in the overall engagement for that week.

otherness, that is, what they stated in papers and that I gained from discussing films during class with them, appeared generally to be an assessment of otherness as the social construction of non-hegemonic forms of difference (gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity) in negative ways. Thus, I would argue that the discussion herein of student conceptions of nonhuman animal otherness should be thought of in terms of how they perceived media – and society at large – as depicting nonhuman animal difference, and the portrayal of difference as motivated by cultural and political reasons, often in order to construct hegemonic forms of relationality across difference.

The unit on nonhuman animal otherness was designed to complement the overall aim of the course by providing students another facet to their understanding of otherness. Specifically, from the outset of planning the unit, the intention was to provide students with a toolset to critically view media representations of nonhuman animals, akin to the representation of human difference and politics of its screening that the rest of the course dealt with. The presiding professor's design of the course was not to provide an overview of film studies, but rather to foster critical thinking in students, particularly with regards to media consumption. As this was the only film studies course offered at the university, unless students pursued graduate work in film studies, it was unlikely they would further engage with the field; as such, providing students with an important takeaway beyond disciplinary approaches and paradigms was forefront in the construction of the course overall.

As each week's new unit brought new theories to analyze various manifestations of otherness, the unit herein discussed fit quite well, both as an examination of a specific form of othered identity, and as a unit able to draw on extant pedagogical work on human-animal relationality. Scholars writing on teaching human-animal relations have long suggested that a primary goal of courses should be to have students think critically regarding nonhuman animals, rather than reinforce

the hegemonic social constructions that abound in the academy and society at large (DeMello 2010; Pedersen 2010). Furthermore, other scholars undertaking analysis of teaching the place of nonhuman animals in society have suggested that presenting nonhuman animal issues alongside human ones can provide the ground for robust student engagement and learning, deconstructing the boundaries between “human” and “animal” (Beirne and Alagappan 2007; Corman and Vandrocová 2013).

In constructing the unit on nonhuman animal otherness, my two chief concerns were continuity with prior and future units in the course (using otherness as a frame), and additionally, focusing on what Pedersen (2010, 122) refers to as the “material and symbolic roots of harmful and oppressive practices.” As she asks in the final chapter of *Animals in Schools*: “How can they [the material and symbolic roots] and their effects be critically addressed? And how can alternatives be envisioned and evaluated?” (ibid.). In maintaining continuity with the other units of the course, the unit on nonhuman animal otherness could not merely become a critical reading of a particular manifestation of nonhuman animal otherness, but rather had to address how the film could help to explain and demonstrate the othering of nonhuman animals, or provide a foil for prevailing images of nonhuman animality. Additionally, as with prior units, the ultimate goal was to provide students with a toolset to critically analyze further representations of otherness that they would encounter. Thus, selecting materials (a film and readings) that emphasized critical self-reflection was paramount to constructing this unit.

A key part of the course overall was the design of the essay prompts, which were written in a way meant to encourage bringing together self-reflection and critical analysis of each unit’s film and concepts. This type of writing assignment was well received from the beginning of the course by students, who stated that they appreciated the chance to write about their own experiences alongside their opinions on the film. While some students did struggle at first with merging an argumentative

writing style with self-reflection, by the final assignment of the course, all had risen to the occasion quite well, especially given some of the students' remarks on their lack of training in writing argumentative essays.⁵

Due to the expected topics of discussion and a pedagogical orientation towards honesty with students about instructor standpoint, I forthrightly noted that I am vegan⁶ in order to more fully disclose to students my own biases. I anticipated that class discussion of nonhuman animal otherness, regardless of the inclusion of the readings to be discussed later, would turn to the consumption of nonhuman animal bodies, however partially, as it is indeed a prominent feature of human-animal relations and students had to this point displayed particularly incisive thinking. Disclosure of such a minority standpoint runs the risk, as Pedersen (2010) details, of being cast as political in the face of the prevailing perspective's supposed neutrality.

While disclosure of my own veganism and perspectives could have led students to be cautious, given their common responses as supportive of the consumption of nonhuman animals, I would suggest that the honest foregrounding of my own biases may have actually led to a richer engagement, as the prompt did not

⁵ Such comments from students intersect trends in Japan of students exiting high school with sometimes less training in being asked to write an essay critical of a topic, compared to the predominantly Euro-American context in which pedagogy of human-animal relations has been theorized. Herein it is also important to distinguish between prior preparation in argumentative writing and critical thinking skills. I mean to situate the context of this unit for an audience likely unfamiliar with the Japanese educational system, not reflect in-depth on its impact on students' modes of engagement with course content. Students, as evidenced by class discussion, were as adept at critical engagement with course topics as other contexts (see footnote 8), but I note some issues with the nature of the assignment to be reflexive in consideration of how their engagement was evaluated by the presiding professor and myself through the assigning of essays with an argumentative component. See Karan 2005, 182-183; Suzuki and Oiwa 1999, 290-291; Ozawa 1993, 251-257 translated in Lu 1997, 569-571, for discussions of the Japanese education system and critical thinking in the context of secondary education.

⁶ The presiding professor also noted his vegetarianism; however, my dietary and consumer choices were connected to broader issues through a brief explanation of my personal standpoint, as I would be providing the prompt and leading class discussion the following period. It was my hope that detailing my own beliefs, students would not feel there was a hidden motivation behind the film and writing response.

lead in a direction that privileged my standpoint, but rather provided ample ground for disagreement. Students had previously challenged elements of the readings and the presiding professor and myself on interpretations of films, and in a critical pedagogical context where students were openly sharing details of themselves – including in their responses about nonhuman animal otherness – I felt it would have been disingenuous not to disclose this, given how often such dietary choices are associated with political orientation. Additionally, responses to the prompt never seemed focus on defensive writing regarding consumption, but rather to examine it within the context of supporting normative conceptions of nonhuman animal otherness.

Within the small lecture I gave, I did not present much discussion of the material treatment of nonhuman animals by humans; rather, I eschewed any sort of didactic presentation of “ideal” human-animal relationality, and aimed instead to, per the entire view of the course, promote critical thinking about human-animal relationships.⁷ In this sense, what is herein discussed can be taken as the result of a unit that sought to have students reflect critically on human-animal relationality through the framework of otherness, and the gendered and consumption focused response that will be discussed emerges out of such a context. What is also important to note in my foregrounding of standpoint to the students is that throughout the entire course, the presiding professor had explicitly noted that grades would not be given based on viewpoints taken, but rather the clarity of argument, basic elements of writing style and citation, and subjective strength of the paper in making an

⁷ Such a choice for the lecture is also due to *Watership Down* largely being a wildlife film, and aside from several scenes involving the rescue of female rabbits from a barn (and resulting human violence towards the rabbits), there is no interaction with humans. Students were encouraged to engage with *Watership Down* on the basis of its *representation* of nonhuman animals, with prior lectures having discussed the politics of representing otherness.

argument, would determine grades.⁸ Pedersen (2010, 54-56) has previously pointed to the importance of conveying to students that their disagreements with an instructor's view will not determine their grade; similarly, I forthrightly noted that disagreement was not grounds in any way for a lower grade reinforcing the point from prior units that even critical thinking counter to the presiding professor and myself was encouraged.

The essay prompt⁹ that was provided to students also stands as an important factor in student response and also warrants discussion, given student divergence from the prompt. The prompt was designed to have students reflect on their own views of nonhuman animals, but in no way to suggest preference for, or indictment of, a certain perspective, beyond students engaging in some way with otherness. Even then, the prompt did allow for challenging even the assumption that otherness is a factor in human-animal relations.

Similar to the avoidance of an assumption of students holding certain viewpoints or overly steering students in a certain direction, I wish to qualify why I chose a fantasy film over a "realistic" or violent depiction of nonhuman animal life. Pedersen quotes from her interview with a teacher of courses on human-animal relations about why she, a person critical of human-animal relations and speciesism, has stopped doing class activities such as going to the slaughterhouse:

⁸ This is important to highlight in particular with regards to the Japanese context, given that first and second-year students more accustomed to Japanese high school than university may have been reluctant to express their own views, particularly in argumentative form due to the nature of prior schoolwork (see footnote 5). However, per Stapleton 2001 & 2002, and Davidson 1995, this is not to suggest a presumption of students as having a dearth of critical thinking skills in relation to other cultural contexts. As will be detailed, students indeed displayed adept critical thinking for the prompt, which may have implications for debates on Japanese students and critical thinking exercises, which are beyond the scope of this article.

⁹ The prompt was: "Looking at *Watership Down*, do you see the animals othered [in the film]? Can you think of examples of animal otherness from your life to relate to the discussion? Be sure to refer to the film."

There is no reason to take students there because they are already upset and on their way to becoming vegetarians anyhow, if I didn't *curb* them. And if I took them to a slaughterhouse, there is *nobody* who would eat meat after that, at least not for a month, then maybe they will have forgotten. /.../ I feel that, my students who are so sensitive, we watch films, quite a lot of films in the course and I warn and warn prior to [watching], and even then they just sit like this, crying and are unable to eat. So, I changed my approach a lot. There is no reason to *show* things that produce *such* terrible reactions (2010, 49, emphasis original).

While there is indeed a robust strand of argumentation within critical animal studies as to the importance of revealing the oppression of nonhuman animals (especially to those not critical of such oppression), I decided early on with the presiding professor of the class to forego screening of films that centered the oppression of nonhuman animals by humans in gruesome or violent ways. While Aaltola (2014), Jenni (2005) and Freeman (2012), amongst others, have provided an important discussion about the moral imperative to reveal nonhuman animal suffering to those who are not critical of hegemonic modes of human-animal relationality, I decided against using such visuals or giving a lecture adopting a stance of firm disavowal of exploitative human-animal relationality. More specifically, as I was teaching in a context that has seen little pedagogical work on providing students with critical perspectives on human-animal relations, I felt that applying the largely Euro-American conclusions of human-animal relations would be premature. Moreover, in observation of the overall course goal of providing students with a toolset to think critically about their relationship to othering processes, my aim with this unit was to encourage them to think critically about the epistemological roots of nonhuman animal otherness rather than what Pedersen's interview details as a temporary lifestyle switch. By not teaching my own viewpoint/political stances, I aimed to avoid privileging my own personal reactions (for example veganism) to the subject being taught. And through not assuming the validity of prior approaches and models to a different context, I hoped to remain flexible to engagement in order to best dialogue with students,

hopefully having them walk away with a critical set of skills to read media representations of nonhuman animals.

Similarly, scholars writing on the connections between representation and what Pedersen and Stănescu (2012) refer to as the “animal condition” have suggested that such a material condition has (deeply problematic) epistemological roots (Lippit 2000; Rule 2010; Wadiwel 2015). This stance parallels Pedersen (2010, 122) who, writing in a critical pedagogical context, asks how a critical pedagogy strategy for teaching human-animal relations can address these roots in order to have students critically evaluate human-animal relations. In light of such work, this unit avoided the use of imagery that depicted extreme violence towards nonhuman animals, and set out to have students critically reevaluate human-animal relations through showing a film that was not narrow in its depiction of nonhuman-animal life, and to not provide a monolithic lecture on the nonhuman animal condition. My goal, derived largely from that of the course overall, was more an attempt to encourage critical and creative thinking that addressed the roots of the nonhuman animal condition. Likewise, my address (and problematization) of the material and symbolic roots of nonhuman animal otherness in this reflection is present in no small part due to the student problematization of otherness that will be presented.

In noting the above about the construction of this unit, it is my hope to situate this critical reflection as detailing the experience of selecting materials and teaching human-animal relations through a frame of otherness. As such, I engage with the class response to further evaluate and reflect on this frame, and suggest future directions in using otherness, and perhaps animated film, to help students think creatively and critically through human-animal relations.

Choice of Film and Supplemental Readings

Having discussed key pedagogical aspects of the construction of this unit, this article now turns to a discussion of the choices for the film and supplemental readings of the unit. As noted above, the film chosen for this unit was *Watership Down*, the animated adaptation of Richard Adams's (1972) eponymous novel that details the adventures of a group of rabbits seeking to avoid disaster and establish a new colony. *Watership Down*, however, is not an uncomplicated choice – especially due to its anthropomorphic depiction of rabbits.

A key aspect of choosing *Watership Down* as opposed to a live-action film, was that rather than using a didactic (and perhaps subsequently, polarizing) film that screens nonhuman animal suffering, I decided with the input of the presiding professor to use a film that would require students to critically, and creatively, think through the implications of otherness in regards to human-animal relationships. If the goal of the unit, and the course overall, was to have students think critically about the hegemonic construction and representation of various identities, then using a film that showed nonhuman animals outside of human control, and even resisting it, would provide a foil to everyday human-animal reactions.

Beyond this, *Watership Down* and other animated films about nonhuman animals take viewers on fantastical imagined journeys instead of employing quite different emotions in screening the factory farm. I have already noted Pedersen's (2010) observation of one teacher's reluctance to use shocking and disturbing imagery of suffering, and I shared such a sentiment; instead of merely shocking students, I wished to, per the course as a whole, place faith in their critical thinking skills and have them respond to a particular work. Taking note of arguments about the epistemic nature of nonhuman animal oppression and the complications of theories of obfuscation as leading to nonhuman animal exploitation, I found it more

prudent in this case to levy students' imaginations and critical thinking skills in thinking through nonhuman animal otherness.

Jenni (2005) notes in her article, "The Power of the Visual," that those seeking to effect change in viewers' relationships with nonhuman animals should be most concerned with moving beyond mere affective experiences that may linger and fade, and seek out visuals that convert affective experiences into knowledge. As already mentioned, Pedersen, but also DeMello (2010), notes that imagery of nonhuman animal suffering is, particularly in the first exposure to it, more emotionally jarring than anything for students. Owing to such observations, using an animated or fantasy film seemed a theoretically viable choice in more than one way, and also a means to avoid screening (human) violence towards nonhuman animals. My primary motivations for such a choice were that the film presents nonhuman animals, namely rabbits, as whole individuals, determining their own lives, and with many characteristics that are often only prescribed to humans in cinema.

The choice of *Watership Down* is not without complications, particularly given historical issues pertaining to the representation of wildlife, and also issues of anthropomorphism. Films depicting wildlife have consistently proven problematic in the effacement of individuality (Rule 2010), alongside heavily framing and controlling representations of nonhuman lives (Ganetz 2004; Welling 2014). In the case of *Watership Down*, one is also given the complications of sexism extending from Adams's original work, and the problematic of adaptation and reception. In the original novel, and then later the film, the heroes and main actors of *Watership Down* are the male rabbits that must break away and establish a new colony. It is only after the colony is established that they begin to think of female rabbits, and seek out mates to continue the colony. Such a framing of interactions with female rabbits lead Jane Resh Thomas (1977) to be harshly critical of Adams's book. *Watership Down*, Thomas, argues, anthropomorphizes male rabbits as human, but the male rabbits only

seek out female mates as a secondary plot point. Thomas's contention is that the female rabbits are a rather negative aspect of Adams's work, because if the male rabbits can be read as men, the female rabbits, cast as helpless and secondary, paint a rather detrimental picture of women.

Watership Down's particular legacy of adaptation and reception are also important to note in light of it being chosen. The 1972 novel version of *Watership Down* was marketed to children, in contrast to the mainstream marketing of the film in 1978. The mainstream marketing and reception of the film, as opposed to it being narrowly marketed as for children, was addressed by the presiding professor in his remarks prior to the screening of the film, connecting it to director Martin Rosen's other animated films and their reception in Britain more specifically. Moreover, the film adapts Adams's initial work, transferring in part the sexist portrayal of the female rabbits; as such, one could argue, following Thomas, that while the male rabbits are fully anthropomorphized, the female rabbits take on a somewhat subhuman status in *Watership Down*.

Anthropomorphism is a complicated issue, particularly in light of teaching a perspective critical of otherness. Criticism of anthropomorphism has often pointed to how such representations of nonhuman animals efface their individuality, and reduce them to vehicles for human meaning; however, others have suggested that while anthropomorphism is anchoring nonhuman animals to human epistemology and refusal to accept or know animals as they are, anthropomorphism paradoxically can spur viewers to place more value on the lives of nonhuman animals (Halberstam 2011; Malamud 2007; Welling 2014). In short, the usage of film that deploys anthropomorphism as a key representational strategy is admittedly complicated, and the specifics of how much to dialogue with students regarding anthropomorphism – particularly in contexts where wildlife cinema, anthropomorphic, or animated films are not the central focus of a course – are likewise complicated. Certainly, students

might have responded differently to the unit if I had incorporated a discussion on anthropomorphism. However, given the time constraints of the unit – and also students' expressed concerns of some readings being too complex for non-native speakers of English, and subsequently quite time-consuming for incorporating into essays assignments – focusing on perspectives critical of anthropomorphism in this case likely would have made the unit overwhelming and diluted focus and depth of reflection.

Because of concerns arising out of its anthropomorphism and relationship to wildlife cinema, *Watership Down* was not a choice without its issues. However, having noted the particularly prominent issue of sexism within the film, I do believe that the anthropomorphism did not significantly impede critical engagement with human-animal relationships. Rather, similar to Malamud's (2007) contention that anthropomorphism conveys a message of valuable nonhuman animal lives (even if tied in a human epistemology), the film promoted rich engagement. Similarly, the work of Halberstam (2011), albeit largely on 3D computer-generated animation, points also to the contradictory nature of such anthropomorphic images. While the nonhuman animals are stuck only acting as humans, they ironically achieve value through such an act. *Watership Down* perhaps models excellently the contradiction Halberstam observes in more recent animation, except that instead of the contradiction of finding portraits of queer childhoods within corporate-produced imagery for mass consumption, *Watership Down* provides the contradiction of a fundamentally conservative set of human relationships in a narrative that imagines an otherwise radically different rabbit life.

A part of Halberstam's (2011) conclusion on anthropomorphism is that while indeed precarious, teetering always on the edge of humanism, animated anthropomorphism offers chances to be creative (ibid., 50-51). Malamud (2007) similarly suggests that a particular strength of anthropomorphism is that it forwards

nonhuman animal individuality, a possible counter-representational strategy to the effacement of individuality that Lippit (2000) and Rule (2010) find in cinema at large. I would also note in a final remark on framing *Watership Down* and (animated) wildlife cinema that animation provides a different context than live-action. Specifically, it sees the world in a radically different way, transforming it from inert recipient of humanity's choices to an actor (Halberstam 2011; Heise 2014). Both Halberstam (2011) and Heise (2014) point to the animated nonhuman animal's human likeness as harboring potential to challenge anthropocentrism. Animation allows for the visualization of something quite different, and while there are myriad difficulties with using a film that others through anthropomorphism, given that the unit, and more largely, course, were on critical perspectives to otherness, students were accustomed to critically analyzing films by the time we reached *Watership Down*.

In addition to the film, there were three optional, supplemental readings: an excerpt from Anthony J. Nocella II's (2012, 3-6) chapter introducing the concept of eco-ability, an excerpt from Kim Socha's introduction to *Women, Destruction, and the Avant-Garde* (2012, 30-37), and Marie Houser's (2013) article "Bodies of Literature." Before elaborating on the choice of these pieces, what is important to note is that, as with all readings in the course, the Houser, Nocella, and Socha readings were optional for students. As the course was meant to teach students critical engagement with media in addition to honing argumentative essay writing skills, the course stressed gathering supportive citations and using them in a way that buttressed one's argument. Varying from week to week, either the presiding professor or I would offer optional readings, particularly in cases where students might not have a robust understanding of a film's cultural context or were being introduced to a new theoretical paradigm.

A selection from Nocella's (2012, 3-6) chapter on the concept of eco-ability was selected for two reasons, the first of which is that he details a particular vision of connectivity between human and nonhuman otherness through divergent, but intersecting usages of ableism targeting different humans and nonhumans. Additionally, Nocella's chapter brings together critical reflection and academic writing, parallel to hopes for student papers in the course. In essay responses, a small number of students cited Nocella's piece; this may be due in part to concerns parallel to those that Geurts and Hansen (2015) detail in their reflection on student engagement with eco-ability, namely that the environmentalism aspect caught students off-guard.

Houser's (2013) shorter piece was chosen, similarly to Nocella's, because she merges critical reflection with analysis, but also due to how she specifically mentions *Watership Down*, albeit Adams's original novel. Houser reflects on Adams's novel, remarking that it demonstrates how fiction can powerfully envision how nonhuman animal life may be. Her stressing of creativity and imagination in relation to nonhuman animal representations was well suited to the overall approach of encouraging personal reflection as well as thinking of anthropomorphic representation as not dichotomized good/bad. Houser's piece was the most cited of the optional readings in student papers, perhaps due to the piece's shorter length, alongside her specific mention of *Watership Down*.

Socha's piece was perhaps the most theoretical and animal advocacy-grounded, although still relatively short and accessible. In the excerpted subsection from her introduction, Socha (2012, 30-37) discusses with specific reference to children, how the consumption of nonhuman animals is not "natural" to humans, but culturally and historically emergent. Additionally, Socha also addresses anthropomorphic representations of nonhuman animals, specifically those that are targeted towards children. I chose the Socha piece primarily for her straightforward

and succinct detailing of how the cultural construction of nonhuman animals can have material effects; as detailed previously, a key goal for this unit was to teach students that human-animal relationships are not natural but subject to an array of cultural forces. However, being accustomed to the general concerns and language of CAS was most likely an unconscious factor in my choice of the piece. In hindsight, the piece may have incited some students' essays to be addresses of consumption. However, given that a small minority of papers cited Socha's piece or addressed any of her points, the turn to discussing consumption may have more to do with the class's assessment of the relationship between animal alterity and human-animal relationality.

Perhaps most apparently, the fact that the readings were all critical animal studies-related in nature could be suggested as a factor in turning students towards analysis of consumption, due to the language of the readings. Regardless of the readings being optional, the fact that readings' claims may have been read as having instructor approval certainly could have led students to feel the need to turn to, and rationalize, consumption. As student papers did not address the readings' theoretical concepts specifically, and their overall emphasis on consumption is only addressed explicitly in Socha's work, it is difficult to firmly suggest the exact impact of readings, since the readings were framed as optional to begin with.

In light of the selection of such readings a criticism that the unit was a particularly CAS-emphasizing approach to the place of nonhuman animals in cinema may be offered, which deserves response. While all three readings were critical of current modes of human-animal relationality, all offered elements that dovetailed with my overall approach to the unit, which was to encourage critical thinking regarding nonhuman animal relationships. The excerpt from Socha's book addresses, in a rather simple and forthright manner the fact that human-animal relationships are not pre-determined, an important concept for the address of nonhuman otherness.

Tangentially, Houser and Nocella's pieces both employ personal narratives and critical reflection on personal human-animal relationality, which was the practical goal for the unit and course.

Student Response

Having now noted the construction and underlying pedagogical concerns of this unit, I will turn to the student responses to the unit. I turn to student responses largely because of the rich engagement with otherness they represent, and the pedagogical challenge for future courses that I believe they present.

Before suggesting implications, however, it is important to sketch a rough outline of what responses addressed in a general manner. As noted above, the prompt asked students to critically reflect on the film, and think through otherness in everyday human-animal relations, similarly to previous prompts. Students, by a significant majority, chose to address how consumption of nonhuman animal bodies is related to otherness (out of the nearly 30 person class, under 5 papers addressed other topics as their central focus, with consumption still on the periphery). Given the nature of the responses as being critical reflections, there was obviously great variety throughout papers, yet a number of commonalities can be gleaned from the whole. Most apparently (beyond the predominant focus on consumption), there was a gendered response to conceptions of otherness, particularly in terms of addressing its implications for nonhuman animals. More specifically related to consumption, though, students interestingly engaged with biological aspects of nonhuman animal alterity, offered strategies for addressing nonhuman animal otherness as negative and contrasting responses that argued for furthering nonhuman animal otherness as a strategy, and finally, some students argued for nonhuman animal welfare.

A key aspect of student response to the unit was the marked division of gender in the discussion of certain issues and strategies for addressing nonhuman

animal otherness. Previously, those studying other cultural locations have noted that conception and consumption of, interaction with, and response to nonhuman animals is different according to gender (Adams 1990; Cudworth 2010; Gaarder 2011). While most of these studies have not looked at otherness as the ontological concept with a possible gender differentiated conception, they have shown clearly that women and men engage with the “animal question” in different ways. Papers written by female students followed the trend that authors, beginning with Adams have spoken to, namely, on average, more of a concern for nonhuman animals was demonstrated. Female students were more likely to be critical of nonhuman exploitation. Furthermore, male students, instead of being more ambivalent towards consumption and use of nonhuman animals, were more likely to directly argue in support of consumption and use, again in correlation with previous studies on masculinities and regards of nonhuman animals by them (Adams 1990; Luke 2007). Male responses also followed a number of patterns for defending the otherness and usage of nonhuman animals that have been attested to elsewhere, such as using scientific justification (Rothgerber 2013).

Most evident of this gendered difference in responding to the unit were language differences between female and male responses. Female responses clearly stood apart from male responses in direction and tone, stemming from language choices, particularly diction. Specifically, responses from female students more often used uncertain language and many times avoided taking unambiguous stances on their view of nonhuman animal otherness. Since language was differentiated along a gender binary, the influence of gendered language in responses was accounted for and responses were read critically with this in mind for analysis. Female students occasionally made strong statements about human-animal relations, but would often qualify these statements by offering a statement critical of the consumption of nonhuman animals, or alluding to cultural relativism and individual choice as factors

in permitting what they disagreed with, amongst other qualifications. This correlates with linguistic studies on deployment of more uncertain language by girls and women (e.g. Ide 1982; Takahara 1991) and was something that was mirrored by similar qualifying statements in class discussion of *Watership Down*; “I think,” “Maybe,” and sporadically apologizing for viewpoint, etc. Male students, however, were far more likely to directly offer their opinion and many times present it in an argumentative format demonstrating that they believed it to hold a large degree of objective worth.

While uncertain language rendered statements expressing value judgments towards nonhuman animal otherness diluted, female students’ papers still contained the only responses with explicitly negative evaluations of current human-animal relations (some male responses did mention welfare as desirable, but did not outright condemn the present state of human-animal relations). However, in the responses most critical of nonhuman animal use, phrases and words such as “completely wrong”, “cruel”, and “unforgiveable” were used; in essence, female criticism of nonhuman animal exploitation was percolated at times by emotions and value judgments, something that male responses tended to avoid. Opposite of the emotional language implemented by female papers, many male papers were – in a detached, objective manner – referencing to biological and other natural science work to support their arguments. Beyond simply equating this with increased embrace of emotions by female students because of femininity, I believe that an argument can also be made that this may evidence gendering of relationality towards nonhuman animals, particularly when we consider the embrace of science, due to its supposed objective nature, by many male responses. Given the students’ overall focus on consumption, the gender-differentiated evaluation of human-animal relations may have stemmed from a relationship between gender and consumption.

Gender and consumption suggest in this context a correlative relationship, particularly in light of studies in other cultural locations and Japan especially. The rise in consumption of nonhuman animal “products” beginning at the end of the 19th century has thoroughly reshaped Japanese dietary habits and also agricultural production (Fujita 1993; Morishima, Aita and Nakagawa 1993; Rothacher 1989). Such an impact has been noted as gendered, with men consuming more meat and expressing more of a preference for it, particularly red meat (Kerr et al. 1994). Moreover, the role of schools in normalizing the consumption of nonhuman animal bodies and “products” is notable in the Japanese context, as in the United States and other cultural locations (DeLeon 2011; Kerr et al. 1994; Pedersen 2010, 103-105). As such, authors have remarked on a gradual normalization of the consumption with each subsequent generation. This normalization is crucially important to note in light of consumption of nonhuman animal products being addressed as a normalized practice by student papers, and certain responses being divided by gender.

Normalization was central to the analysis of numerous students, who focused on consumption as in fact, normal. This trend is particularly interesting because students by and large identified human-animal relations as socially constructed, including students who defined consumption of nonhuman animals as a biological imperative. Thus, numerous responses forwarded problematization of how humans interact with and use nonhuman animals, but the underlying biological or scientific reasons students professed belief in were seen as the true nature of human-animal relationships to nonhuman animals. As such, students did not engage critically with what they held as constituting biological fact. This being noted, there was variance, with numerous female students openly expressing dismay that consumption was normative, and confessing they felt caught up in a system they did not wish to participate in. Alternatively, numerous male students argued along a more cultural relativistic line of thought, weaving in not cited biological and scientific

argumentation to suggest that we should merely embrace current modes of consumption because of their desirability (similar perhaps to the “niceness” factor of consumption of “meat” that Piazza et al. (2015) identify).

As such, with a supposedly natural, non-socially constructed foundation to the consumption of nonhuman animals observed in many responses, there were interesting critical takes on nonhuman animal otherness by students. Perhaps the most concerned responses to nonhuman animal otherness, however, were those responses which took for granted the biological naturalness of humans consuming nonhuman animals, but suggested that othering nonhuman animals is negative. This group of responses saw students arguing that there needs to be “food education” and other types of programming for children in order to teach them where their “food” comes from. Students remarked that the unit had indeed made them reconsider how they think about nonhuman animals, and made them more conscious about their diets. Such responses often overlapped with those that argued nonhuman animal welfare is a serious issue, parallel to issues discussed in other units.

Yet, almost opposite to the idea of dispelling otherness was another group of student responses arguing that current conceptions of nonhuman animal otherness needed to be upheld precisely because of a biological imperative. These responses saw a possible danger in doing away with otherness as a defining feature in the representation and discussion of nonhuman animals, as it could spell serious changes for the consumption of nonhuman animals, which was seen as either a biological necessity, or a fundamentally important facet of human nature. These responses were not the majority, and were largely male. This group of responses stands as an interesting foil to the group which argues for doing away with current perceptions of nonhuman animal otherness – those that view otherness as harmful place firm faith in the immutable nature of the biological foundation of human-animal relations, whereas those positively assessing otherness’s function with regards to nonhuman

animals see consumption patterns as precariously positioned, and enforced through social behaviors and cultural construction.

Given that the majority of responses identified consumption as part of a trajectory of othering nonhuman animals, the juxtaposed nature of students arguing for recognition of otherness as negative and those supportive of it as a strategy for maintaining hegemonic patterns of consumption, warrants analysis. Struthers Montford (2013), in her article on “beef” consumption as a factor in the maintenance of dominant Albertan identity, suggested that assumptions of consumption of nonhuman animal bodies being only possible if practices are obfuscated from view may not be relevant in all contexts, which is observed in the student response to this unit also. The two groups of students that most clearly engaged with othering nonhuman animals as a trajectory, and ruminated on the material aspect of such a trajectory – “meat” – also demonstrate the limits of an explanatory model which argues the visibility of practices of harming, using, or consuming nonhuman animals spurs those engaged in such practices to halt them. Students very clearly identified that they were consuming nonhuman animals, and rather than merely identifying this, also proposed that those mechanisms which obfuscate from view the processes of raising “livestock” and eventually consuming them should be made visible and taught to other people – with the belief that doing so would not change dominant patterns of consumption.

This being noted, there is cause for interrogating why students turned to consumption and expressed support for hegemonic practices and relationality towards nonhuman animals. This is especially the case in light of prior explanatory models suggesting that understanding the visual obfuscation of exploitative practices towards nonhuman animals transforms one’s relation and ideas regarding nonhuman animals, including a subconscious othering of nonhuman animals. As thought through in the first and second sections of this paper, the issues of anthropomorphism, and more

largely, the representation of nonhuman animals being “always-already” a given (Fudge 2002, 6) prompts a discussion of the merits and demerits of using fictional as opposed to non-fictional representations of nonhuman animals, given substantial problematization of both types from myriad scholars. Certainly, the disingenuous and fictional (not to mention at times, biologically reductionist, and false at that) portrayal of rabbits, who are not commonly consumed in Japan, may have not actually made visible to students the practices of consuming nonhuman animals. But nonetheless, the fact that students identified such practices themselves seems to suggest that students did have ample awareness of what consuming nonhuman animals entailed – and a number seemed confident that revealing this would not change human-animal relations at large.

Such a moral imperative to truthfully speak of the structures and realities behind consuming nonhuman animals calls to mind the challenge posed to often-cited current explanatory models of nonhuman animal consumption. In particular, Vasile Stănescu (2010; 2014) has documented the often intersecting “humane” slaughter and locavore movements, and how there is a growing number of consumers raising (and killing) their own chickens, becoming interested in the raising of nonhuman animals they consume, and other welfarist contentions against what is cast as more abhorrent dominant ways of killing nonhuman animals. Those who argue for “happy meat,” Stănescu contends, are not fundamentally reconfiguring human-animal relationships, but seeking a way to make anthropocentrism more ethical and viable. I turn to Stănescu’s work because he keenly notes that those who are advocating for “happy meat” express concern about nonhuman animals’ conditions and indeed how to change them, and make people aware of where their “meat” comes from; it is a notion similar in some ways to the responses from students discussed herein. That is, overt and genuine concern for the welfare of nonhuman animals to a certain degree, but not a fundamental change in relationality – rather, the epistemic issues of nonhuman

animal identity that Lippit (2000) and Rule (2010) are concerned with remain unaddressed.

Tangentially, activist M. Ryan Leitch (2013) argues that those heavily invested in specific criticisms of hegemonic human-animal relationality may need to re-evaluate the efficacy and details of current critical explanatory models; for Leitch, activism on behalf of nonhuman animals may have inadvertently lead to the “humane meat” movement. Similarly, Struthers Montford (2013) suggests that a larger logic of sacrifice underpins nonhuman animal consumption, and that the visibility of practices may not change their predominance, which is similar to the concerns about overexposure to nonhuman animal suffering inuring humans to it, raised in the context of animal theory by Ralph Acampora (1998) and more recently by Timothy Pachirat (2011).

While an extended meditation on the limits of explanatory models of visibility/concealment determining the shape of current human-animal relationships, primarily in the context of consumption, is beyond this article, I do find it crucially important to note that the student response to this unit details an incredibly robust engagement with the concept of otherness. The students exceeded the presiding professor's and my own hopes for this unit, bringing more of their own independently gathered sources to this unit than any other in the course. Students very clearly argued a key concept in animal studies – that obfuscation of nonhuman animals is related to their consumption (with student opinion on what such leveraging of otherness means) – without having been taught this in class. In light of the engagement that has been detailed, it is important to note that the student engagement herein goes against a significant body of work that argues the concealment of practices harmful to nonhuman animals is what enables them. Rather, students showed awareness of what happens, and a number argued that educating others about what consuming nonhuman animals entailed was the moral thing to do. Underlying

this, though, was the belief that consumption was natural and predetermined above the level of a social construction. The engagement delineated herein, particularly in light of the implementation of otherness as a framework for teaching human-animal relations, implies that there could perhaps be limitations in using visibility as an explanation for current nonhuman-animal relations, particularly in a critical pedagogical context.

Conclusion

Within this article, I have aimed to critically evaluate and reflect on my role within this unit and the implementation of otherness as a frame to teach human-animal relations. The student engagement with this frame was particularly rich, and even though students primarily did not address the film, their engagement with otherness and also consumption demonstrated adept critical thinking around human-animal relations.

Having noted this, the student response to this unit suggests that, with numerous limitations arising from contexts of these remarks, future critical pedagogical work on human-animal relations may want to consider how visibility of practices and structures related to nonhuman animals does not necessarily serve to change them, nor even inspire a desire to change them. While some students were indeed concerned about the visibility affecting the importance of consuming nonhuman animals, more often than not students expressed little to no concern that visibility would impact predominant modes of relating to nonhuman animals, most notably consuming them. Again, these conclusions are anchored to a specific context, but may be important to revisiting evaluations of visibility in animal theory. Additionally, the correlative nature between response to consumption and gender may be important to future research on the nonhuman animal condition in the

Japanese context, particularly in thinking through a critical pedagogy of human-animal relations more concerned with the Japanese university setting.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Darren J. Ashmore for taking me on as a teaching apprentice, and offering feedback on this paper. Additionally, I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their incredibly helpful comments on this paper.

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The Lungfishes from a Historical Perspective: How Humans See the Other

Audrey Appudurai

Introduction

Three hundred and ninety million years ago during the Lochkovian period, the Earth was devoid of four-legged creatures. The land was colonised with primitive avascular plants and arthropods, and the Lochkovian seas were dominated by marine invertebrates and armoured fish. Within the freshwater basins of Gondwanaland lungfishes evolved, organisms that represent the transition between life in the water and atmospheric oxygen breathing life on land. Human narratives about lungfishes reveal multiple aspects and concerns with this intriguing animal and act as mirrors which present biases (both personal and social) in our attempt to understand ourselves and the Other.

When it comes to unravelling visual experience, especially of non-human animals, it is usually expected that scientific methodology holds the key because objectivity is a fundamental aspect of its approach. However, the perceptions of organisms, including humans, are constructed both through biological apparatuses and subjective experience and interpretation. This has previously been discussed in depth by Thomas Nagel, Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway, among others, who all interrogate ideas about ‘knowing’ non-human Others. Thomas Nagel recognized the problems inherent in exploring the subjective perception of other organisms, and wrote that the ‘subjective character of experience’ (1974, 436) of an individual is exclusive to the organism, one must ‘*be* that organism’ (1974,

436) in order to understand it, and the human mind is the limiting factor preventing full comprehension. Jacques Derrida reminded us that our (human) observation of the Other observing us is almost never from the vantage point that science and philosophy usually takes. For Derrida, 'knowing' the animal comes from engaging the animals as objects of their vision, and as beings that look back (2002). Like Derrida, Haraway invites us to see the animal seeing us, saying 'we polish an animal mirror to look for ourselves' (1991, 21). She believes the way forward is to address the gap between humans and non-human animals to better understand the world, and that attempting to perceive like the Other involves first tearing down pre-conceived notions about what it is to be human (Haraway 2008).

Jakob von Uexküll is of particular interest because he devised the *Umwelt* theory to investigate the ethological, inner worlds of non-human animals; one that overcame what he believed to be the misguided objectivity of modern science. The *Umwelt* theory argues that each individual constructs its own environment (*Umwelt*) that is dependent on the perceptions, actions and relationships relevant to the individual within the environment. The *Umwelt* is conceptualised by an imagined sphere: a soap bubble surrounding each organism that is continuously reshaped by the interpretation (semiosis) of meaningful signs (all sensory data received) that are relevant to the animal. As Brett Buchanan explains, 'Uexküll contends that animals must be interpreted by virtue of their environments that they inhabit, and, insofar as it is possible, from the perspective of their behaviour in such environments' (2008, 7). Uexküll predominantly relied on behavioural experiments to observe the *Umwelten* of non-human animals. For example, Uexküll's studies on the reflexes of sea urchins showed that darkness is a perception sign relevant to the animal, and as shadow passes over the light sensitive skin of the urchin, the semiotic response is the movement of their quills (2010, 77). This embodied approach of unravelling the phenomenal worlds of the Other sought to combine individual subjectivity with scientific objectivity.

However, the subjectivity of an individual's *Umwelt* means that it is incompatible with science, and lacks scientific merit. Nevertheless, Uexküll's process of investigation still has important lessons to teach in ethology and biosemiotics.

Thus, the construction and outcomes of scientific research are always framed by their human *Umwelt* understandings of the world; as sociologist Bruno Latour reminds us, 'scientific activity is just one social arena in which knowledge is constructed' (1986, 31), and as Donna Haraway has expressed, 'biology is a discourse, not the living world itself' (1992, 299). Just as scientific research is one 'social arena' in which knowledge about lungfishes' visual perception can be attained, other discourses also offer new perspectives on how the *Umwelten* of lungfishes can be investigated and comprehended. It is important to note that the study of human narratives about lungfishes explored in this paper departs from the purely ethological study of the lungfishes' *Umwelten*, and is rather an interdisciplinary investigation about human cultural interpretations and appreciations of the lungfishes and their *Umwelten*. These human narratives add vital knowledge and perspectives for the quest of human understandings of the Other in the context of biases involving cultural sensitivities and history. These narratives reveal both new understandings on the lungfishes' and human *Umwelten* and the places where these *Umwelten* may meet and/or differ.

This paper delves into historical and contemporary stories concerning lungfishes. Indigenous stories are used to reveal alternative frames of knowledge, diverse attempts to understand and make meanings out of this curious animal, which lives in water but possesses lungs. Stories from nineteenth-century Europe illustrate how lungfishes, as 'transitional animals', contributed to the shift from a predominantly religious to a secularly based taxonomy and world view. These stories confirm that science is an important tool and methodology to make sense of the Other animal, but it is always a reflection of the society within which it

operates. Contemporary stories reveal other concerns of Western societies through the lungfishes, such as national pride and human obsession with celebrity. In addition, I will contribute my own personal narrative about a small group of Australian lungfishes that illustrates the intimate connection between ingrained assumptions and understandings about these animals. In general, the paper explores the rich human cultural archives of lungfish stories which reflect the human desire to make sense out of a transitional animal that, in turn, reveal our own (human) anthropocentric limitations in the quest for the non-human *Umwelt*.

Lungfishes in Indigenous Communities:

The Dala, The Mmamba, and The Amazonian Killer Lungfish

Before lungfishes captured international attention after their modern Western¹ discovery, their presence and unique position was well known to Indigenous communities. To the Gubbi Gubbi people of Queensland, Australia, the Australian lungfish (*Neoceratodus forsteri*), or Dala², are sacred animals. The Dreamtime story of Dala, woven by Gubbi Gubbi elder Dr. Eve Fesl, tells a story of a fish destined to be the ancestor to all vertebrates:

Many years ago, thousands of years ago, there were no animals on the Earth, and the Earth Mother and our ancestral spirits looked down and decided that they wanted to have animals on the Earth, which would be their children. So, they designated that Dala would, first of all, get a lung, then it could get vertebrae and be able to walk, and that would be the forefather and foremother, really, of all the animals in the world. The breeding place would be near the edges of the river, so that the animals could come out and so we have Dala, the lungfish which only has one lung. It's the only place in the world you could find it, and this place where we stand is one of the most viable breeding places (interview in Franklin 2007).

Although Fesl was not aware of the scientific importance of Australian lungfishes when growing up, she understood that the Gubbi Gubbi people were their sacred

¹ By Western, I refer mainly to the Judeo-Christian version of perceiving/explaining life.

² In the Gubbi Gubbi tongue.

custodians. She had been told about the cultural and ecological importance of Dala from a young age, and remembered a family meeting by the Mary River that involved lungfishes ‘swimming around ... in the water below’ (Franklin 2007). This highlighted the value of such an encounter because it was ‘our sacred fish’ (Franklin 2007), ‘we were taught not to hurt it, to protect its habitat, where it feeds and swims’ because Dala ‘are ancestor spirits’ (statelibraryqld 2009).

This intimate tie between the Gubbi Gubbi people and lungfishes is also linked to their relationship to the Mary River. Both Fesl’s mother and uncle were born on the banks of the Mary River in traditional style, where, ‘when giving birth, the mother has to have her sisters by her side to assist her’ (Eve Fesl, interview in Franklin 2007). In another anecdote Fesl speaks of her grandmother, and the stories told about Dala:

My grandmother wove shelter covers from bladey grass and used paperbark as a soft bed to lie on. At night the family would see the reflection of the stars in the water, and hear the ripple of the water and the occasional explosion of air as Dala, our sacred fish, chose to come to the surface to expel the breath from his lung. It was at these times, the children would be told the story of Dala. As they lay under the stars and beside the rainforest, with its night bird calls, the children listened to the story of the beginning of our culture (documented by JerryinBrisbane 2008).

The cultural importance of Dala, created by the close cultural relationships to the river landscape encompassing the Mary River, family and community, influenced Fesl’s understanding of Australian lungfishes. To Australian Aboriginal groups, oral narratives and the meanings they convey are ‘owned by the individual storytellers in accordance with their position within their social and spiritual universe’ (Klapproth 2004, 34) and are ‘items of exchange in a cultural arena’ (Muecke 1983, 88). In Fesl’s case, these narratives are intertwined with anthropomorphic attitudes towards Dala. Fesl often mentions that ‘Dala will come up beside the canoe and you can stroke Dala. That’s what a friendly creature it is’ (statelibraryqld 2009) and when greeting them in her native tongue, does not

forget to let them know that she is ‘part of the family’ (Franklin 2007). This does not necessarily suggest that Fesl is making Dala more human-like, but rather that non-human animals like lungfishes are important members in the human world. Gubbi Gubbi stories present an alternative position for the human living within the world. The human animal is integrated as part of the natural world and therefore must employ responsibility and respect to other animals.

The liminal ‘Otherness’ in the nature of Dala as a fish with a lung³ is not a ‘problem’ to cultural beliefs. Rather, this view of the world embraces the concept of fluidity in animals’ forms and shapes. The Gubbi Gubbi people were aware of Dala’s ability to breathe atmospheric oxygen air long before the Western scientific community, and unlike this community did not seek to disprove or condemn it as an ‘impossibility’ or ‘abnormality’. Rather, there was a place to accept and appreciate (even if not to fully understand) the Other.

Similarly, *Protopterus aethiopicus*, one of the African lungfish species, is of special value to one of the biggest clans of Buganda, the largest sub-national kingdom within Uganda. One of the first established clans is the Mmamba Gabunga, which translates to the native name for *P. aethiopicus*, also known as the marbled lungfish. Like *N. forsteri* to the Gubbi Gubbi, *P. aethiopicus* is a totem to the Mmamba people, a spiritual emblem to remind them of their ancestry and mythic past. In the Mmamba origin story, the clan’s founder Mabiru, had close ties with the rivers, and gained the king, Kabaka⁴ Kintu’s favour by offering his talents as an expert navigator and canoe maker (Buganda 2016). The Mmamba remain one of the largest and most influential clans of Buganda, and do not eat their namesake due to its symbolism of their clan. Like the story of Dala, the Mmamba understand the human as an integral part of the living environment.

³ The Australian lungfish, *N. forsteri*, is the only species that possesses just one lung, all other lungfish species possess a pair of lungs.

⁴ ‘King’ in the Mmamba language.

While both employ some taxonomical systems in regard to the world around them, the Indigenous populations of Australia and Africa allow for the fluidity of nature in the living world; liminality and difference in ‘Others’ are accepted (and sometimes celebrated). The Western view appears to be more rigid in terms of order within a fixed hierarchy. The Indigenous populations may also have appropriated the ‘Otherness’ of lungfishes to their own position within the newly colonized Western world – the Indigenous knowledge and taxonomy did not fit within the Western system and therefore became either monstrous or completely invalid. Thus, it may explain why the Western discovery of lungfishes during colonization resulted in many mythologies featuring them as ‘monsters’ due to their novel and ‘bizarre’ nature.

After the 1837 discovery of the South American lungfish by Johann Natterer, reports flooded in about a mythical beast, the *minhocao*⁵ of Brazil, and its possible ties to lungfishes. The tales of *minhocôes* stem from Goyaz, a state in central Brazil, where in the deep lakes of Padre Aranda and Feia, *minhocôes* torment the locals by dragging horses, mules and cattle into the water. Saint Hilaire, a scientific journalist visiting the area in the mid-nineteenth century, investigated these reports by residents near the lake and described the creature thus:

The word *minhocao*, is an augmentative of *minhoca*, which, in Portuguese, signifies *earth-worm*; and, indeed, they state that the monster in question absolutely resembles these worms, with this difference, that it has a visible mouth; they also add, that it is black, short, and of enormous size; that it does not rise to the surface of the water, but that it causes animals to disappear by seizing them by the belly (1847, 279).

Further investigation led Saint Hilaire to fishermen who said the *minhocao* ‘was a true fish, provided with fins’ (1847, 279). This search led him to Richard Owen’s paper on the newly discovered African species *Lepidosiren annectens*, and

⁵ Singular of *minhocôes*.

Natterer and Fitzinger's recent discovery of the South American *L. paradoxa*. To Saint Hilaire, both these animals fit the description given by the fishermen and Owen, and *L. paradoxa* shared the habitat of the *minhocao*, so he concluded: 'These characters agree extremely well with those which we must of necessity admit in the *minhocao*, since it seizes very powerfully upon large animals, and drags them away to devour them'. Finally, he continued with great confidence that 'it is, therefore, probable that the *minhocao* is an enormous species of *Lepidosiren*' (1847, 280). Saint Hilaire's story illustrates how the 'different' can become monstrous and result in exaggerated tales, in this case created by Western cultural biases surrounding the 'exotic' and the unknown of newly colonised land.

More recently, in the mid-twentieth century, the *buru*, an ancient animal of the Ziro valley of India was thought to be a lungfish. At the end of World War II, explorer Charles Stonor and anthropologist J. P. Mills travelled to the valley and heard the legend of the *buru*, a now extinct group of creatures that were a blight to the Apatani people of the Ziro valley (Izzard 2001). According to Apatani elders, the valley's marshes were populated by these creatures and when their people settled in the valley, livestock and residents were attacked by these large, reptilian-like water dwelling monsters. The Apatani people were so afraid of the *buru* that all marshes were drained of water, which eventually caused the extinction of *burus*, who either perished without water or burrowed deep into the underground springs of the valley. In 1948, Stonor accompanied news correspondent Ralph Izzard to the neighbouring Rilo valley, where locals insisted that *burus* still existed. After an extensive search, Izzard and Stonor failed to find evidence that *burus* were still at large (Izzard 2001).

Many cryptozoologists have tried to identify this mythical beast. The general contenders are reptiles, such as modern day dinosaurs, crocodiles or water-dwelling monitor lizards. However, cryptozoologist Karl Shuker believes that the *buru* was a now extinct species of lungfish – an Asian counterpart to the

species inhabiting Africa, Australia and South America. The lungfishes' aquatic lifestyle, behaviour, morphology and association with burrowing into the earth for long periods of time have convinced Shuker that the *buru* may have been a more primitive lungfish. More interestingly, a personal experience with an African species of lungfish may have cemented Shuker's beliefs:

One of the most popular exhibits of the ichthyological practicals during my days as a zoology student at university was a living specimen of an African lungfish *Protopterus*, which was sometimes placed on display in order that we could observe its behaviour. As it happened, for much of the time there was actually very little that we could observe, because it would spend most of the practical resting [*sic*] motionless at the bottom of its tank. Every so often, however, and usually when everyone's attention was diverted elsewhere, it would solemnly perform its *pièce de resistance*. All at once, without any prior warning, it would raise the front part of its large body upwards, until its head just touched the surface of the water. Sometimes it would then simply nudge the tip of its snout above the water, but if we were lucky (by now, everyone would have rushed up to its tank to watch its celebrated performance) it would actually raise its entire head, after which it would remain in this position for several minutes, ventilating (2012).

This experience, articulated in detail, left a lasting impression on Shuker. The locals of the Himalayan valley have recalled that the *buru* would occasionally raise its head out of the water to make a bellowing noise. Lungfishes, when respiring through their lungs do the same and Shuker commented that 'this scenario [of the *buru*'s bellowing] is one that has strong lungfish associations for me' (2012) even though others argue against the *buru* being a lungfish. Shuker's personal and cultural background, which included a personal encounter with the captive animal, left a lasting impression that may have influenced why he chose to believe the lungfish to be related to a mythical beast. Although separated by time and context, this story is not unlike that of Saint Hilaire and the *minhocao*. In both narratives, the 'monstrous' nature of the *buru* and *minhocao* led Saint Hilaire and Shuker, respectively, to associate them with lungfishes, a transitional animal – a fish that can breathe air – with no prior record of attacking locals and dragging

animals into the water. This indicates that the lungfish may have been suspect due to its inability to fit within a clear hierarchical taxonomy.

In addition, these stories also represent the clash between the Indigenous worldview and the Western colonialist one – the loved and respected animal became a dangerous beast: the human within and equal to the rest of the living world assumed dominion and control, and anything that did not fit within the order was deemed to be monstrous.

The Great Lungfish Controversy:

How the Discovery of a Fish Shook the West

In 1817, the young zoologist Johann Natterer was chosen to be part of one of the biggest scientific expeditions to leave Austrian soil. During the next twenty-two years, Natterer amassed a collection of over twelve thousand specimens from South America's natural landscape (Barreto and Machado 2001). One of these was an animal he found so peculiar that he brought it to reptile curator Leopold Fitzinger for a closer inspection in 1837. Natterer had found two specimens, one in a swamp on the left bank of the Amazon and another in a pond in the river Madeira (Natterer 1840). The animals were long, slender, and had mottled brown patterns upon their backs. The head and bodies were decidedly eel-like. Their fins were extremely delicate for their size and descended from the creatures' bodies like vestigial appendages when they relaxed, motionless, on the river bed (Bischoff 1840, 116-159). By all accounts this animal was a fish at first glance. However, when Fitzinger examined the creatures he discovered that they possessed what was undeniably a pair of lungs. In Fitzinger's day, amphibians fell under the umbrella of 'reptile', but even classified amphibians such as particular salamander species (or 'sirens') that teetered upon the line between fish and reptile with their feather-like gills, had limbs with digits that resembled the fingers and toes of terrestrial reptiles. This creature had no such appendages. So

bewildered was he by this unique animal, Fitzinger christened it *Lepidosiren paradoxa* – ‘lepido’ for the scales, ‘siren’ for the eel-like salamanders it resembled, ‘paradoxa’ for his confusion – and firmly placed the animal within the classification of reptile (fig. 1).

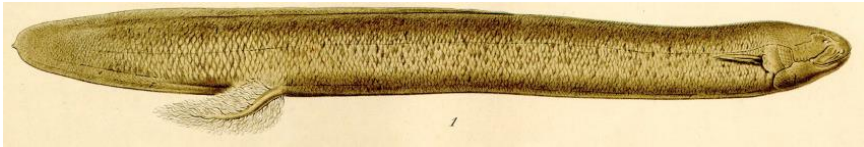


Fig. 1. Adult male *L. paradoxa* during breeding season (Kerr 1900, Plate 12).

Although Charles Darwin’s *On the Origin of Species* had not yet been published, evolution as an explanation for new natural history findings was already being discussed in the scientific community. His personal stance upon the matter is unknown, but Fitzinger’s confusion and uneasiness about *L. paradoxa* is reflected in the naming of the South American lungfish as a ‘paradox’. It is important to note that even in his recognition of an animal that did not fit into pre-existing taxonomy, he still did not venture to change the boundaries and acknowledge this animal as being transitional. Fitzinger and Natterer were prisoners of nineteenth-century Western scientific assumptions and the ideology of fixed species created by God’s will or plan. Nevertheless, the South American lungfish was the first in a number of species that threatened to change the minds of many because of its liminal nature.

Two years before Natterer’s and Fitzinger’s encounters with *L. paradoxa*, another similarly paradoxical animal was taken from the Gambian river, Senegambia, and presented to the Royal College of Surgeons by Thomas Weir. Richard Owen, whose legacy would include being the first director of the Natural History Museum in London, took it upon himself to classify this new organism. His attempt to place this animal within the known taxonomic groups created a rift between what Owen believed and what he observed. What lay before him was

evidently a fish, which he named *Lepidosiren annectens* in 1839⁶ (fig. 2). Fish-like on the outside, this fish, like *L. paradoxa* of the Amazon, had lungs as well, a fact Owen could not ignore. The presence of an organ that could take in air from the atmosphere placed this creature out of the Class of Fishes, the taxonomic group he initially proposed. A fish with lungs was not a fish according to scientific convention of the time.

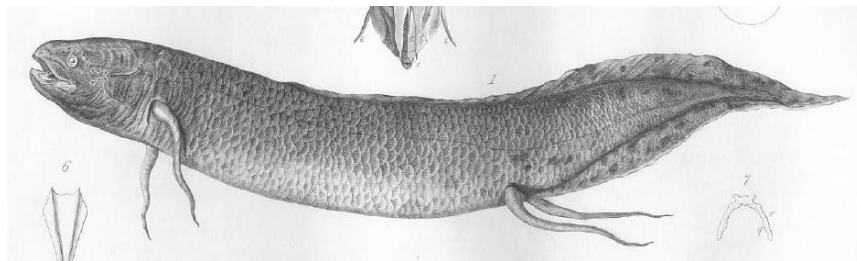


Fig. 2. *L. annectens* specimen examined by Owen (Owen 1840, tab. 23).

Owen famously opposed Charles Darwin. Owen did not believe in evolution by natural selection as Darwin explained it. To Owen, there was no such thing as transitional animals that could belong to a number of phylogenies. The existence of such animals would further prove Darwin's theory of gradual change through time; that groups were not fixed and evolution occurred through natural selection. Because of the lungfish, Owen (consciously or not) disregarded true scientific reporting in favour of his religious and cultural beliefs. As a result, Owen's observations and notes about the lungfish's nose were congruent with these beliefs. He wished to prove that the lungfish was not using its lung to breathe, as only then could this animal truly be a fish. 'The nostrils', Owen wrote, 'appear as two small perforations leading to blind sacs' (1840, 330). This was his proof: the nostrils did not lead to the lungs, rendering the lungs useless. Owen hypothesised that these organs were 'swim- or air-bladder(s)' (1840, 353); hence the lungfish

⁶ This later changed to *Protopterus annectens*.

was a fish after all. Owen's final statement after describing the various systems of animal in excruciating detail was as follows:

In the organ of smell we have, at least, a character which is absolute in reference to the distinction of Fishes from Reptiles. In every Fish it is a shut sac communicating only with the external surface; in every Reptile it is a canal with both an external and an internal opening.

According to this test, the *Lepidosiren* is a Fish: by its nose it is known not to be a Reptile: in other words, it may be said that the *Lepidosiren* is proved to be a Fish, not by its gills, not by its air-bladders, not by its spiral intestine, not by its unossified skeleton, not by its generative apparatus, nor its extremities, nor its skin, nor its eyes, not its ears, but simply by its nose (1840, 352).

However, Owen's conclusions were questioned when anatomists Bischoff and M'Donnel examined members of the same species and concluded that the blind sacs spoken of by Owen did in fact connect to the mouth, and thus this animal was a reptile. M'Donnel concluded that this group of fishes were indeed the transitional creatures Owen fought to deny. He wrote, 'I know of no animal more calculated leading [*sic*] to the adoption of the theory of Darwin than the *Lepidosiren*' (quoted in Zimmer 1998, 27).

These narratives surrounding the Western discovery of the transitional lungfishes illustrate how religious ideologies fed into the classification and naming conventions of nineteenth-century science. The Judeo-Christian teleological influences stemmed from Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) and his widely accepted system of plant and animal classification by binomial nomenclature introduced in the eighteenth century. Linnaeus was a devout and orthodox Christian who believed early in his career as a botanist, physician and zoologist, that as Man, he had been ordered by God to study nature and its laws. He then created what we know as the Linnaean system of ordered taxa that includes genus and species. Linnaeus believed that every species was decided by God's original creation, writing 'every genus is natural, created as such at the beginning – hence not to be rashly split up or stuck together by whim or according to anyone's

theory' (translated in Ramsbottom 1938, 197). Although later in his career, Linnaeus adopted the theory of transformism⁷ and hybridization in speciation, he still did not alter his belief that the natural world consisted of systematically ordered works of Creation (see Gardiner 2001). Linnaeus's fixism⁸ was widely adopted by the scientific community despite his creationist views because, for the first time, clear and consistent rules for classification were possible. These biases are evident in Fitzinger's classification of *L. paradoxa* as an anomaly that could still firmly fit within a pre-existing taxonomic Class, and more explicitly in Owen's incorrect identification of *L. annectens*.⁹

On the other side of the world, Gerard Krefft, director of the Australian Museum, was trying to enjoy his dinner (Olsen 2010). This particular meal was made for him by Robert Forster, a squatter from Queensland who had acquired a position at the Australian Museum as a cook. Forster had been trying to alert Krefft to a new species of fish unknown to science for a number of years. Known as *baramoonda* or *baramoondi* by the local indigenous populace (fig. 3), the white colonisers of Queensland called it the Burnett, or Dawson salmon (for where it is found), but Krefft did not seem interested. Finally, Forster took it upon himself to place the fish precisely under the director's nose and cooked the delicacy for Krefft himself, hoping that his experience of the meat would reveal what made this fish so special. Krefft was shocked to find that the torso of this fish contained a darker organ that looked suspiciously like a single lung (Krefft 1870a). He immediately implored Forster to collect more specimens to examine. As an apology and thanks, Krefft christened the fish *Ceratodus forsteri*¹⁰ in 1870 after Forster (Krefft 1870b).

⁷ For more information on the concepts of transformism, see Corsi 2005.

⁸ Fixism is a non-religious theory that all species alive today are identical to those in the past, and these organisms emerged already adapted to the environment without undergoing changes (see Ereshefsky 2001).

⁹ It is interesting to note that lungfishes still remain in Owen's Class of choice, the Fishes.

¹⁰ The name eventually changed to *Neoceratodus forsteri*.

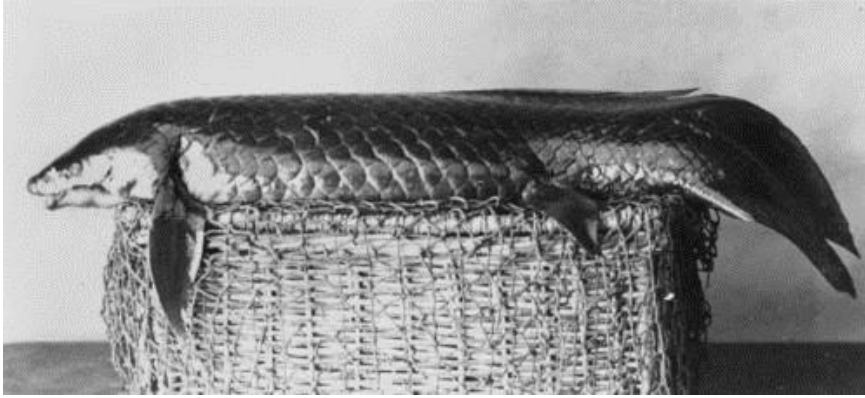


Fig. 3. Australian lungfish lying on a cane fishing basket ('Lungfish laying' 1895).



Fig. 4. Two fishermen with their Australian lungfish catch, Coomera River, Queensland ('Two fishermen' 1917).

The Australian discovery of its very own lungfish species was momentous for the young country, because it was one of the first of a new species to be announced in

an Australian broadsheet (Krefft 1870a). Krefft defied his conservative superiors, who had insisted he transport the specimens to England for a ‘proper’ assessment, and in doing so, claimed the discovery for himself and Australia. This was one of the first public instances where regional science from British colonies attempted to extract itself from European authority and assert its independence. The Australian lungfish in this case, became a symbol of national pride, positioning Australia as a legitimate and important nation within the world. Krefft described this lungfish as an amphibian, allied to the ones discovered in Gambia and the Amazon. Unlike Owen, Krefft was an advocate of Darwinism and commented that ‘we cannot be surprised at fresh links connecting the ancient fauna of the present day. It is in Australia in particular where zoological questions of great importance will yet be solved’ (1870a). Scholars like Albert Günther, who examined the Australian lungfish to verify Krefft’s claims, were impressed and entertained the possibility that this lungfish was indeed a living representation of the transitional animals of which Darwin spoke; those that first crawled out from the sea to colonize the land (Günther 1871a; 1871b). James Hector, of the newly colonized New Zealand wrote:

The chief interest attaching to this (lung)fish arise [*sic*] from the circumstance that it is the living representative of an intermediate class of amphibious animals from which in early times sprung fishes on the one hand, and true reptiles on the other. Unlike any other fish, it has a lung, but also gills, thus possessing two distinct modes of purifying and oxygenating its blood (1874, 490).

In Krefft’s case, the cultural influences on his understandings of *N. forsteri* predominantly lay in his acceptance of Darwinian ideologies and a political desire for Australia to be legitimised and independent from governing English authorities in matters of animal biology.

The origin of terrestrial vertebrates was a major and important focus in the history of scientific ideas. The discovery of lungfishes prompted excitement and

heated debate on the existence of evolution by natural selection. Academics like William Caldwell flocked to Australia to study transitional animals like the lungfish and platypus (Caldwell 1884). Another researcher, Richard Semon, spent two years in Australia attempting to collect and study the Australian lungfish's eggs (Semon 1901). Papers announcing this new species requested any new specimens to be sent to London and beseeched those in the lungfish's native land to resist temptation to hunt and eat this valuable species. P. L. Sclater placed such a note in *Nature*, writing:

In conclusion, I may express a hope that this short notice may have the effect of calling the attention of some of the colonists of Queensland to the wonderful nature of this relic of the Denovian epoch that is now swimming about beneath their noses, and that they will cease, for the present at least, to kill it and eat it as "salmon". Any specimens that may "rise to their fly" should be carefully kept out of the way of the cook, preserved in alcohol and transmitted to the British Museum or some other scientific institution. When the existence of *Ceratodus forsteri* becomes more widely known, there will be no lack of applicants for examples of it (1870, 170).

This time, the new Australian immigrants 'colonised' the unique animals of the continent to establish their hold on the land. Despite the lungfishes' 'discovery', long before, by the Indigenous population, it had to be 'rediscovered' to the Western world by Western colonists. While the Indigenous people respected lungfishes within its environment, the colonialists captured and shipped them to be displayed in other countries (dead or alive), removing the fish from its environment and transforming it into a human 'commodity'.

The Secret of Immortality:

Contemporary Cultural Influences of The Australian Lungfish

The Chicago World's Fair of 1933 was named 'A Century of Progress International Exposition' to celebrate the city's centennial. The fair's motto 'Science Finds, Industry Applies, Man Conforms' celebrated technological

innovation, but one particular exhibit had little to do with technology. Two Australian lungfishes, a male and a female, had arrived from Taronga Zoo, Sydney to be witnessed by Chicagoans for the first time at the Shedd Aquarium. Walter Chute, the aquarium's director, wanted rare, precious fish to attract visitors to the fair – a testament to the human fascination with the exotic. This act illustrated that despite all technological innovation and control, there were still things beyond our understanding, such as a fish with lungs. When Chute discovered the steamship collecting exotic fish from Hawaii was also heading to Australia, he promptly asked permission from Taronga Zoo for one of the continent's own 'mud-fish' to become a permanent resident of Shedd.



Fig. 5. Granddad arrives at the Shedd Aquarium, May 1933 (© Shedd Aquarium 2013).

Not long after, Shedd's railroad car, The Mariposa, collected thirty containers of exotic fishes from Los Angeles to Chicago, including the fish Chute had requested, one of which was christened Granddad (fig. 5) (Furnweger 2013). Although the age of this lungfish is unknown, since he came to Shedd as an adult

(fig. 6), the 80th anniversary of his captivity was celebrated on September 17th 2013, making him the oldest living animal in captivity since the death of George, the Galapagos tortoise.

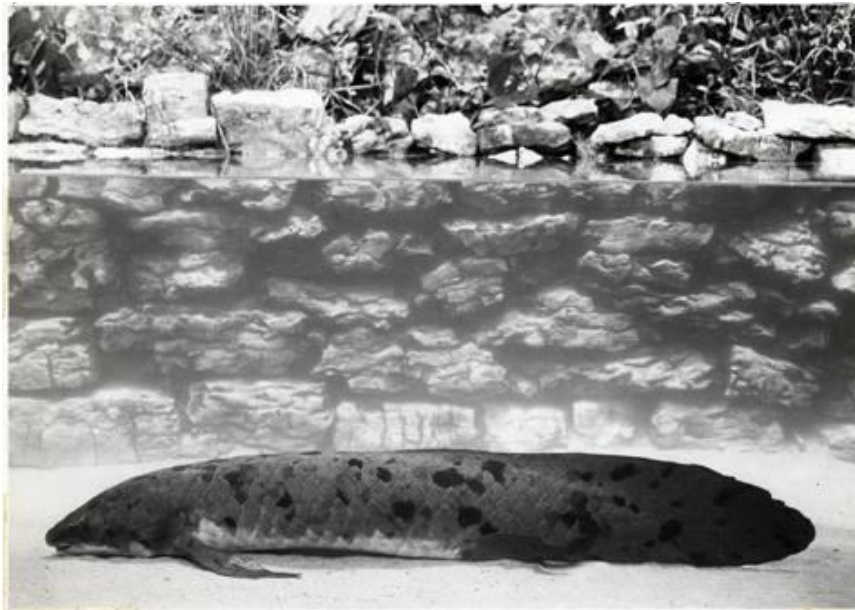


Fig. 6. Granddad in his aquarium (© Shedd Aquarium 2013).

Granddad has become a celebrity and national treasure in those eighty years. He has been praised as ‘an ambassador for the conservation of his 100 million year old species’ by the Consul-General of Australia, Hon. Roger Price (Australian Government 2013). His name also implies a familial fondness from the humans that care for him. The Shedd Facebook page was inundated with comments about Granddad, such as ‘Happy Birthday!!!’ by Kristy Wilsey; 20 September 2013, ‘He’s a true national treasure’ by Mark Konzerowsky, 8 November 2013; ‘I’m so glad to see Granddad’s still around’ by David M. Prus, 18 September 2013; and ‘He’s so cute! Many years to come’ by Emily Cassady-Oliviera, 18 September.



Fig. 7. Granddad's 80th birthday cake (© Shedd Aquarium/Brenna Hernandez 2013).

His birthday celebration earned him even more well-wishers and reached an estimated audience of over four million on the day. He made the news, blog posts were published and comedian Jimmy Fallon mentioned him in his opening monologue on September 21 2013. A press release outlined the event and esteemed guests attended the celebration, including the Consul-General of Australia. Granddad and the four female lungfishes in his tank were treated to an exclusive 'ice cake' of shrimp, smelt, herbivore gel squares, yellow squash, green peas, grated carrot and sweet potato moulded into a two-tiered castle (fig. 7). The cake was covered in seaweed frosting, garnished with shredded greens, carrots and raspberries and placed into the tank – an anthropomorphic gesture to symbolise the significance of the animal to humans, probably more than benefit the animal himself (fig. 8).

Bonnie McGrath illustrated the bond felt between human and lungfish when she wrote of Granddad in an article released about the lungfish's anniversary:

When I met Granddad in 1978, he was just about to celebrate his 45th anniversary as a South Loop resident. And I thought he was old then! He's been living in the South Loop a lot longer than I have. I've only been here 19 years. But we both came to live here during the month of September, although I arrived 61 years later (McGrath 2013).

Michelle Sattler of Shedd said, 'A lot of people have a great relationship with [Granddad], and a lot invested in him. So, we hope to see him for years to come here at the aquarium' (quoted in Hayes and Jordan 2013) and Ken Ramirez, Shedd's executive vice president of animal care, added 'Granddad makes people happy. Everybody knows him' (quoted in Coffey 2013).



Fig. 8. Granddad at his 80th anniversary celebration (© Shedd Aquarium/Brenna Hernandez 2013).

After his milestone as the oldest fish in captivity, Granddad enthusiasts are pondering if he holds the secret to immortality. As WGNtv.com reported, 'Scientists are hoping that by studying [Granddad] and other lungfishes, they may unlock the secrets to longevity, which can then be applied to us' (Hayes and Jordan 2013). Such stories reveal the nature of human desires in contemporary Western society, illustrating our obsession with celebrity: we care more for one

‘famous’ lungfish than for the environment that sustains the species. In addition, due to this celebrity, we create anthropocentric items of ritual celebration that have no meaning for the fish, like a birthday cake and Facebook comments, rather than, for example, choosing to release him back into the wild. This emphasises again the Western world view of dominion and control, which in its extreme places non-human animals in an otherness that allows them to be viewed as tools that can be utilised for human needs and desires.

Nine Blind Lungfishes: A Personal Narrative

The last four years of my life have concentrated on studying the visual perception of lungfishes. Although my research touches on several species, my encounters with lungfishes in the flesh have been with the Australian species, *N. forsteri* (fig. 9). Australian lungfishes possess a well-developed colour vision system despite living a predominantly nocturnal lifestyle in freshwater rivers among the macrophytes of Queensland. Australian lungfishes possess one rod photoreceptor type used in dim light, and four cone photoreceptor types that are optimally sensitive to the red, yellow, blue and ultra-violet ranges of the visual spectrum (Hart et al. 2008, 1-14). Part of my research into their visual perception involved testing the colour vision capabilities of *N. forsteri* to confirm if they utilize their potential for colour vision. Eyes such as these are more commonly found in diurnal birds or reptiles, not fish. Hence, this visual system does not seem to complement the behavioural patterns of lungfishes. In many respects, their visual system makes them as ‘paradoxical’ as their lungs, since their visual machinery, one that enables them to see many colours, seems to be at odds with the environment they have evolved in, which is dimmed and muddy.



Fig. 9. A juvenile Australian lungfish, *N. forsteri* (2010, reproduced with kind permission from S.E. Temple, S.P. Collin, N.S. Hart and R.G. Northcutt).

After an arduous wait at the beginning of this project, nine juvenile Australian lungfishes travelled from Queensland to my laboratory in Western Australia. I personally checked on their welfare every day, feeding them and making sure the water quality in their tanks was optimal. I noticed subtle differences between the personalities of each fish. It is difficult to remain indifferent when caring for an organism, human or otherwise, and I was no exception. I anthropomorphised my charges, grew fond of them, and looked forward to observing their responses to different coloured lights. After four months, a photographer visited our research group to document the various animals we were studying. I took advantage of this rare opportunity to photograph my own fish, preparing a freshly clean glass tank in a room bathed in light. I picked one fish and carefully brought it down to model for the camera. As the photographer was setting up the equipment, I noticed something peculiar. Amidst the bright lights and through a freshly cleaned glass, the head of this particular individual looked strange: the fish appeared to have no eyes. I was numb with shock. The shape and colour of the lungfishes' head were normal, but its eyes were not where they should have been (fig. 10). There was no scarring, no indication that eyes had been removed or deformed in some way; they seemed simply to have not developed at all.

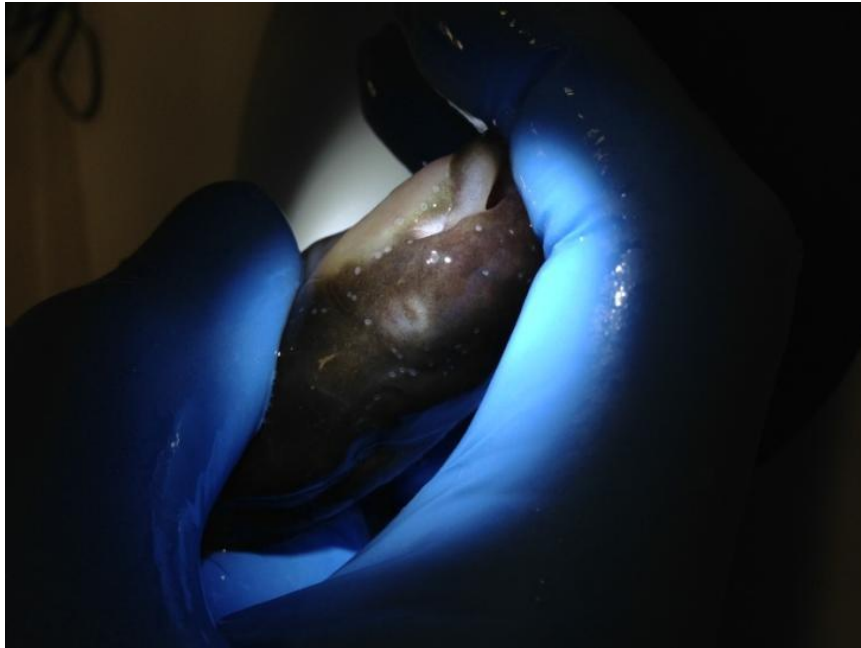


Fig. 10. Confirming the visual deformity in abnormal *Neoceratodus forsteri*: the eye is clearly absent (Appudurai 2013).

Distraught, I could not believe the irony of the situation: how was I to research the visual system of lungfishes if my specimens had no eyes? I tried over and over again to understand how I had failed to notice the deformity when the fish first arrived, or when I had fed them and cleaned their tanks every day of the next four months. The only explanation I have is that I, and the others involved in my project, took it for granted that a fish has eyes. My understanding of lungfishes, garnered from basic gathered knowledge and assumptions of what a fish ‘should be’ clouded my ability to see until I was faced with an undeniable ‘truth’. As for Owen, my expectation of a certain ‘truth’ inhibited an understanding possible only when these expectations were cast aside.

With my previous expectations dissolved, I could now investigate and observe these animals in a new light. The perception signs relevant to the ‘normal’ counterparts of their species were not relevant here, and studying their *Umwelten* needed a systematic approach that combined behavioural, electrophysiological

and anatomical analyses. Histologically, I confirmed the presence of subcutaneous eyes embedded approximately 4.2 mm beneath muscle and connective tissue. These eyes contained most of the structures typical of the eyes of normal Australian lungfishes, but did not contain a clear cornea (Appudurai 2016, 166-167). The electrophysiological study demonstrated that the retina of the fishes was still receptive to light, despite the eyes buried under skin since birth (Appudurai 2016, 158). However, when tested behaviourally, only one individual demonstrated statistically non-random behavioural responses to light and dark (a similar experiment to that of Uexküll and the sea urchin), suggesting that the tissue covering the eye of that fish still allowed enough ambient light through (Appudurai 2016, 148). As a representation of their species, or even their abnormality, each individual's *Umwelt* was different, as demonstrated by these experiments.

The Connection Between Human Cultural History and the Lungfish *Umwelt*

Here, I have outlined different stories about lungfishes and the humans who invented and told these stories. To the Indigenous peoples of parts of Australia and Africa, the liminal nature of lungfishes have made them celebrated creatures of the living world, and illustrated an understanding of the embeddedness of the human within the natural environment. In the mythical stories of the *minhocao* and the *buru* spread by colonialists of the New World, however, the differences of lungfishes as transitional animals made them monstrous. For Richard Owen in Victorian England, the fiercely embedded ideologies of a Linnaean creationist taxonomy combined with Owen's own personal biases resulted in an incorrect description of *L. annectens*, a transitional creature that did not fit the established natural order of nineteenth-century European science. In newly colonised Australia, the 'rediscovered' lungfish was a commodity that shored up the position of 'Australian' science. The narratives about Granddad illustrate a

contemporary self-absorption and obsession with celebrity and immortality that positions lungfishes as commodities and tools for human advancement. Finally, my own story reveals how reality is obfuscated by preconceived assumptions of what a lungfish 'should' be.

These inescapable biases are formed by ingrained beliefs, assumptions and ideologies which, often subconsciously, force a particular understanding of what lungfishes are and/or should be. John Berger discusses this intimate connection between what we 'see' and what we 'know', saying, 'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe ... we never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation between things and ourselves' (2008, 9). Human cultural narratives of lungfishes show that these biases are prevalent across cultures and throughout history, and thereby influence how humans choose to understand liminal creatures like lungfishes because, '[narrative] accounts are not simply representations of the world; they are part of the world they describe' (Hammersley 2007, 107). The exploration of narratives about lungfishes does not directly give us insight into the *Umwelten* of lungfishes from an ethological perspective, but understanding *Umwelten* still requires human interpretation, which changes throughout history, among cultures, and individual experience. This ultimately impacts how humans 'know' and understand non-human animals. In addition, these narratives also illustrate that non-human animals are capable of eliciting an unsettling response in humans, especially when they threaten the security of fundamental religious ideologies and definitions of life. Just as scientific research is one 'social arena' in which knowledge about how a lungfish may visually perceive the world may be examined, cultural ideologies and assumptions influence how humans comprehend the visual experience of lungfishes and Other organisms. In many respects, all these narratives can reflect on different *Umwelten*, of human and non-human animals interacting together;

some may merge, some may burst – but all combine into a multifaceted perceptual world.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Ionat Zurr of SymbioticA, Professor Shaun P. Collin, Associate Professor Nathan S. Hart and the Neuroecology laboratory at the University of Western Australia for their intellectual, financial and practical contribution to this research project. Additional financial support from the Australian Research Council and the Western Australian Government is also acknowledged.

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Going to the Dogs: The Foreign and Religious Other in German Renaissance Prints

Dana Rehn

Dogs have an enduring symbolism in images and texts that encompass both positive and negative meanings. During the German Renaissance, whole groups of people in remote regions of the world were portrayed with the heads of dogs in both literature and visual culture. This paper examines the monstrous race, the dog-headed *cynocephali*, within the social context of German Renaissance prints. It discusses how the dog-headed motif was used to both demonise and socially marginalise foreign and religious Others from the Western ‘civilised’ world and Christian realm. In turn, this paper illustrates how this motif was able to reinforce unity and identity among the German people, against the backdrop of increasing German national sentiment. While the monstrous races have been widely studied, it has primarily been in general terms, encompassing many types of creatures. Their representation in northern (German) art and visual culture has also not been extensively examined in relation to the social contexts of the Other in German Renaissance art, society and culture.

The prevalence of these hybrid creatures in pictorial prints is evident in late fifteenth-century and sixteenth-century Germany, around the height of the European witch-hunts and Protestant Reformation. They were produced in southern Germany,

where at least half the population remained Catholic and where a third of all executions of witches occurred during the European witch craze, revealing tensions of perceived ‘Outsiders’ within the region (Roper 2004, 19; Midelfort 1972, 58). The prints were predominately created by unknown artists as book and map illustrations in scholarly works authored by people who held respected positions within society. The authors were university educated, physicians, clergymen, academics and explorers – giving credibility to their stories of the monstrous and their accompanying images.

The Dog-Headed Race: Conceptions of Alterity

The cynocephali were located in their traditionally associated location in the mountainous and forested regions of north-eastern Asia in Martin Waldseemüller’s *Carta marina* (1516) (fig. 1). A cynocephalus who is carrying a branch differs from traditional representations of the cynocephali with its hooved feet. This depiction may have been influenced by the *Hippopodes* (‘horse foot’), the hooved monstrous race with the bodies of men who were similarly linked to Asia. The accompanying text notes that it has a human head, the face of a dog, and speaks two words, then barks the third (Duzer 2010, 225). This account derives from the Franciscan missionary, John of Plano Carpini (1182-1252), who stayed with Mongols in 1247, where he claimed to have been told of the dog-headed neighbours by Russian clerics (John of Plano Carpini 1980, 23, 31). This cynocephalus could have further been inspired by *The Greek Alexander Romance* (c.300 A.D.), which stated that ‘their voices were partly human and partly canine’ (Pseudo-Callisthenes 1991, 178). The description and illustration of this cynocephalus clearly stresses its duality as both man and beast. The branch-wielding cynocephalus is similar to the figure on the left resembling a wild man with long pointed canine ears, wielding a club while chasing a hare. This

motif was used to further symbolise the creatures' barbarity and ignorance of more sophisticated chivalric weapons (Friedman 1981, 32-33).

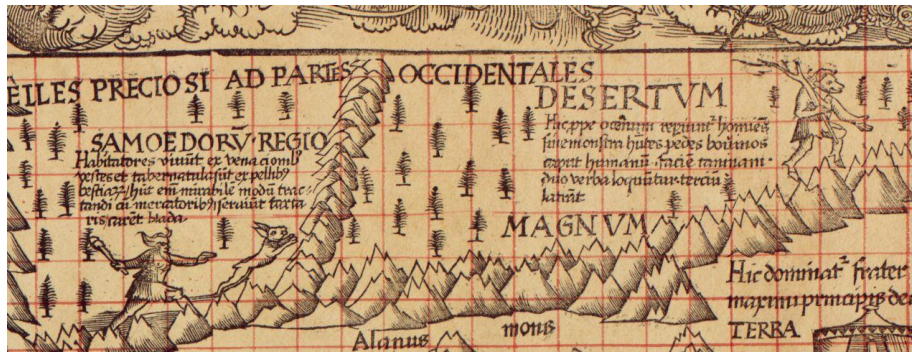


Fig. 1. Martin Waldseemüller, *Carta marina navigatoria portugallen [siorum] navigationes atque totius cogniti orbis terre marisque formam naturamque situs et terminos nostri[s] temporibus recognitos et ab antiquorum traditione differentes eciam quorum vetusti non meminuerunt auctores, hec generaliter indicat*, Detail, 1516, Strasbourg, produced by Johann Schott. Woodcut, 128 x 233 cm, each sheet measures 45.5 x 62 cm, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Jay I. Kislak Collection.

The cynocephalus is also presented gesturing with one hand. The hand-gesturing cynocephalus is used to signify its absence of sophisticated language and thus its lack of humanity, despite being portrayed alone (Spinks 2009, 15-16). The barking cynocephali embodied the foreign barbarian, which was derived from the ancient Greek *barbaros* and meant ‘gibberish speaker’ (Strickland 2003, 48). For the ancient Greeks, articulate speech in the Greek language defined humanity and the rational mind over the animal realm (DeMello 2012, 37). This view was shared by the Romans, as most of the monstrous races described by Pliny, who wrote one of the earliest influential accounts of monstrous races, were also said to be without articulate speech (Pliny 1962, 76-77). Even German humanists, such as Conrad Celtis (1459-1508), similarly continued to hold Latin in higher regard over their own ‘barbaric tongue’ (Krebs 2011, 107; Celtis 1948, 20-21). When describing the dog-

king of the people of Ptoeambati and Ptoemphanæ, Pliny stated that the king would make signs with his body, which his subjects would interpret as commandments they would observe (Pliny 1962, 67). This follows from Ctesias of Cnidus (c. 400 B.C.) who stated of the cynocephali that ‘by barking and by making signs with their hands and their fingers like the deaf and the dumb, they can make themselves understood’ (McCrindle 1882, 22). This motif served to illustrate that the cynocephali relied upon heavy hand gestures to supplement their primary communication of barking (Friedman 1981, 29).

In Waldseemüller’s map, the cynocephali are also shown to wear garments made out of crude animal skins. This offered only a slightly more charitable view in comparison to nude depictions of the cynocephali (e.g. fig. 5). When relating to pagans, nudity was imbued with negative connotations (Mellinkoff 1993, 203-04). While wearing animal skins placed these figures somewhere between animal and human, it also separated them from ‘civilised Christian society’ (Friedman 1981, 32). This account is supported by a sixteenth-century German traveller in Spain who had described captured men from the Canary Islands dressed in animal skins as ‘wild beasts’ (Mercer 1980, 228). However, he further stated that dressing these creatures in European clothing ‘made these beasts in human bodies into tame human beings’ (ibid.). The belief in the absence of humanity of the cynocephali and related creatures is thus evident from their lack of ‘civilised’ European clothing. However, the fact that the cynocephali wear anything at all illustrates that Waldseemüller separated them from the other animals depicted, but nonetheless continued to maintain their separation from humanity, thereby reinforcing their human-animal hybridity. In this way, they are neither wholly man nor beast, but belong along the fringes of society like the mountainous ridge the cynocephalus walks along.

Gog and Magog: Muslim Ottoman Turks and Mongols

Down to the right of these monstrous races is the land of the Mongols (fig. 2). Beside a tent city, men are illustrated in robes or ‘bloomers’ and are wearing exaggeratedly tall hats resembling *fezzes* that have a tassel at the top. Albeit shorter, the *fez* was commonly worn by Ottoman Turks at all levels of society (Chico 2013, 175).



Fig. 2. Martin Waldseemüller, *Carta marina navigatoria portugallen [siorum] navigationes atque totius cogniti orbis terre marisque formam naturamque situs et terminos nostri[s] temporibus recognitos et ab antiquorum traditione differentes eciam quorum vetusti non meminuerunt autores, hec generaliter indicat*, Detail, 1516, Strasbourg, produced by Johann Schott. Woodcut, 128 x 233 cm, each sheet measures 45.5 x 62 cm, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Jay I. Kislak Collection.

One man on the far right appears to be wearing a turban, which was more traditionally associated with Ottoman Turks during this period. Their location suggests that the once feared Mongolian Empire that had managed to capture parts of Eastern Europe during the thirteenth century, had been replaced by the new threat posed by the Muslim Ottoman Empire (Strickland 2003, 193; Jackson 2005, 138). One of the men riding on a horse while holding an arrow demonstrates that at least some of the men are soldiers. He is travelling in the direction of Europe with a dog running behind him, underscoring their expansionist threat. Just as the Mongols touched on the apocalyptic fears of the medieval Christian West, so too did the threat of the new religion of Islam from the East during the early modern period (Jackson 2005, 143). By the time this map was made, Constantinople had already fallen to the Ottoman Empire, where some Christians had been forced to convert (Cunningham and Grell 2000, 1-2; Schwoebel 1967, 163). The tent camps served as emblems of war and apostasy (Wheatcroft 1993, 44).

The mountainous ridges that surround the Ottoman Turks resemble the mountains thought to separate Gog and Magog, the princes of wicked nations in Biblical apocalyptic literature (Arjana 2015, 72). In this way, their location associates them with the apocalyptic enemies, rulers of nations under the dominion of Satan. As stated in Revelation: 'Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth – Gog and Magog – and to gather them for battle' (20.7-8). Gog and Magog have been represented invading Vienna as turban-wearing Ottoman Turks and as Mongols below a flying demon representing Satan in the 1530 edition of the New Testament by Martin Luther.¹ Written on a tent

¹ See for example Master A.W. *Gog and Magog* (woodcut, 11.7 x 8 cm), illustrated in Martin Luther. 1530. *Das Neue Testament unsers Herrn und Heilandes Jesu Christi*. Wittenberg: Hans Luft. [Artstor.org](https://www.artstor.org/ARTSTOR_103_41822000979284) (ARTSTOR_103_41822000979284).

amongst their camp are the words ‘Gog’ and ‘Magog’, associating them with the Biblical monsters of the apocalypse. The image recalls the story in Ezekiel in the Old Testament in reference to Gog: ‘You will come from your place in the far north, you and many nations with you, all of them riding on horses, a great horde, a mighty army’ (38.15). This threat against the people of Israel was reinterpreted by the contemporary audience as a threat to Germany. It was thought that Germany would especially experience the wrath of God as it was where ‘the Gospel had shone the brightest and been least appreciated’ (Cunningham and Grell 2000, 43).

One figure among the bearded men with long pointy moustaches in Waldseemüller’s map has the face of a long snouted dog. Although similarly dressed, the cynocephalus is distinguished with a contrasting checked pattern on his robes. A checked pattern had often been used to indicate an evil person (Mellinkoff 1993, 21). The cynocephali not only came to represent unconverted pagans in the remote corners of the world, but also Muslims who were often regarded in classical and early Christian writing as ‘a race of dogs’ (Strickland 2003, 159-60). In antiquity, Pliny stipulated that the king of Garamantes in modern day Libya had an army that was literally made up of ‘dog soldiers’ (Pliny 1962, 67). Eulogius of Córdoba (c. 810-859) also called the prophet Muhammad a dog, because dogs are considered impure in Islam and calling Muslims dogs would have been a great insult (Strickland 2003, 159-60). Muhammad and the Muslim ruler, Saladin (1138-1193), were portrayed with the heads of dogs in Alexander of Bremen’s (d. 1271) thirteenth-century illuminated *Expositio in Apocalypsim* (‘Exposition of the Apocalypse’) from Saxony.² In another image in the same source, Muhammad was depicted as a dog standing on

² See for example ‘The Beast and his image as Saladin and Muhammed’ (Alexander, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*, Saxony, c.1249-1250. Cambridge University Library, MS Mm. V. 31, fol. 185v), illustrated in Strickland 2003, 223. University of Cambridge Digital Library. Accessed June 25, 2016. <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-MM-00005-00031/374>.

his two hind legs next to the Devil.³ Muslims were also described as dogs in literature in the Middle Ages. In *The Song of Roland* (c.1140-1170), Muslim characters yelped like dogs (Sayers 1957, 185), as did the Muslim army in *Kyng Alisaunder* (c.1275), ‘whose men could neither speak nor shout / But only bark and rage like hounds’ (1934-36) (Weber 1810 vol. I, 84; Friedman 1981, 67). As these sources suggest, the cynocephali were used to underscore the ferocious barbarity of the Muslim Turks.

The Germanic warrior wolf tribes similarly used the image of the ferocious canine to instil fear in their enemies. The image was used by the early Germanic tribe called the Lombards. An early Lombard historian, Paul the Deacon (c.720-799), wrote in his *Historia Langobardorum* (‘History of the Langobards’) that this tribe claimed to have had cynocephali in their army and would drink the blood of their enemies (Paul the Deacon 1907, 20; Speidel 2004, 19). During the early fourteenth century, the Lombards’ emblem was the dog and they were ruled by King Congrande known as the ‘Great Dog’ (White 1991, 61). Marco Polo also wrote of Tartars having cynocephali in their army: ‘Tartar chiefs, with their dog’s-head followers...ate the bodies of their victims like so much bread’ (1871, 276). In this way, Waldseemüller’s map was drawing on this long tradition of associating Muslims with barbarous hounds and creating an enemy to be both feared and hated. Since there is only one cynocephalus who appears to be an Ottoman Turk, it suggests that they were not conceived as a race of dogs in this instance, but like the Lombards and Tartars, had cynocephali as their followers.

Further down Waldseemüller’s map are another two cynocephali described as having the heads of dogs (fig. 3). The pair face each other and the mouth of the

³ See for example ‘The Beast of the Earth, his image, and henchmen’ (Alexander, *Expositio in Apocalypsim*. Saxon, c.1249-1250, University of Cambridge, MS Mm.V.31, fol. 85), illustrated in Strickland 2003, 224. University of Cambridge Digital Library. Accessed June 25, 2016. <http://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-MM-00005-00031/173>.

cynocephalus on the left is open revealing its long protruding canine tongue. Both are gesturing heavily with their hands raised to signify their lack of sophisticated language. They are further distinguished from the previous cynocephalus with hooved feet above as the text beside them notes that they rely exclusively on barking to communicate (Duzer 2010, 228). This is emphasised with the cynocephalus on the right with his hands raised in an apparent frustrated attempt to communicate.



Fig. 3. Martin Waldseemüller, *Carta marina navigatoria portugallen [siorum] navigationes atque totius cogniti orbis terre marisque formam naturamque situs et terminos nostri[s] temporibus recognitos et ab antiquorum traditione differentes eciam quorum vetusti non meminuerunt autores, hec generaliter indicat*, Detail, 1516, Strasbourg, produced by Johann Schott. Woodcut, 128 x 233 cm, each sheet measures 45.5 x 62 cm, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Jay I. Kislak Collection.

The pair are wearing crude and tattered garments. The text describes them as sheep's skin – not considered a luxury item during its day (Duzer 2010, 228; Ergang 1967, 65). The cynocephalus on the right appears to be wearing a hat that resembles traditional Mongolian fur-lined caps. Mongolian clothing was made out of animal hides and sheep's wool from the herds of livestock they would raise (Chico 2013, 26). Since these cynocephali are further located in the region of Mongolia and had been influenced by Carpini's account of the Mongols' supposedly dog-headed

neighbours, the Mongols and the cynocephali could have been conflated. Therefore, it is quite possible that they represented Mongols who were known for their close relationship with animals. This in turn simplified the process of reducing these foreigners to animals.

The Mongols' representation as dog-heads could have also been the result of their long rumoured acts of cannibalism or come from the belief that they ate dogs (Jackson 2005, 149; Phillips 2014, 178). As written in a letter by Ivo of Narbonne to the archbishop of Bordeaux in 1243: 'The men are inhuman and bestial, they can be said to be monsters rather than men, they thirst for blood and drink it, they tear to pieces and devour flesh of dogs and of men...they drink for their delight blood which they draw from their sheep' (quoted in Matthew Paris, *Chronica Majora* 4.76-7, cited in Baraz 2003, 98). Mongols were also unfamiliar with processed food such as bread and wine, a symbol of Western civilisation, consuming raw meat instead (John of Plano Carpini 1980, 16; Baraz 2003, 103). Europeans believed that humans ate refined, cooked food; hence those who did not were likened to animals (Salisbury 1994, 170).

The fact that the Mongols were nomads meant that they did not build a lasting city, which further reduced them to being considered less than human (Jackson 2005, 139). The cynocephali were universally portrayed against a remote landscape. The wilderness held strong symbolic significance in the Middle Ages and the early modern period. It became associated with all things wild and in consequence symbolised anything outside orthodox Christian society (Bernheimer 1952, 12, 20). Being nomads also associated them with the mark of Cain. Monstrous races were commonly thought to be descendants of Cain who was cursed with a physical mark given by God after killing his brother Abel (Genesis 4.3-15). Cain was punished by being hidden from God's presence and to wander the earth like a nomad 'east of

Eden' (4.15-16). For this reason, they represented God's punishment for sins on earth (Strickland 2003, 49). As Cain was hidden from Christ's presence, it associates the absence of faith in the god of the Bible with their physical monstrosity

Their representation as dogs could also be in reference to their perceived violent savagery during their conquests, massacring whole cities indiscriminately. This is coupled with the sexual abuse of their captives, culminating in the cannibalism of their victims (Baraz 2003, 93). The map also appears to have highlighted the trepidation of collaboration between the once feared Mongols (with some converting to Islam) and the new Ottoman force (Tolan 1996, xvi). This is further evident from the print in Luther's *New Testament* of Ottoman Turks and Mongols storming Vienna, discussed above.

The Conception of a Monster

Further separated by another mountainous ridge is a similar lone cynocephalus (fig. 4). Despite being shown alone, he is gesturing to his left with his mouth open in an attempt to communicate. The text that accompanies the lone cynocephalus states that it is men alone in this 'race' who appear as dogs, while the women appear as human (Duzer 2010, 226). This description alludes to bestiality. Ancient sources such as Ctesias have similarly described cynocephali as a tribe of up to 120,000 with visibly male sexual organs. However, he later states in the same source that the women had the tails of dogs (McCrindle 1882, 22, 25). According to Pliny, the Greek historian Duris of Samos (c.350 – 281 B.C.) stated that some Indians had regular sexual relations with animals that resulted in half-human, half-animal hybrid offspring (Pliny 1962, 79).



Fig. 4. Martin Waldseemüller, *Carta marina navigatoria portugallen [siorum] navigationes atque totius cogniti orbis terre marisque formam naturamque situs et terminos nostri[s] temporibus recognitos et ab antiquorum traditione differentes eciam quorum vetusti non meminuerunt autores, hec generaliter indicat*, Detail, 1516, Strasbourg, produced by Johann Schott. Woodcut, 128 x 233 cm, each sheet measures 45.5 x 62 cm, Library of Congress, Washington DC, Jay I. Kislak Collection.

Adam of Bremen, a German historian of the eleventh century, described the birth of cynocephali from the Amazon women of Asia, considered a monstrous race in themselves. In his historical treatise, *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum* ('History of the Archbishops of Hamburg-Bremen'), he writes:

Some, too, assert that they are made pregnant by the merchants who pass that way, or by the men whom they hold captive in their midst... And when these women come to give birth, if the offspring be of the male sex, they become Cynocephali; if of the feminine kind, they become most beautiful women (Adam of Bremen 2005, 200; 4.19).

John of Plano Carpini recounted the tale of a land where the women were all human; however, their men were all dogs (John of Plano Carpini 1980, 23). He further stated that the dogs communicated with the women through sign language, thus underscoring the depiction of the hand-gesturing cynocephali (White 1991, 132).

As the tales of the dog-headed cynocephali were believed to have derived from Indian epics themselves (Wittkower 1942, 159-97), dogs were important in the belief systems of the steppe and East Eurasia. A similar Tibetan story described dogs mating with Turkic women who gave birth to male dogs and to human girls (Aigle 2014, 126). In this way, the association between cynocephali and Mongols could have originally derived from the Mongolians themselves. As David Gordon White has shown, Mongols, Turks, Tibetans and Tartars all have dog or wolf ancestry legends (1991, 135). However, they had become reinterpreted to fit the contemporary fears of Western Europe that linked heresy with bestiality. Regardless of its origins, bestiality was thought to be the cause of the birth of hybrids and the monstrous races, and was accordingly escalated to one of the worst sins of all (Wiesner-Hanks 2009, 29-30). The cynocephali's monstrosity is further underscored by the heading *Monstra* ('Monsters') beside the lone cynocephalus.

Images of canine-human hybrids further attest to the conflicted relationship early modern Europeans had with companion animals. Dogs were increasingly kept as pets and had been used to symbolise faithfulness in works of art (Reuterswärd 1981, 53-69). However, a negative interpretation was still commonly applied. During the Middle Ages, the close relationship of keeping pets, as opposed to the strict utilitarian use of dogs for hunting, was seen as a type of heresy because it threatened to undermine the distinction between humans and animals (DeMello 2012, 150; Cohen 2008, 211). This contributed to the fear of losing superiority over them as God gave man dominion over all animals in Genesis 1.26. Living with animals was thought to reduce humans into beasts (Taylor 2013, 45). During the early modern period, a close relationship with dogs as pets was still regarded with suspicion. For example, Cornelius Agrippa von Nettesheim (1486-1535), an eminent German astrologer, philosopher and scholar, was thought to derive his occult knowledge from

his companion dog, in other words, his witches' familiar. His pupil, Johann Weyer (c.1515-1588), believed the gossip was because he was 'childishly fond of this dog' (Serpell 2002, 167; Weyer 1991, 113). Furthermore, the suspicion of witches' familiars around the time of the witch craze derived from superstition caused around the height of the bubonic plagues where dogs were immune. Since hundreds of dogs were left homeless upon the death of their owners, dogs were seen eating the unburied dead, which did not help their reputation as harbingers of death (Taylor 2013, 43, 44). Since the Church popularised the idea that the plague was caused by Satan, it helped to create the common belief that the Devil was disguised as a dog during the early modern period (Weyer 1991, 612, note. 38; Taylor 2013, 44). For this reason, canine motifs had become associated with pagans and the Devil (Ferreiro 1998, 65). The close relationship with animals also fostered the connection between the idea of heresy and bestiality (Taylor 2013, 45). The blurring of distinctions between animals and humans from the Middle Ages resulted in increased resistance by the Church, which legislated against and demonised bestiality (Salisbury 1994, 96).

Savage Cannibals of the New World

As exploration grew during the early modern period, the existence of these mysterious creatures was pushed to lesser known corners of the world, including the Americas (Friedman 1981, 1). It was in the sixteenth century that the cynocephali were portrayed in the New World with the publication of *Uslegung der Mercarthen oder Carta Marina* ('Guide and Instructions for the Carta Marina') (1525) by Lorenz Fries (1489-1550) (Duzer 2010, 222). The booklet served as a companion to Fries' map, based upon Waldseemüller's 1516 *Carta marina*. Cannibalistic cynocephali are depicted and described in the chapter 'Of Cannibals' in both the 1525 and 1527

editions (fig. 5). A woodcut in this chapter illustrates a cynocephalus butchering a human into pieces as he holds a cleaver above his head. Another gestures with his arms stretched out towards the butcher on his right to signify his purchasing of the human flesh.



Fig. 5. Artist Unknown, *Cannibals on the Caribbean Island* in Lorenz Fries, *Uslegung der Mercarthen oder Carta Marina*, Strasbourg: Johannes Grüninger, 1525, leaf XVI, Woodcut, handcolouring, 10.5 x 14.4 cm, Archive of Early American Images, The John Carter Brown Library, Brown University.

On the far right stands what could be a female, though judging from the profile angle it is more likely male given the similar prominent pectoral muscles possessed by the other males whose only clothing appears to be a stringed loincloth. The cynocephalus chews on a raw and bloodied arm while gesturing to another cynocephalus on the far

left with a whip in one hand used to guide a llama. Another person, whose possible destination is also the chopping block, is tied to the llama. Dismembered body parts hang above the block illustrated in a similar vein as a crude outdoor butcher's shop. As described by Fries:

Cannibals are a grim, slit-eyed people; dog-heads sit right on their heads, so that one gets scared when one looks at them. And they have an island which Christoffel Dauber [Christopher Columbus] of Janua [Genoa] recently discovered. This island is very large and has a lot of other islands around it. The cannibals all go naked except that they adorn themselves with parrot feathers of all kinds of colours, strangely woven together. These people prefer most of all to eat human flesh, and therefore, often in the year they go to surrounding islands in order to capture people. And they grab boys, beef them up all the hours the way we do it to camels, so that they will become fat and strong and all the better for being eaten. They kill the old ones and eat their entrails. They hang up the other meat the way we do with pork. But if they grab women, if these are young, then they keep them, so that they make a lot of children, just the way we do on account of marriage. If they are old, then they keep them as prisoners for their service and work (Fries 1525, fol. XVI, translated by Gerda Dinwiddie).

The dog-headed cynocephali were used to illustrate cannibals for their ferocious appearance and because dogs were used as a symbol for gluttony (Cohen 2008, 212). This symbolism originated in the Bible where dogs were repeatedly referred to with disparaging references as devourers and destroyers (Jeremiah 15.3), even of human flesh (Matthew 7.6). Depicted in profile to elucidate its long canine snout, the print also provided an opportunity to reveal the cynocephalus' long canine fangs, which signified its carnivorous appetite for human flesh (Magasich-Airola and de Beer 2007, 168-69). In this way, the profile view was often used to represent foreign Others, to exaggerate their features and to highlight their otherness (Bale 2010, 66-67; Mellinkoff 1993, 211-12). It is, however, curious that these depictions of a supposedly monstrous race were thought to be cannibals as they munch on human

flesh, suggesting that they thought the dog-headed race were closer to human than animal after all, or at least more than they would like to admit.

Perhaps they were deemed cannibals because they were still half human. Nonetheless they were regarded as monstrosities for this very reason. Monsters were typically represented as half-human, half-animal composites so that people could safely project their innermost fears on these odd figures (Gilmore 2003, 1). For this reason, what people most feared were the ‘demons’ within oneself – the othered self. They revealed the potential for human savagery or the temptation of immorality. They served as an example of what happens when one turns away from or is ignorant of God – the epitome of goodness. Turning away from God has turned them into bestial monsters, and they serve as a warning and provide physical evidence of the corruption of the internal self. The belief that physical imperfection was related to danger and the sin of defying God appears in Leviticus 21.16-23 and Deuteronomy 28. Hence, prints of cynocephali illustrated the German preoccupation with losing their special position with God.

Native Americans were similarly depicted in scenes of cannibalism with hanging body parts and in the act of cooking human flesh. This is demonstrated in the series of prints created by Theodor de Bry (1561-1623).⁴ These cannibalistic scenes became a common motif of Native Americans during the sixteenth century, based upon stories told by explorers such as the recollections by Hans Staden from Hesse (c. 1525-1579) (Staden 2008, 10; Arens 1979, 22-26, 28; Tucker 2011, 28; van Groesen 2008, 182-83). Rather than reflecting the reality of people found in America, this iconography, as well as their descriptions in tales, recycled old stereotypes and folklore of cannibalistic barbarians in order to portray the natives as akin to animals

⁴ See for example Theodore de Bry, *Cannibalism in Brazil* (1590, engraving, New York Public Library), illustrated in Obeyesekere 2005, 7.

(Arens 1979, 28; Colin 1999, 20). They made all foreign people appear interchangeable to the Western viewer and became composites of what was foreign and Other. Such stories brought back by travel writers would have served to reinforce the identity of 'German-ness' and the othering of foreigners, and to marginalise the latter as dangerous. As argued by anthropologists William Arens and Gananath Obeyesekere, the cannibalistic 'savage' was a construction of the Other that had little basis in reality. Rather, it was primarily a preoccupation of early modern Europeans (Arens 1979, 22-26; Obeyesekere 2005, 1-2).

Given their remote location, it is unlikely the image of a dog-headed race chewing on human body parts would have stirred fear of these cannibalistic monsters among its viewing audience. However, it would have caused repugnance of these savages and in turn further inspired national pride, allowing for a renewed sense of solidarity against the outsider. There was an increase in nationalistic writings in sixteenth-century Germany such as that by the anonymous author, simply known as 'the Revolutionary of the Upper Rhine', of *Buchli der hundert capiteln mit vierzig statuten* ('Book of a Hundred Chapters') (1510). The book described the German people as being the 'Chosen People' in the eyes of God (O'Brien 1988, 24; Waley and Denley 2013, 236; Whaley 2012, 122). Lienhard Jost (c.1500s) went further by prophesising that Strasbourg, in which this print was created, would become the New Jerusalem (Cunningham and Grell 2000, 36). This national sentiment resulted in a sense of anti-foreignness (Hughes 1992, 20). Even among the most sceptical of its viewing audience, the print would have functioned as a metaphor for the human condition.

Since the print was created amidst the German Peasant's war of 1524-5, it could have functioned as a reminder of the consequences of savagery at home. As within war, cannibals turn against one another, devouring their own. Peasants were

also often regarded as closer to animals for their ignorance and close connection to animals on the land, in the same way that Mongols were (Evans 1988, 2). The wilderness and outskirts of society were associated with lower order beings, and people who lived outside the city were described akin to savages and beasts, along with the other animals they lived beside in the wilderness (Freedman 2002, 29, 32-33). In this way, during the sixteenth century, the language of 'class' was not used, but rather thought in terms of divine 'order' and rightful and deserved place (Jütte 1994, 11, 15).

According to Fries, the cynocephali were not just savages, but had slit-eyes like goats that recalled images of the Devil. This description likely derived from the belief that the Devil would disguise himself as a dog (Weyer 1991, 612, note 38). For this reason, the iconography of the dog-headed cynocephali was not only used to distance early modern Germans from foreigners by highlighting the animalistic primitiveness of the latter's physical appearance and behaviour. It also demonised the cynocephali by casting them in opposition to Christian doctrine in representing them as a sign of the degenerate nature of humanity and as a portent of the impending apocalypse. They therefore not only personified the representation of the Other, but also functioned as symbols of external and internal threats to the safety and stability of German Renaissance society.

The use of female humans for procreation again suggests that the cynocephali were the result of bestiality and were in consequence heretical beings. The person tied to the llama has a feminine appearance in contrast to the deceased male's head lying on the chopping block. The curvature of her body also suggests a hint of breast hidden from being tied up by her hands and feet. As the text stipulates, she could have been captured for procreation or slavery instead of used as food. This print further reinforces the notion that all cynocephali were male, as evident from the prints

discussed, as well as the notion of their sexual depravity. The image and textual description of slit-eyed dogs also recalled the idea of witches having sexual intercourse with the Devil and demons. The Devil and demons were thought to assume the body of animals, including dogs, thus reflecting the moral panic that women were being corrupted by the Devil during this period (Oldridge 2005, 80; Salisbury 1994, 98).

The Noble Savage

Mandeville's *Travels* was the most popular travel tale in early modern Europe. Although much of Mandeville's tale can safely be regarded as a work of fiction today, this was not the case at the time of publication (Tzanaki 2003, 273). It became an important text for geographers and explorers with Christopher Columbus most likely influenced by Mandeville while looking for the riches of Asia (ibid., 269). Illustrated in Anton Sorg's 1481 German edition of the text is a fierce looking dog-headed man with large fangs, naked notwithstanding a cloth covering his genitals with pectoral muscles exposed, armed with spear and shield that portrayed the image of a serpent-dragon (fig. 6). Just as the club was used to illustrate the lack of sophisticated weapons, so too was the spear that was regularly used to distinguish non-Europeans in early modern representations.⁵

Mandeville described the cynocephali as rational and stressed their piousness, despite the alleged fact that they ate those captured through battle (Mandeville 2011, 121). The cynocephali of Mandeville worshipped the ox as their god. They wore a gold or silver ox on their head as a sign of their devotion. He also described their

⁵ See for example the title page of Hans Weigel. 1577. *Habitus praecipuorum populorum, tam virorum quam foeminarum Singulari arte depicti*. Nuremberg: Weigel. Illustrated in Smith 2014, 127, 128.

pious king who said three hundred prayers each day and wore a ruby around his neck. The ruby marked his leadership, as only with it would others accept him as king (ibid., 67). The ruby served as a sign of the king's strength, as no one was able to rob him of it to take his place. Their land was also safe to travel through since there was no thievery under the leadership and justice of their king. The description of rational and pious dog-heads must have created an uncomfortable realisation of their humanity for the early modern audience. However, these descriptions by Mandeville of just and civilised cynocephali lie in contrast to its illustration.



Fig. 6. Artist Unknown, illustrated in John Mandeville's *Das buch der ritters herr hannsen von monte villa*, trans. Michel Velser, Augsburg: Anton Sorg, 1481, 62 Munich, Bayerische StaatsBibliothek.

Mandeville's *Travels* was written in the tradition of Christianising 'primitive' pagans, including the dog-headed race. For example, in the mid-ninth century, the monk Ratramnus of Corbie (d. c.870) wrote a letter to the German missionary Rimbert of Hamburg-Bremen (830-888), in response to the question of preaching Christianity to cynocephali that he frequently spotted in Scandinavia in his *Epistola de Cynocephalis* ('Letter Concerning the Doghead') (Steel 2012, 268; Orchard 2003, 17 note 97; Lozovsky 2009, 320). While Ratramnus described them as more animal than man, as their heads point to the ground rather than the heavens like man, Rimbert described them as exhibiting human reason. For this, Rimbert cited their modesty by wearing clothes, as well as their living in villages and farming; therefore, he believed they were more man than animal (Friedman 1981, 188). He also recounted a cynocephalus who was christened with the name Christopher, who was revered as a saint from late antiquity in predominately Byzantine art (Steel 2012, 268; Orchard 2003, 17 note 97; Lozovsky 2009, 320). Ratramnus consequently concluded that the dog-heads had potential for humanity and should be converted to Christianity (Palmer 2014, 183). Mandeville, highlighting the piousness of the cynocephali, likewise illustrated their potential to be Christianised.

The account of the dog-headed Christopher was likely derived from the apocryphal stories of the apostles Andrew and Bartholomew, sent on a mission by Christ to Parthia (modern day Iran), whose first meeting with the dog-faced cannibal was remarkably similar (Friedman 1981, 74):

Now his appearance was exceedingly terrible. He was four cubits in height [1.8m], and his face was like unto the face of a great dog and his eyes were like unto lamps of fire which burn brightly, and his teeth were like unto the tusks of wild boar, or the teeth of a lion, and the nails of his hands were like unto curved reaping hooks, and the nails of his toes were like unto the claws of a lion, and the hair of his head came

down over his arms like unto the mane of a lion, and his whole appearance was awful and terrifying (Budge 2012, 173-74; fol. 184a, col.2).

The two apostles laid their hands upon the dog-headed man and prayed the beast out of him saying: ‘In the Name of the Lord JESUS CHRIST, let the nature of the wild beast remove itself from thee, and let the nature of the children of men return unto thee’, and he became gentle as a lamb (Budge 2012, 179; fol. 186b, col. 2). This account underscores the cynocephali’s bestial appearance and nature as having been linked to the lack of Christian faith and demonstrates the civilising nature of Christianity as it further described that ‘he was rejoicing and was glad because he had learned to know the right faith’ (ibid., 173; fol. 184a, col.2). As this tale suggests, there was a long tradition that associated bestial appearance and behaviour to the non-Christian Other.

Further distancing itself from other representations of cynocephali during the German Renaissance, the cynocephalus portrayed in Mandeville’s 1481 Augsburg edition of *Travels* is depicted not in the distant landscape, but before a plinth with a sculpture of an ox, a mark of civilisation. As this image was created before the onset of the Protestant Reformation, it is worth inquiring what was thought of this sign of idolatry. After all, it is plainly stated in several instances in the Bible that one should not create or worship idols (e.g. Leviticus 19.4, 26.1). The production of cult statues was halted in early Christianity for fear of idolatry, but returned during the twelfth century, before their decline during the Protestant Reformation (Gaudio 2008, 124). However, despite the plethora of religious art during the pre-Reformation period, they did not completely lose the taint of suspected idolatry (Kamerick 2002, 1, 5).

The serpent-dragon or lindworm upon the cynocephalus’ shield suggests the worshipping of false idols as it is a symbol of evil and the Devil and was frequently used to depict the Antichrist (Hall 2008, 294). The text does not associate the

cynocephalus with the serpent-dragon and could instead be an addition by the artist to reflect society at the time it was made; a society which sought to demonise the Other in European culture, despite the humanising treatment in the textual source of the cynocephali by Mandeville. However, the dragon and lindworm were also commonly used in heraldry. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472-1553), for example, used a winged-serpent as part of his signature emblem in prints (Moser 2005, 40). The winged-serpent was illustrated with a ring in its mouth, which represented eternal life in classical mythology (Ozment 2011, 70). While the serpent-dragon on the shield of the cynocephalus could similarly be used in the same vein, it had also been used as an iconographical device to demonise an opposing enemy in battle (Strickland 2003, 181).

The Face of Evil: Enemies of Christ

Mandeville's story of the dog-headed ox worshippers has been shown to be a composite of different stories from Marco Polo. These include the great rubies owned by the King of Ceylon (Sri Lanka) and the head of an ox as an idol in 'Manzi' and 'Cathay' (north and south China) (Marco Polo 1871, 256, 208; Bennett 1954, 67). The ox on the pedestal further resembles the golden calf worshipped by Israelites in Exodus 22. Christian writers have often used this story in the Bible to challenge the competing faith by illustrating that Jews did not have a true covenant with God and showing the ingrained depravity of the Jewish people (Alexander 2005, 170). Even Mandeville, who appears to show tolerance of the cynocephali's faith, did not demonstrate the same for Jews, whom he demonised and held responsible for the killing of Christ, and made claims of their attempts to kill all of Christendom (Mandeville 2011, 50, 118, 159). Mandeville must have been aware of the association of the ox with the sin of the Jews as well as with heretics and the Devil more

generally (Cohen 2008, 220). Regardless, the worship of a domesticated animal used widely in agricultural production across Europe would have been deemed repugnant to its European audience (Pascua 2011, 90). Furthermore, at a time when showing too much affection for an animal was frowned upon, worshipping one as a deity was worse (van Groesen 2007, 126).

Jews were also referred to as dogs by medieval churchmen and were depicted with dog-heads before Christ in the ninth-century illuminated manuscript, *Chludov Psalter*, for example (Strickland 2003, 160).⁶ This association was derived from the New Testament that used dogs as a metaphor for Jews in Matthew 15.26. Jews were further associated with the monstrous races from having lived outside cities, their strange dress and diet, incomprehensible speech (Hebrew), and the belief of their physical deformity of a concealed tail, horns and a hook nose (Hassig 1999, 32). The relationship between the cynocephali and Jews was also based on the shared belief in their practice of cannibalism (Gow 1995, 49). Their humanity was further questioned for rejecting Christ as it was thought this revealed their irrationality (Stow 2006, 9). As proclaimed by the French abbott, Peter the Venerable of Cluny (1092-1156): ‘Surely I do not know whether a Jew, who does not submit to human reason nor acquiesce to proof-texts that are both divine and his own, is a human’ (Peter the Venerable 2013, 123). Peter further repeatedly called Jews dogs in his *Adversus Iudeorum inveteratam duritiem* (‘Against the Inveterate Obduracy of the Jews’). During the thirteenth century, it was feared that they were in alliance with the Mongols to exact revenge on their Christian enemies (Jackson 2005, 143). Martin Luther also conveyed the threat of an alliance between European Jews and the Ottoman Turks, a fear dating back to the eleventh century that resulted in a massacre

⁶ See for example Unknown Artist, *Christ Surrounded by Dogs*, (c. 950, illuminated manuscript, *Chludov Psalter*, f.19v, Moscow, State Historical Museum), illustrated in Hassig 1999, 43.

of Jews along the Rhineland and other parts of Europe (Luther 1818, 448; Richards 1991, 90). This alliance again associated them with the monstrous races of the East. The 'Revolutionary of the Upper Rhine' also stated that Alexander the Great drove the Jews up into the mountains, thereby further associating them with the notion of Gog and Magog (Strauss 1971, 239). In this way, the cynocephali and Jews were the embodiment of sin and the enemies of Christ. As a result, the image of the cynocephalus worshipping an ox recalled the corrupted Israelites worshipping a golden calf. This print would have served as a warning to those who were tempted from the 'one true' God at a time when many Jews were being expelled from German cities (Boes 2007, 93).

Apocalyptic Warnings and the Corruption of Man

During the German Reformation, it was not uncommon to see book illustrations of monstrous births resembling a human-animal composite. While some monstrous births were represented with the head of a dog like the cynocephali, some were also inverted to have the legs and tail of canines, with a body and head of a human. An example of this was illustrated in a chronicle published by Johann Wolf (1537-1600) in 1600, entitled *Lectio-num memorabilium et reconditarum* ('Memorable and Recondite Readings'). Among its images was a monstrous birth of a half-human, half-canine hybrid, with a human head and torso and hairy canine legs and tail, framed like an ethnographic portrait (fig. 7). The image accompanied a story of a woman in the year 1452 who was allegedly impregnated by a dog, which resulted in the hybrid who was sent to the pope to be exonerated for the sins of the mother (Holländer 1921, 308-09). Miraculous stories of monstrous births who became completely normal once baptised also existed, but there is no indication that this occurred in Wolf's account (Jackson 2005, 172). Instead, this monstrous birth

functioned as a reminder of the sin it was conceived in. As stated in Leviticus 18.23, bestiality was a sin. The depravity of mixing species was further indicated in Leviticus 19.19: 'Do not mate different kinds of animals. Do not plant your field with two kinds of seeds'. This doctrine was used to highlight that animals were quantifiably different from humans by defining Christian sexuality within the strict hierarchical system of man and beast (Salisbury 1994, 87-88).



Fig. 7. Artist Unknown in Johann Wolf, *Lectionum memorabilium and econditarum*, Lauingen, 1600, 911, Woodcut.

However, the fact that humans and animals were believed to produce offspring undermined this fundamental difference. Such stories of mothers giving birth to animals or hybrids were widely traded without question. For example, a broadside published in Strasbourg in 1575 depicted a Jewish mother who had given birth to two

sows. The Jews were also likened to sows and therefore the woman who had given birth to them represented the inner bestial nature of the Jews (Soergel 1998, 138-39).⁷ In this way, the immediate sin of a monstrous birth could be the result of the internal emotions, beliefs and desires of the woman herself leading to a physical imprint of their deformation on the unborn child (Crawford 2005, 18-19). In consequence, these monstrous births reflect the fear of the inner animal that can lie within us all. Like St. Christopher discussed above, his wild appearance was a temporary state. Once he had come to know the right God, he lost his wildness and ferocious exterior. These stories and visual culture reveal that all of humanity had a potential to become like animals. Turning away from God and moving away from the civilising influence of the city had the power to turn man into a beast.

Not only could this print serve as a warning against bestiality, it could also pose as a caution against mixing with other races or religions. As aforementioned, the mating of women with dogs was thought to result in the monstrous races. In Renaissance Europe, sexual intercourse with Jews was equated with bestiality as they were regarded as a race of dogs (Stow 2006, 18-19). Intermarriage between Jews and Christians was also condemned at the 538 Council of Orléans (Richards 1991, 89). The image of the monstrous birth was also created at the height of the witch craze. As discussed above, there was a fear of women mating with the Devil in the form of a dog. Hence, bestiality, witchcraft and the Devil were intrinsically linked. Turning away from the Christian God would turn man into a beast. This could have also been the case with Christians who were in interfaith relationships. Not only was religion at the heart of this, but German nationalism. A romanticised vision of German heritage and its superiority was partly due to the rediscovery of the history of the Germanic

⁷ *Ain Gewisse Wunderzeitung von ainer Schwageren Judin zu Binzwangen vir meil von Augspurg*, (Strasbourg, 1575), illustrated in Soergel 1998, 139.

people in *Germania* by Cornelius Tacitus (56 – 117 A.D.) (Krebs 2011, 17; Hughes 1992, 20). They were described by the Roman historian as ‘unique, pure, and unlike any other’ as they had not been ‘contaminated by intermarriage’ (Tacitus 1999, 39). As a result, marrying an outsider would have not only been an affront to God, but to German nationalism. Furthermore, the monstrous birth’s portrayal in the pastoral landscape and his unclothed body also highlights that he is separated from civilisation like the cynocephali. The text is followed by a description of a meteorite the following year serving as an omen, emphasising the role of the monstrous birth as a warning.

Conclusion

These canine-human hybrid creatures not only came to represent the foreign Other from their mythological origins in antiquity, their physical characteristics were used to both demonise and socially marginalise religious and foreign Others from the Western ‘civilised’ world and Christian realm. The portrayal of these creatures reflected the fear of the degeneration of society at a time of moral reform and strong adherence to orthodox religion. Considering their distant location, it is doubtful that these monstrosities were especially feared in and of themselves. Instead, they became the embodiment of real social and political fears including the fear of the expanding Ottoman Empire and the Jewish Diaspora more closely located at home. They also highlighted the fear and apprehension of an inevitable apocalypse, because they brought with them competing religious beliefs and false prophets. In addition, the cynocephali were read as signs or portents in nature itself. They signified humanity’s reduction to its most bestial and primitive forms for those who did not follow the one true prophet of Christ. Therefore, evil-doers were easily recognisable and the cynocephali illustrated the sin of defying God. Where physical deformity had long

been associated with danger and sin, human-animal hybrids reflected the greatest perversion of God's creation (Strickland 2003, 66, 65).

Associating the cynocephali with foreigners also helped reinforce a romanticised vision of German heritage, and its superiority, thanks to the region's growing national sentiment. By portraying foreign and religious Others with the heads of dogs, they were shown to be less than human and accordingly lower in a hierarchical view of different people in the world. They showed the glory of Germany's own civilisation in comparison, and in turn created greater intolerance of the Other. The prints allowed its Christian audience to unite in their repugnance of foreigners' heathen and demon worship. In portraying the Other with the heads of dogs, the pervasive dog origin stories that existed in many cultures across the world were used against the very people they were derived from.

As people did not think in terms of 'race' during the Renaissance, they thought in terms of development. In turn, there was a drive to maintain strict boundaries within this hierarchical world view, where tales of bestiality served to warn against intermingling with different people deemed Other, which were thought to be the cause of hybrids. This was not only thought to be the result of bestiality as described in Johann Wolf's chronicle, but of women mating with different races, as seen in the tales of Amazonian women and in Martin Waldseemüller's and Lorenz Fries' sources. While these images show the superiority of Christians, and more specifically German Christians' special place with God and in the world, they also reveal their insecurity. This insecurity was fuelled by the long history of being regarded as barbarians by Rome (Stadtwald 1996, 61).

As all the prints investigated in this paper were originally book and map illustrations, their mode of dissemination contrasted with the 'tabloid' nature of pamphlets during the Renaissance. These works also cited ancient authorities such as

Pliny to further attest the authenticity of the authors' claims. Since the monstrosities were depicted in historical chronicles and other sources by authors who held respected positions in society, it would have helped to further serve the Reformation and social reform as the images would have been used as evidence for the degeneration of civilisation. As most of the prints in this paper were illustrated in textual sources, their primary audience would have been the educated classes. They were packaged as analytical 'scientific' accounts, but also offered entertainment as well as moral guidance, allowing the monstrosities to appeal to large segments of society. Although there is no doubt that scepticism existed regarding the cynocephali, with some authors including the monstrous races to appeal to their buying audience, they were treated as if they should be taken as serious and factual accounts, since they stressed facts over explicit moral persuasion. The prints nonetheless contributed to and reinforced the culture of fear of foreign and religious Others in the German Renaissance.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. Lisa Mansfield, and fellow colleagues and friends Nerina Dunt, Matthew Gray, Andy Smith, and Luke Stange for reading and providing feedback on the preparation of this manuscript. This gratitude is further extended to the anonymous reviewer and the editor of this special issue, Sune Borkfelt, for their advice and guidance.

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American Bully: Fear, Paradox, and the New Family Dog

Rachel Levine and Justyna Poray-Wybranowska

Reviled, Pit Bulls have become representative. There is no other dog that figures as often in the national narrative—no other dog as vilified on the evening news, no other dog as defended on television programs, no other dog as mythologized by both its enemies and its advocates, no other dog as discriminated against, no other dog as wantonly bred, no other dog as frequently abused, no other dog as promiscuously abandoned, no other dog as likely to end up in an animal shelter, no other dog as likely to be rescued, no other dog as likely to be killed. In a way, the Pit Bull has become the *only* American dog. [...] We have always counted on our dogs to tell us who we are, but what Pit Bulls tell us is that who we think we are is increasingly at odds with what we've turned out to be (Junod 2014).

In “The State of the American Dog,” Tom Junod (2014) probes how it is that the United States – a country with a long history of concern for animal protection and a special fondness for the domestic dog – has come to so despise a broad category of dogs that its animal welfare services euthanize upwards of 3,000 ‘pit bulls’ *each day*.¹ Junod’s editorial contributes to a growing conversation about American companion animals and, more specifically, the history and present place of pit bull-type dogs in

¹ The designation ‘pit bull (also written as ‘pitbull’ or ‘Pit Bull’) refers not to a specific breed, but rather to a classification; it is used to indicate a body type shared by several different dog breeds and mixes thereof, including primarily the American Pit Bull terrier, the American Staffordshire terrier, and the Staffordshire Bull Terrier. The category is sometimes extended to include the American Bulldog and the Bull Terrier. In this article, we use *pit bull* to refer to this broad category of dogs; names of officially recognized breeds are capitalized.

the American cultural landscape. In recent years, scholars in veterinary medicine and behaviour, social and political sciences, history, and critical race and gender studies have weighed in on the multiple paradoxes and ambiguities that define life for pit bulls and their people. The fact that the pit bull – long featured and guaranteed to provoke controversy in glossy magazines, newspapers, TV news, and social media alike – has garnered attention from academics indicates a growing scholarly acknowledgement that much like the contested terrains of race, gender, and sexuality, the non-human, too, is culturally constructed.



Left: Fig. 1. An American Pit Bull Terrier (Nicolas 2006). **Middle:** Fig. 2. An American Staffordshire Terrier (Demon975 2012). **Right:** Fig. 3. A Staffordshire Bull Terrier (Sannse 2006). Note: these are public domain images from Wikipedia, so the genetic background of these dogs is not confirmed. We contacted both the American Kennel Club and the United Kennel Club for permission to feature their breed standards in this article, and both kennel clubs declined our request. Images of dogs that represent the standards for these three ‘pit bull’ breeds can be found online through <http://www.akc.org/> and <http://www.ukcdogs.com>.

We arrived at our research with an interest in understanding how American pit bull breeders address the widespread view that these dogs are inherently vicious and therefore dangerous. We were also interested in understanding how this market is modeled given the reality that pit bulls are, in many instances, illegal. Pit bulls are the dogs most often surrendered to and euthanized by American animal shelters: they are

the commodities of a production scale so large that the market has been flooded and supply far exceeds demand. Why do people continue to produce pit bulls given the fate that this type of dog is likely to encounter?



Fig. 4. A series of American Bullies credited as foundational to the Kinneman Kennels American Bully breeding program (Kinneman 2014b, reproduced with permission).

An analysis of our primary data (the arena of online dog sales) revealed that far dwarfing the Internet presence of pit bull breeders are breeders of something that

resembles and is sometimes referred to as a pit bull, but that in many apparent ways is *not*: the American Bully. Pit bulls are a category of dogs that can be visually identified by a muscled frame, a wide head and jaw, and tight skin, among other features, and American Bullies look to have these very qualities in exponential form. Resembling caricatures of an anxious public's imagined fear object, they are hugely muscled from their large skulls to their hind legs, with very broad jaws (see fig. 4). Already wondering how breeders could successfully market a demonized breed type, we were puzzled to see that many people were very purposefully producing dogs that embodied the most exaggerated version of this dog type's features.

We read this breeding program as a self-conscious, highly political response to a widespread instance of discrimination based on physiological markers – both of pit bulls and the people with whom they are typically associated. We therefore ask: How does the American Bully, as a recognizable animal body type, help to narrate a longer history of America's fraught relationship with criminality, race politics, and citizenship? How does the American Bully suggest a more particular story about America's ambivalent valuation of the dog as both family member and property, and how does this story play out in quite historically distinct ways along race and class lines? The manipulation of the pit bull body into the American Bully offers an important set of insights for understanding how human-dog relationships can negotiate traditional American values and cultural forms. More specifically, these breeding programs can index new articulations of identity for those people who have long been connected to the dogs' vilification.

There is an established body of scholarship on the American pit bull. A notable proportion of this work connects pit bull ownership to marginalized communities of color and examines the co-production of both the dogs' and the humans' outsider status, often via physiognomic understandings of their perceived

criminal pathology. We expand this discussion in a few specific ways. We locate the vilification of the pit bull within a larger account of the changing location of perceived threat to American security. When the War on Drugs replaced foreign military operations as the greatest source of fear for the American people, and drug-involved Black Americans replaced foreign nations as ‘public enemy number one,’ so too did the homebred pit bull replace the German breeds as the most feared type of dog. In our treatment of the evolving relationship between the pit bull and racialized Americans, we analyze how breeders, rather than lawmakers, pit bull advocates, or opponents, frame the dog’s relationship to American citizenship and values. Others have looked closely at the fact that pit bulls evade categories (Junod 2014; Irwin 2012; Delisle 2007). We examine this phenomenon and contend that American Bully breeders have capitalized on this very ambiguity to carefully carve out a delineated category of the pit bull dog. In the following pages, we trace how the pit bull became the American Bully through shifting registers of fear and Otherness. In doing so, we show how the ideological anchoring of marginalized Americans to perceived regimes of violence and disorder has, in effect, invited these same populations to participate in the discursive and material association of animal bodies and American citizenship. American Bully breeders use registers of home and family to draw the pit bull into American social order.

Legislating Uncertainty

‘Pit bull’ is employed as a blanket term for any dog that shares physical traits with a cluster of officially recognized, short-coated, game-bred terrier dogs: the American Pit Bull terrier, the American Staffordshire terrier, the Staffordshire Bull terrier. The term is sometimes also extended to include other similarly bodied breeds, and necessarily includes mixed-breed dogs resembling any of the above. The definition of

what constitutes a pit bull, Junod explains, is “so elastic and encompassing” that communities that want to ban ‘pit bulls’ must do so by banning all dogs that have any physical characteristics of the above breeds (Junod 2014). The city of Denver’s bylaw, for example, states:

Pit bull breeds (American Pit Bull Terrier, American Staffordshire Terrier, or Staffordshire Bull Terrier) are banned in the City and County of Denver. Pit bull type dogs are defined as any dog displaying the majority of physical traits of any one or more of the above breeds, or any dog exhibiting those distinguishing (physical) characteristics, which substantially conform to the standards established by American Kennel Club or United Kennel Club (City and County of Denver 2016).²

What is often referred to as Breed Specific Legislation (BSL) might thus be better understood as Body Specific Legislation. Breed-specific bylaws targeting pit bulls encompass all dogs that reverberate with *the image* of the pit bull to which the public is accustomed. By virtue of this, these bylaws formally entrench public misunderstanding. Certain canine features become perceivable as frightening because they are thought to be ‘pit bull’ features and therefore indices of immanent threat: what is frightening becomes illegal, and what is illegal is frightening. The pit bull is an example of confirmation bias: *pit bulls are scary dogs, and so scary dogs must be pit bulls*.

Vague definitions of the pit bull have material consequences for dogs and their owners (see Irwin 2012 for an extended discussion of this). Broad definitions permit local animal services to seize and euthanize great numbers of dogs that can be argued to look like the above listed breeds, and defending or protecting a dog labeled as a pit bull can require significant personal and economic resources on the part of

² Breed-specific bans in many other American cities rely on similarly broad definitions. Miami’s breed-specific legislation, for only one example, qualifies a pit bull as “any dog that exhibits those distinguishing characteristics” of the American Pit Bull Terrier and the American Staffordshire Terrier (Miami – Dade County, Florida 2016).

owners. A 2006 piece in the *New Yorker* titled “Troublemakers: What Pit Bulls Can Teach Us about Profiling” specifically makes the connection between the targeting of pit bull-looking dogs, with the aim of reducing dog bites, and racially-targeted searches at airport security check points. The article concludes that both forms of visual profiling are ultimately ineffective sole methods of predicting or reducing potential threat (Gladwell 2006).³

Though the pit bull is the present canine focus of American fear and anxiety, it joins a storied list of dog breeds that have, for varying periods of time, held this status. In the 1880s, it was the Bloodhound. Bloodhounds were most feared because they were used in Tom Shows (staged adaptations of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*). These shows drew audiences by featuring “fierce Siberian Bloodhounds” on stage to pursue a run-away slave (Delisle 2007, 29). The dogs’ performances were so impressively fearsome that American audiences became convinced of the Bloodhound’s inherent ferocity. After WWI, the German Shepherd – used commonly for policing, guarding, and personal protection – replaced the Bloodhound as the most feared breed (ibid., 69, 74, 85). Shortly after WWII broke out, however, the American public became

³ Historians generally agree that the breeds comprising the pit bull category share a common link to dogs that were used for the sport of bull baiting in nineteenth-century England (American Kennel Club 2016a; American Kennel Club 2016b; Huemer 2000, 32). Drawing connections between a dog’s physical appearance and its behavior has some degree of value, since dog breeds were originally developed with specific utilitarian goals in mind – herding dogs (collies and shepherds), for example, share nipping tendencies which stem from the fact that they have been bred for the specific purpose of keeping herds of cattle together by nipping at them – but to attempt to deduce aggression from a dog’s size or physical characteristics alone is to make a huge leap that cannot be rationalized through genetic makeup. Several studies conducted by veterinary journals and animal behavior specialists have shown that the pit bull’s enduring reputation for genetically programmed ferocity is unsupported. In 2014, the American Veterinary Medical Association published a paper stating that “controlled studies have not identified this breed group [the pit bull] as disproportionately dangerous” and that breed-specific dog bans are an ineffective way of attempting to decrease dog-bite incidents (American Veterinary Medical Association 2014, 2). Canine aggression, the paper concluded, rather than being inherent in the dog’s genetic material, has a great deal more to do with socialization and environment (see also National Canine Research Council 2015; Perez-Guisado and Munoz-Serrano 2009).

fixated on another ‘dangerous’ German breed: the Doberman Pinscher. Depicted in American media as working alongside Nazi SS guards in concentration camps, the Doberman Pinscher was also thought to exist in opposition to American values. The dog’s use in this abhorrent work became a stain on its presumed moral integrity; the Doberman became “almost universally known as a vicious, heartless, demon dog” (ibid., 81). The Doberman’s link to Nazi Germany endured for decades (ibid., 80). By the late 1970s, though, the fear surrounding German Shepherds and Doberman Pinschers had calmed down, and people seeking intimidating-looking, strong working dogs turned to Rottweilers (yet another German working breed) and pit bulls.

Since the 1980s, well into the 1990s and continuing still, pit bull-type dogs have held the ‘demon dog’ title (ibid., 90). It is critical to note that the fear of pit bulls did *not* stem from a fear of any specific breed that falls under the pit bull umbrella, e.g. Staffordshire Bull Terriers. The boundaries around this fear object were necessarily indefinite and indeterminate from its inception.

Before the pit bull was a villain, it was a hero. In the early 1900s, pit bull-type dogs were depicted by media and in popular culture as the “all-American family pet” (Kim 2015, 67). Pit bull-type dogs were also used as a symbol of patriotism, and appeared on many American propaganda posters wearing the stars and stripes. Pit bulls accompanied troops into battle during World Wars I and II, and served as companions and guard dogs to wounded soldiers (Delisle 2007, xv). One pit bull named Stubby participated in seventeen battles. He was promoted to the rank of Sergeant, and was awarded a Purple Heart for his bravery (ibid., 71). A propaganda poster from 1915 (fig. 5) depicts the dogs of rival nations dressed in their national

military uniforms (“War Dogs: Pit Bulls in the Military” 2012).⁴ In the center is the pit bull, representing the USA, with a caption that reads: “I’m neutral but not afraid of any of them.” Using the pit bull as stand-in for national character at a time of hyper-patriotism meant the dog had enough cultural recognition to easily embody the master narrative of what it meant for Americans to be members of a nation at war. To characterize its own canine figurehead as even-tempered and courageous – *not* as superlatively hostile or combative – indicates that the country was so certain of the pit bull’s admirable deportment that it was reasonable and common sense to use the dog as a stand-in to make the same claim of itself.



Fig. 5. WWI propaganda poster (1915) (“War Dogs: Pit Bulls in the Military” 2012).

The pit bull is the first American dog, rather than a foreign breed, to occupy the status of canine outcast. It is also the first instance of a constellation of phenotypes, rather

⁴ Important to note is that the small Dachshund is used to portray Germany, and not the fearsome Doberman. Note, too, that England is not associated with its Staffordshire Bull Terrier – a ‘pit bull’ type dog.

than behavioral breed traits, being the determining factors for vilification. Despite its history as hero and patriot, the pit bull quickly became the target of prejudice in the 1970s. This status has endured for nearly half a century (Delisle 2007, xvii).

How and why did America turn on its favourite dog? The shift from fearing a delineated foreign threat to fearing the danger within corresponds with a larger move away from a nation united against external assailants, to a class-fragmented society that turned on the efforts of the powerful to control those citizens understood to be corrupted, degenerate, and debauched. The new image of the pit bull frames a new image of America. The pit bull's new reputation was bred by America's new war: the War on Drugs.

Post-War Poverty and Public Enemy Number One

The American War on Drugs was declared in 1971 and saw the apex of its early laws and policies in the 1980s, and, through law and policy, continues today. This 'war' grew out of the country's changing relationship with its underclass and military veterans – by the 1970s, increasingly overlapping demographics.

During periods of militarization, lower class, poor, and even homeless Americans were drafted to participate in nation-building industry, and heralded as heroes for defending their country on the frontlines. Americans of all racial backgrounds were recruited in large numbers, though the prototypical *image* of the American war hero was decidedly White. The end of WWII saw the return of vast numbers of veterans of which many had new and significant impairments. This demographic trend continued as a result of foreign military action into the 1970s. Between 1940 and 1980, the number of homeless, disabled, and deeply poor Americans exploded, producing increasing demands for social services (Howard 2013, 15, 71, 119, 220). Formerly war heroes, the veterans who largely composed the

mushrooming American underclass were now seen as degenerates and burdens on the public purse. The soldiers' public image shift from hero to hoodlum spelled out the beginning of problems for the dogs that had once been known as American war heroes as well. The pit bull's steadfastness and loyal service to its master were the traits that led to its celebration as patriot, but much like the former soldiers and factory workers who were now the jobless and destitute, these dogs no longer fulfilled an ideological public service.

In August 1969, shortly before Richard Nixon was elected president, a urinalysis of incoming inmates at D.C. jails found that 44% of inmates tested positive for heroin – the drug of common choice for down-and-out Vietnam veterans (“Thirty Years of America's Drug War: A Chronology” 2014). These findings were foundational to a shift in American governance that would target the drug users and dealers who were often members of the new poor, former-military class. Nixon had run as a social conservative and painted himself as the candidate of those people who “obey the law, pay their taxes, go to church...” His mandate was to be tough on “crime and disorder” (Yogman 1968, 1). Nixon cast the drug addict not as someone to be supported out of addiction, but rather as someone who “need[ed] to be *contained* before he can do any additional harm” (Dufton 2012). Nixon thus effectively designed the image of the drug user to be “one of a dangerous and anarchic threat to American civilization” (ibid.). His rhetoric centered on the view that drugs posed a threat to America's archetypal middle class family, pressing the point that drug addiction “destroys lives, destroys families, and destroys communities” (Nixon 1971a). Nixon called drug users and sellers “criminals attacking the moral fiber of the nation, [...] who deserved only incarceration and punishment” (Nixon 1971b). Such was the official state and federal attitude with regards to the management and punishment of drug offences.

Nixon's 'war' lost some steam during Democrat Jimmy Carter's presidency, but was renewed with the election of Republican Ronald Reagan. At the end of Reagan's first term in 1985, public anxiety around drugs was still quite minor: only about 6% of polled Americans saw drugs as an issue of national concern. By the end of his second term (1989) that number climbed to 64%, representing "one of the most intense fixations by the American public on any issue in polling history" (Drug Policy Alliance 2016). Over a very short period of time, drugs went from being viewed as a minor issue to being seen by the majority of the public as an urgent threat to the American way of life.

Segregation, Panic, and (Dis)order

Government responded to new poverty with 700,000 units of public housing across America (Goering, Kamely, and Richardson 1997). For many decades, public housing operators had enforced racial/racist tenancing policies which sought to house Blacks in all-Black projects near historically Black neighborhoods, thus entrenching inferior living conditions and both deepening and expanding the scope of existing racialized poverty (Hirsch 1983). In 1968, the Fair Housing Act formally acknowledged the continuing segregation of Black Americans through discriminatory housing access, but the structure of a segregated society had been laid. The growth of all-Black neighborhoods engendered occupants' relationships to community as based in shared misfortune and struggle (Hayashi 2014, 1209; Rossi 1991, 36-40).

In the 1970s, big cities began seeing waves of gentrification due to the growing post-industrial service economy. Traditional urban ghettos and their residents were now coming into close and regular contact with the White middle class, and testing the endurance of spatialized racial distinction. In his 1971 speech Nixon proclaimed, "America's public enemy number one [...] is drug abuse. In order

to fight and defeat this enemy, it is necessary to wage a new, all-out offensive” (Sharp 1994). In so saying, Nixon fortified weakening boundaries by installing an ideological divide between ‘*the public*’ and its enemy. This conceptual wall had strong lasting power.

Race has played a significant role in configuring American street publics, and has led to a common view of ‘public space’ as that which excludes certain raced bodies. A similar logic has operated in the widespread fear of pit bulls, which have been understood as a specific threat and menace by way of their unwelcome intrusion in an imagined ideal America where safety and ‘niceness’ is mapped by Whiteness (see Low 2009). In other words, the fear of the pit bull indexes a greater cultural logic wherein disorder and impurity cause the ultimate perceived danger. The pit bull label seeks to contain possibly dangerous dogs, but the multiple conflicts and contradictions within the category in effect *further* human insecurity by manifesting the weakness of human concepts and ordering devices (see Douglas 1966). The pit bull as it is presently conceived is not merely threatening because of its own presumed qualities, but because its label serves as a reminder of the deficiency of American society’s attempt to categorize its Others. It is the discursive production of the pit bull, necessarily full of ambiguity and barely contained by messy edges, which does the lion’s share of amplifying public panic surrounding dog bodies.

Mary Douglas’ theorem is useful for coupling the rejection of American Blacks with the denunciation of pit bulls. For Douglas, *space* is a critical mechanism for defining social pollution. In a context of established prejudice, pit bull-looking dogs *become* vicious when placed outside of their symbolic order – e.g. in proximity to the White middle-class family. Conversely, they are minimally dangerous when out of this ‘public’ view in a racially segregated housing project. It is perceived intrusion that makes the pit bull – already nebulous of category, and thus always

teetering on the brink of disorder – into “matter out of place” (Douglas 1966, 48). Of course, the violation of an unstable boundary such as the precise edges of a racialized neighbourhood in a changing city, or the precise genetic lines of a dog category created from corporeal ambiguity, is practically given. Nevertheless, such violations play an important role in American culture. By pronouncing the series of classifications that define daily life, they draw attention to the social need to keep bodies in place. Boundary keeping is thus a moral project, and the War on Drugs was a project in moral order, writ large.

“Wilding”: Pit Bulls and Racialized Crime

Throughout the 1980s, the media was transfixed with stories of youth crime, and doomsayer forecasts for future crime trends became regular features of news coverage (Pickett and Chiricos 2012, 676; see also Chiricos 1996 and Zimring 1998). Youth criminality was *overwhelmingly* attributed to Black youth, and reporting trends reflected the studied view that “delinquents are generally Black and that victims of violent crimes tend to be White” (Pickett and Chiricos 2012, 676; see also Feld 1999).

We can read the criminalization of Black youth as an example of pollution that serves to re-announce the cultural value of order. Black youth crime was considered exceptionally dangerous to social order because for so long it had no designated regulating framework. The early Juvenile Justice System had been written exclusively for the purpose of the reform of Whites, and so without change to the justice system to confirm that Black youth – the “superpredator” of the moment – could be tolerably contained, dominant White culture would continue to panic over

these as-yet unfixed events (Pickett and Chiricos 2012, 676).⁵ By the 1990s, and mostly owing to public protest, adult courts and correctional facilities enforced the bulk of violent youth crime (ibid.). Segregation led to crime; crime provided the justification for segregation. This “circular causation” itself legitimized beliefs of racial difference and produced the secondary phenomena of confirmation (Galster 1999).

The connection between the drug dealer (the Anti-American person) and the fearsome pit bull (the Anti-American dog) is not merely a conjectural hypothesis based on temporal coincidence. The 1980s media both followed very similar reporting scripts when discussing the groups separately, and churned out many stories formally coupling racialized men and pit bulls in a criminal context (see Tarver 2013, 281; Huemer 2000; Applebome 1987; Sager 1987).

Delisle argues that newspaper reports on dog bites and fatal dog attacks in the 1980s demonstrate a significant shift in their *style* compared with the previous 150 years (Delisle 2007, xvii-xviii):

Prior to the 1980s, theories and myths about Doberman skull size and wild rumors about viciousness were not taken up by the newspaper media [...]. But, starting in the early 1980s, all of this would change. A new breed of dog would start to be found in attacks [...]. Not only would the newspapers emphasize breed above all other elements in dog attacks, but the media would print outrageous rumors, myths and theories about anatomy and temperament (ibid., 87).

The dog’s body was central to the story of its monstrosity. The notions of e.g. “locking jaws,” “extreme bite pressure,” and “imperviousness to pain” were understood as specific and unique to pit bull-type dogs (Delisle 2007, ix). It is

⁵ Black children were understood as too “developmentally stagnant, incorrigible, and undeserving” to be supported by the Juvenile Justice System’s mandate of youth rehabilitation (Pickett and Chiricos 2012, 676; see Nunn 2002; Soung 2011; Ward 2012).

impossible to know what the precise breed makeup of the dogs involved in these attacks actually *was*; however, it was in the same timeframe when dog attacks were connected to racialized violence that ‘pit bull’ entered the popular vernacular as a term to organize a very genetically diverse grouping of dogs.

Fire burst from its open mouth, its eyes glowed with a smouldering glare, its muzzle and hackles and dewlap were outlined in flickering flame. Never in the delirious dream of a disordered brain could anything more savage, more appalling, more hellish, be conceived than that dark form and savage face. It is as if the vicious hound of the Baskervilles that burst upon Sherlock Holmes out of the fog has returned to haunt the streets of America (Brand 1987).

The above quote from Brand opens one of two mass-circulated articles on pit bull dogs published on 27 July 1987. Brand’s article, “Time Bombs on Legs”, begins its discussion of “killer” dogs by painting this picture of a pit bull as an almost supernatural being with enormous capacity for terror and malice. Brand quickly moves to discussing a real event involving a “creature” and its “savaging” of an elderly woman (Brand 1987). That same day, the cover of *Sports Illustrated* was filled by a single close-up image of a dark brindle pit bull baring its teeth and snarling. The dog’s mouth is the focal point of the image, its black nose and lips creating a stark contrast to its sharp white teeth. The sole text on the magazine’s cover is, “BEWARE OF THIS DOG.”⁶ Though *Sports Illustrated*’s commentary on pit bulls features less provocative detailing of the dog’s body than *Time*’s (e.g. describing the dog as America’s “four-legged problem”), its cover employs the same registers of monstrosity and immanent threat to prepare the reader for a catalogue of vastly different dog-attack incidents across America which seem to share two key features: the reported attacker is a pit bull and its victims tend to be the most innocent

⁶ Our request to reproduce the magazine’s cover as an illustration for this article was unanswered.

members of society – “small children,” women, and seniors (Swift 1987). Both pieces authoritatively link pit bull-type dogs to human owners also understood to be programmed for violence, and Brand does it explicitly: “violence-prone owners are turning pit bulls into killers” (Brand 1987).

A study of *New York Times* articles published between 1987 and 2000 argued that pit bull owners, like drug dealers, have been “consistently portrayed [...] as thuggish and unsympathetic” by American media (Cohen and Richardson 2002). Perhaps unsurprisingly, it was in the late-1980s that journalists popularized the terms “wilding” and “wolfpack” when writing of gang behavior and organization, respectively, by Black and Latino youth (Welch, Price and Yankey 2002, 13-14). The terms are plainly racially coded: a 2002 analysis of the use of “wilding” in media reports shows that “all incidents labeled wilding [...] and in which race was mentioned” listed either Black or Latino males as suspects (Welch, Price and Yankey 2002, 7). Thus, while dogs became subject to the ill logics of race, young racialized men were referred to as if relatives of another species entirely – their ‘wilding’ akin to the animal “savaging” of the pit bull described by Brand (1987).

As panic surrounding both dog attacks and gang violence mounted in tandem, the media began covering news reports of police raids on dog fighting operations (Delisle 2007, 97). Dogfighting became criminalized in the late 1800s and is now a felony in all fifty states (Delisle 2007, 257). American Pit Bull terriers, and thus, ‘pit bulls,’ are bred from dogs once used for blood sports – long considered a socially deviant activity in American culture (Delisle 2007, 136; Kim 2015, 272). America has historically used the treatment of animals to mark both racial and national difference. Laws prohibiting cruelty to animals in America date back almost two hundred years, and are an important part of Western discourses of civilization, described by Davis as, “often tacitly embrac[ing] notions of the white man’s burden

as part of their call to educate and enlighten their brethren of color [...] with a gospel of kindness” (Davis 2013, 555; see also Deckha 2013, 518-519). Blood sports were considered at odds with the early twentieth-century American ideal of refined masculinity, and “cruelty” was used as a register by which to target “lower-class abuses in blood sports and industry” (Glick 2013, 643). There is not complete consensus on the origins of the pit bull’s pathology; it has been simultaneously portrayed as primordially evil and as the victim of primordially evil humans.

In 2007, the connection between race and the socially unacceptable mistreatment of animals grabbed national attention when NFL quarterback Michael Vick was sent to prison following evidence that he was fighting pit bulls and housing over fifty such dogs (Kim 2015, 255). The American press began singing a familiar refrain about race, poverty, and criminality (see for example Leitch 2011 and Florio 2010). Media pundits and a vocal public commenting on the Vick case made easy sense of the links between animal cruelty and Vick’s childhood in a poor, predominantly Black neighborhood. The dominant argument held that poor, racialized neighborhoods (“ghettoes”) desensitize children to violence (Glick 2013, 648).⁷ As put in no uncertain terms by Glick, the popular suggestion was “that all kids from such environments are somehow destined to string up dogs, drown them, strangle them with their bare hands, smash their heads into concrete floors, and electrocute them to death” (ibid.).

Vick’s legal team argued that dogfighting is a “culturally based predilection,” and so aligned their defense strategy with the beliefs presented above and thus the same racial logic that was earlier employed by White imperialists (Glick 2013, 640;

⁷ Glick makes a point to highlight the fact that “no significant research exists comparing animal fighting practices according to socioeconomic or geopolitical status. In fact, animal abuse is recurrently represented as “endemic to communities of color”, and as “aberrant and psychopathological” when it occurs among white people (Glick 2013 648; see also Deckha 2013, 517).

Kim 2015, 267). By playing into stereotypes about the racial basis for the (mis)treatment of animals, Vick's behavior was framed as pre-determined for someone from the socio-economic position to which he was born (Glick 2013, 640).

Once again, pit bulls were publically linked to American Black culture through the indictment of a criminal enterprise that was framed as expected given the race of the perpetrator. In this instance, Vick is the author of violence and whether or not the dogs are inherently dangerous falls to the wayside. Relatively, the dogs are victims; any acknowledgement of an inbred capacity for violence is not discussed in the context of Vick's intentional orchestration of violence. Here we begin our discussion of a very different articulation of the long-enduring association between Black America and the pit bull, and we continue with this theme of designing the dog with a certain agenda in mind. The following sections introduce and discuss the creation and success of the American Bully dog. We argue that the American Bully has been bred as a direct and self-conscious response to the decades-long co-persecution and pathologization of marginalized men and marginalized dogs.

Introducing the American Bully

In the late 1990s, a focused group of pit bull breeders began tailoring their dogs to what has ultimately become accepted as a new 'breed': the American Bully. Purebred dog breeding is a multimillion-dollar industry in the USA alone (Harrison 2008), and the explosion of online commerce in the early 2000s has made the Internet the primary site for the sale of carefully branded dogs today. We therefore turn to the way American Bullies are advertised on breeder websites and online forums to study the progression of how this new manifestation of pit bull is marketed to, and understood by, the public. Breeders and fanciers are using 'family' as an aesthetic

and rhetorical framework to contain the disorder that is intrinsic to ‘the pit bull.’ The family here serves as an ordering system to draw the pit bull into middle America.

We surveyed over fifty breeder websites that advertise the sale of American Bully puppies.⁸ With little exception, these online markets share certain crucial commonalities. First is their rhetoric of genetic superiority. Next is an insistence on the dogs’ docile character coupled with a visual emphasis on the dog’s exaggerated physique. This latter point also fits with the third characteristic: the look of the websites. *Overwhelmingly*, American Bully websites (those of breeders, but also those for fanciers, including forums and official web pages of fancier clubs) follow a similar and quite characteristic aesthetic model that reverberates with the common packaging of crime-themed action entertainment media.

Making an American Bully

In today’s American Bully circles, the most significant dispute moves around what constitutes the ‘true,’ ‘real,’ or ‘best’ iteration of body type and temperament – understood to be linked (as has historically been true for its pit bull predecessors), and discussed in greater depth in the next section. Great debate revolves around the relative value of those dogs that represent either the Gottiline [*sic*], or Razor’s Edge line of dogs. Although even pit bull lovers would be hard-pressed to distinguish between the Gottiline and Razor’s Edge dog types, fanciers generally seem to contend that Gottiline dogs are shorter, wider, and bulkier in type than dogs claimed to be bred from Razor’s Edge lines (HQ Bullies 2016b). Though named for the notorious crime boss John Gotti, Gottiline dogs are not exceptional in their tough

⁸ American Bully kennel websites seem to get taken down with unusual frequency, with no remaining trace of contact information for the breeder or status information on the dogs. On a few occasions, we followed a litter of puppies only to find the kennel vanished unexpectedly.

appearance; an intimidating look is the benchmark of the American Bully as a distinctive type. Like the Gottiline breeders, Razor's Edge breeders claim that it is their line that should be credited as the sole producer of the 'true' American Bully body type. Again, these dogs are virtually indistinguishable. It is our belief that the fixation on 'lines' is far more a matter of pride and association than of a genuine belief that each type carries any absolutely unique, defining features.

Despite regular immersion in heated debate about the superlative American Bully form (and so, an insistence that there *are* different forms), breeders are insistent that the American Bully is *never* a crossbreed or a hybrid. This heavy rhetorical reliance on genetic purity shows an effort at constructing a system of recognition and standardization that bolsters the success and the widespread acceptance of body types *as standalone breeds*. This view involves the same thinking as has historically marginalized the pit bull. It is the view that some characteristic physical features can index a dog's relative value.

One American Bully fancier website claims that the Bully look was achieved "by selectively line breeding pure American Pit Bull Terrier Blood [*sic*] generation after generation" ("Featured Breeder" 2014). Breeders openly acknowledge "puppy milling" their dogs. Terrell, an American Bully breeder, speaks openly about how he and other longtime breeders would produce great numbers of puppies in hopes of finding one that appeared physically satisfactory: "we'd have to, sorta, puppy mill a lot of times... we would do a million breedings to get a couple dogs that would look like they was [*sic*] supposed to" (Terrell 2014). The American Bully is not recognized by the American Kennel Club or the United Kennel Club, so Bully-only kennel clubs (notably the American Bully Kennel Club) have cropped up to formally legitimize these dogs. Bully-only kennel clubs subsidize a new understanding of genetic purity

wherein dogs can be known by ever-expanding sub-types, each of which can be connected to or claimed by a ‘line.’



Left: Fig. 6. Notorious Juan Gotty of West Side Kennels (Kinneman 2014a, reproduced with permission). **Right:** Fig. 7. A dog featured on the Razor’s Edge bloodline information page on KinnemanKennels.com. Kinneman Kennels owner Matthew Kinneman has provided a full history of the Gottiline and Razor’s Edge breeding programs that resonates with other online accounts (Kinneman 2014c, reproduced with permission).

American Bullies are not bred with a utilitarian agenda in mind. Rather, their bodies are intentionally constructed to fit a certain image. Breeder websites therefore provide detailed catalogues of their puppies’ ancestry to demonstrate the focused workmanship that went into their product,⁹ including lists of famous littermates or other close relatives. This insistence on lineage and on the capacity to trace a dog’s genetic makeup back several generations reveals an attempt to historicize the American Bully, and to make the breed legitimate by following the same type of detailed record-keeping that major kennel clubs employ for pure-bred dogs. Most fascinating, though, is the way that dogs are catalogued by minimal information – often just by their call name but regularly also by the line name, although never a registration number or any official health clearance information, and very rarely a date of birth or other details to distinguish one “Booyah” from another (see fig. 8).

⁹ See for example: www.pitbull-chat.com, www.bullypedia.net.

This strategy is an ingenious marketing tool. By offering minimal information on the featured dogs, the given assumption is that interested buyers are already versed enough in this world to know the Booyah in question, and if they are not, then access to this insider knowledge may be very alluring. The puppy buyer is not just buying a dog: they are buying entry to an exclusive club.



Fig. 8. Detailed genetic lineage for Strongside Kennels (Strongside Bullies 2016c, reproduced with permission).

In the American Bully world, male dogs are named for alcohol, drugs, money, weapons, vehicles, or monsters (e.g. Patron, Remy, Mossberg, Young Money, Platinum, Monster, Blue Beast, Thing). Females are named for the above, as well as sex, femininity, and exoticism (e.g. Chesty, Ebony, Purity, Drama Queen, Tiger Lily, Erotica, Lady Valentine, Passion, Lil Darky). Interestingly, despite dichotomously gendered naming practices, extra-large female dogs are often referred to as “she-males.” Even as the dogs would seem to be collapsing under the weight of their bulk, they are advertised as ‘top producers’ and ‘all-stars.’ Seemingly, no American Bully can be oversized. The ‘freaks’ pictured as examples below (figs. 10 and 11) have now

formed an American Bully ‘extreme’ class that is formally recognized by the American Bully Kennel Club. When new trends in dog bodies become apparent, these types are encouraged so long as they are moving in the direction towards greater mass. When extra-wide and extra-short American Bullies were scoffed at and mocked as ‘toads,’ one breeder bred this deviation purposefully and then branded his dogs as ‘Toadline.’¹⁰ Another example of the desirability of these so-called ‘freakish’ characteristics is the Freakshow line. Bred by Bustin Out Kennels, this line of dogs emerged in response to the criticism of stud dog Freakshow’s bent tail, flat feet, and crooked legs. This line of dogs is intentionally bred to pass on these “deformed” features (Alvarado 2015b).



Fig. 9: Strongside Bullies’ Mini Duke, or Mini. Mini is a female “extreme pocket” bully. This is an extreme-type bully, but on a smaller scale (Strongside Bullies 2016b, reproduced with permission).

¹⁰ The Toadline has come under direct online attack for breeding what have been called “severe deformities” in its dogs (see Toadline Exotic Bullies 2016 for several examples of this body type) The writer of this criticism, “battenroo,” comments that “[American Bully show] judges have often times chosen the more deformed dogs to win in shows because the ‘extreme’ look is eye-catching and has shock value” (Battenroo c2014).



Left: Fig. 10 and **Right:** Fig. 11. Two sons of Dax, who is discussed below. These dogs display some of the ‘freakish’ characteristics that are so desirable to fanciers of the extreme type: extra-broad chest and wide shoulders, very large top-skull, tight eyelids with seemingly ‘intense’ gaze, visibly split chest muscles, extra-thick forelimbs and hind limbs, etc. Note that coat color and eye color are not considered a relevant determinant of dog quality in the American Bully world; the focus is on muscle bulk (DaxLineBullies c2003, reproduced with permission).

As dogs get more ‘extreme’ in type, the accompanying breeder language strays further from the lingo one may expect to accompany the sale of a pet. The breeder of “extreme” puppies featured in fig. 12 gives an example of the type of talk that is standard in fancier circles. As the dogs’ bodies get blockier and ‘bully’ features become more exaggerated, their descriptions become more hyperbolized (“slammed to the ground,” “girthy as f[uc]k”), and even naming practices take a turn for the more sensational (“Sadaam,” ostensibly for Saddam Hussein – America’s nemesis throughout the 2000’s). To whom are these unconventional dogs marketed and sold? We discuss this below.



Fig. 12. A screen-shot of a breeder describing his recent litter of 'extreme' puppies (Battenroo c2014).

A Couch Potato Called Al Capone

Pit bulls have historically been bred for work and agility, but American Bullies are marketed as “couch potatoes” (BullyTreePedigrees 2012). Pit bulls are known for their agile bodies and ropey musculature, while American Bullies have inflated muscles, often a bow-legged/splayed stance, short legs, and heavy girth. A morphologically exaggerated pit bull with a plus-sized head and jaw, the American Bully is described by fanciers as “mellow,” “friendly,” and applauded for being “great with kids” (“Gotti Pit Bull Puppies” 2016; Alvarado 2015a). The American Bully is a paradox. Its hyper-inflated physique recalls and exaggerates the features around which public fear of pit bulls has long been controlled, but here these traits are repackaged as indices of a docile, low-energy family pet. In this way, the American

Bully functions to redraw the temperament qualities of the dog popularly associated with racialized crime, while staying pointedly loyal to the general suggestions of the same dog's body type. We propose that the American Bully was, and continues to be, a successful and highly sought after niche breed precisely because breeders are responding to – and thereby capitalizing on – the key factors that marginalized and criminalized the pit bull: its coupling with danger, crime, and Black America.

As stated by Juan Gonzalez, co-owner of American Bully fancier magazine *AtomicDogg*, this imposing body is “just a look” (Stokley 2004). Gonzalez insists that the dogs that appear in skull print and spiked collars in the pages of *AtomicDogg* magazine are not bred for fighting or aggression (ibid.). Rather, they are “show dogs,” bred to *look* ferocious, but in actual fact they are “gentle and playful” (ibid.). This seeming contradiction between tough outer appearance and friendly, biddable temperament can be read as an outsiders' claim to normative American citizenship by way of the very dog that has played a hand in excluding him. By exaggerating the pit bull body while insisting on its value as family member and companion, breeders and owners are asserting the place of alternative images within the American social landscape wherein the domestic dog is valued for its obedience and tolerance.

Lowering the pit bull's height, increasing its girth, and inflating its musculature has meant a corresponding dilution of terrier-like behaviours: e.g. chasing, nipping, high prey drive. As it follows, the allegedly larger Gottiline dogs are either championed for being relaxed and laid-back, or criticized for being too sluggish and lazy. These attributes suggest either, respectively, a low energy and thus low maintenance family pet, or a work-shy waste of pit bull genetics. This is a critical ambivalence. For fanciers, the body's signifying meaning is not fixed; the ‘best’ energy level for the dog is a matter of owner preference. Therefore, what makes a ‘good’ American Bully, and even a ‘true’ American Bully is a matter of physical

standards that are up for grabs. Physical standards are not only aesthetic commodities, but are indices for how dog owners envision family, and by extension, proper American citizenship.

Below are a few characteristic physical descriptions of breeding stock. Note how breeders package their dogs as simultaneously threatening and steadfastly safe. A Gottiline breeder declares:

These bully puppies will have that super wide and stocky look with big blocky heads. They have large top skulls... these puppies have been bred to have bully appearance. All of our dogs have great temperaments and do not show any aggression towards people or kids. The perfect puppy to bring home to your family (HQ Bullies 2016c).

“Despite the American Bully’s fierce and powerful appearance,” another breeder insists, “their demeanor is gentle. Their [*sic*] great with kids and extremely friendly with strangers, other dogs and other animals” (American Bully Kennel Club c2004). SteelHeadPits, Razor’s Edge breeders, proclaim that their dogs “exhibit unparalleled [...] muscle mass and bone structure to match. A SteelHeadPit is an even tempered [*sic*], family dog that keenly exhibits protective qualities when needed. A SteelHeadPit is a true bully; a best friend” (SteelHeadPits c2016).

By producing a dog with exaggerated size and diminished aggression, American Bully breeders are challenging Americans to reconsider what a ‘nice’ family (pet) *looks* like.

The New Family Dog

As discussed, news stories over the past few decades have cemented the connection between race, crime, and pit bull-type dogs. Pit bull owners still continue to be referred to as “thugs,” “gangstas,” and “white trash” in news stories – the latter indicating that pit bull pathology no longer only attaches itself to racialized groups,

but is generally matched to any struggling demographic (Anderson 1999; Associated Press 2007; Rivero 2016; see also Dickey 2016 for an extended discussion of this topic).¹¹



Left: Fig. 13. Richard Barajas with Westside's Boogie (Kinneman 2014a, reproduced with permission). **Right:** Fig. 14. Ed Shepherd and an unidentified woman with 21 Blackjack (Kinneman 2014a, reproduced with permission).

The American Bully speaks to a long legacy of tense race relations in America, but the dialogue that is being attempted through their breeding is not exclusively from the Black Americans who have long been the co-persecuted. From its inception, the American Bully type has been a project of mixed human background. The famed founder of Westside Kennels, and credited with starting the Gottiline line of American Bullies, Richard Barajas (fig. 13), is Latino. Websites will also incorporate symbolism and language typically associated with West Coast Hispanic gang organization. Though no Latino breeders claim any sort of gang affiliation themselves, some celebrate gang culture through the marketing of their dogs – for example, the Hispanicization of infamous Italian mob boss John Gotti in naming

¹¹ For example, one section of a 2007 *Associated Press* article on Michael Vick, titled “Tied into the Hip Hop Culture”, makes an explicit connection between pit bulls and the culture of rap and hip hop music (Associated Press 2007).

foundation Gottiline male Juan Gotty. It is also somewhat common to see American Bullies presented in a style similar to that of Mexican-American Chicano rap artists. The Chicano-American political movement came into being alongside the Civil Rights Movement, when Mexican-American activists adopted the previously derisive term to assert solidarity and agitate for civil rights and respect (Moore and Cuéllar 1970, 149). In the 1990s, Chicano Rap was an offshoot of Black American gangsta rap, and both have shared in the objective of making a public forum for young men of color to speak out unapologetically about social issues such as racial profiling, poverty, and drug culture.



Left: Fig. 15. and **Right:** Fig. 16. A famous American Bully male named Dax, bred heavily from Gottiline dogs and credited as foundational to the DaxLine line of dogs (DaxLineBullies c2003, reproduced with permission). It is apparent that Dax is a widened and possibly shortened version of 21 Blackjack. Note that Dax is considered ‘extreme,’ though Gottiline dogs are typically considered to be a classic, or standard type of American Bully (ibid.).

Ed Shepherd (fig. 14, above), a grey-haired White man, is highly respected in the American Bully community for his “Daxline” or “DaxLine” dogs. His foundation male, an American Pit Bull terrier named 21 Blackjack, kicked off Shepherd’s

breeding plan when Shepherd made the connection between the dog's temperament, which he and his children so enjoyed, and the shorter, wider body that was then sub-standard for his breed. "After years of line breeding and inbreeding his dogs," the story goes, Shepherd had created a "signature" American Bully look (which would likely be indistinguishable, to the layperson, from other American Bully lines) (Kinneman 2014a). In Shepherd's stock of Bullies was Barbee, whom he bred to West Coast Gottyline's Romeo (Kinneman 2014a). The result was the now-famous stud dog Dax (figs. 15 and 16, above). Dax produced several famed litters, of which one – arguably consistent with "puppy-milling" – was with his dam (APBT Online Pedigrees 2012).

Our point here is that American Bully breeding was not started exclusively by Black Americans, but the American Bully type was very quickly cohered around registers that resonate with images of American marginality – of which the majority members are of color, but also of which some are White and of rural background, i.e. the stereotypically maligned 'hick' or 'hillbilly' from the Midwest, or the 'redneck' from the Southern states. Jim and Cody Blackburn, the owners of Carolina Bully Farm and creators of the "Moneyline" American Bully, name the kennel's dogs as a nod to their small-town country roots: Big Country and Miss Country, for example (Carolinabullyfarms 2012).

Though early breeders of the American Bully are well known, the basic personal details of many breeders – last name, for example – stay hidden. It would seem that the braggadocio about canine ancestors and head widths on the website front page can be considered enough information for puppy buyers to decide to purchase from a kennel. Similarly, very often quite little (if any) information is required from puppy buyers: purchases seem to be totally controlled by money through many websites' "Buy It Now" feature. With this said, it is fairly common for

breeders to show pictures of their dogs in happy new homes. These images reveal a lot about how varied is the demographic that is drawn to the American Bully.



Fig. 17. Famous R&B singer Mario holding his HQ Bullies female puppy on adoption day, accompanied by HQ Bullies' Epidemic Virus (HQ Bullies 2016a, reproduced with permission).

One commonly featured American Bully owner is the Black American celebrity. HQ Bullies presents, among other celebrity photos, images of R&B singer Mario with his new American Bully puppy (see fig. 17). The Mugleston's Pitbull Farm website features an article from sports magazine *Slam*. Mugleston's describes this as a "5 page article on [now former NBA shooting guard] Michael [Dickerson] and his two pits he got [*sic*] from Mugleston's" (Mugleston's Pitbull Farm 2016). The 'article' is in fact a small quote from Dickerson referencing his dogs and one photo of Dickerson with his dogs, posed together on a long and wide stretch of concrete. The photo is taken from below, making Dickerson and the dogs appear larger than life. The sun sets behind them, against a barren background.¹² When paired together, these men

¹² Our request to reprint this image was unanswered by *Slam* magazine.

and their dogs together produce a commanding image of confidence and power. Mugleston's Pitbull Farm also features images of (all Black) members of the NBA and NFL under the title, "CELEBRITIES DEMAND THE BEST." Mugleston's features a number of these wealthy kennel customers similarly to how they depict their dogs: as a headshot, accompanied by their impressive stats. The insinuation here seems to be that by buying a Mugleston's American Bully, one is also buying into the wealth and celebrity of their puppy's relatives' owners.



Left: Fig. 18. Young girl with adult American Bully bred by HQ Bullies. (Paul Au, e-mail message to Rachel Levine, 6 July 2016, reproduced with permission). **Right:** Fig. 19. A little boy and young American Bully use each other for cushioning while relaxing together (ibid.).



Fig. 20. Jaycel and family from Palm Springs, CA, featured with their two puppies from HQ Bullies (HQ Bullies 2016d, reproduced with permission).

More common than these celebrity features are pictures of tough-looking American Bullies with sweet-looking families. In the photos with children and babies, the clear implication is that the dogs are not just under control around little humans, but that they are tolerant of – if not delighted by – all manner of physical teasing, and have no behaviors of territoriality or sensitivity about personal space: they fit seamlessly into middle America. These dogs are often featured under sleeping children, with children placed upon their backs as if they are horses, in playful headlocks by children, having their jowls tugged on, being sat on, stepped on, or used as a foot rest. Essential to note here is that these children and nuclear families represent all racial/ethnic backgrounds: Black, Hispanic, Asian, and very often White. This suggests to us that, regardless of background, American Bully buyers find something appealing in this extended possibility of what might be considered an all-American dog.



Left: Fig. 21. ManMade Kennels' Optimus Prime, with breeders Edward and Sarah Perez' daughter, EmmaLisa. This picture was sent in correspondence to one of the authors, but is also featured on the kennel's public Instagram photo sharing page, with the note, "this boy is a super lover!!!" (Edward Perez, e-mail message to Rachel Levine, 6 July 2016, reproduced with permission). **Right:** Fig. 22. A young son of DaxLine's famous Dax, pictured with little girl (DaxLineBullies c2003, reproduced with permission).



Left: Fig. 23. Four boys smile for portrait with their young American Bully (Paul Au, e-mail message to Rachel Levine, 6 July 2016, reproduced with permission).
Right: Fig. 24. The same American Bully plays babysitter to baby boy (ibid.).



Left: Fig. 25. American Bully Rose from ManMade Kennels, pulling her human “sister” by a harness (Manmadekennels1 c2015, reproduced with permission).
Right: Fig. 26. ManMade Kennels’ Zombie demonstrating her athleticism with an unidentified adolescent boy (Manmadekennels1 c2016, reproduced with permission). It is unusual to see children presented with their American Bullies doing sports or working. These images demonstrate that not all families seek out the American Bully for a ‘couch potato,’ but may instead consider it to be a valuable family member for reasons more closely aligned with typical American Pit Bull Terrier working traits.



Right: Fig. 27. ManMade Kennels' Zombie out for a family walk with kennel co-owner Sarah Perez, and children Saraya, Eddie, and EmmaLisa, and American Bully puppy (Edward Perez, e-mail message to Rachel Levine, 6 July 2016, reproduced with permission). **Left:** Fig. 28. Zombie with young neighbours of kennel owners Edward and Sarah Perez (Manmadekennels1 c2015, reproduced with permission).

On the Ground and Here to Stay

American Bullies are not only built to look fearsome: the whole online marketplace is visually designed to mimic the experience of viewing the trailer to an action movie involving a motley cast of mobsters and monsters, outfitted with artillery and accompanied by provocative women. Many websites open with hip-hop music playing.¹³ Dogs follow predictable naming strategies as discussed above, and their names are often featured similarly to star boxers at a much-anticipated match, e.g. with flames or thunder coming out of each letter to dramatically announce the dog's presence (see fig. 9).

Webpage layouts follow near identical formulae. Common features are an all-black background with white or other standout font throughout; the kennel name featured in a font commonly found in prison-style tattoos; some combination of dark clouds, smoke, lightening, flickering lights as if from gunfire, and chrome or barbed

¹³ WEST COAST BULLY UNIT's (2016) website, which has now been taken offline, opened with Ice Cube's "I Rep Tha West" playing. "Niggas" is one of the first words in the song. New Age Pitbulls (2016) has its own rap music playing.

wire detailing; a top banner or opening page graphic featuring muscular dogs stacked side by side and presenting a sort of firing squad.



Fig. 29. Litter announcement for Strongside Kennels' breeding of Trunks (sire) and Dolce (dam). This litter announcement combines the 'barren ground' aesthetic that is popular in breeder website main banners with some of the other visual imagery common to website designs, e.g. flashy lights, prison-style tattoo font, no other humans or animals, concrete or otherwise bare ground, etc. (Strongside Bullies 2016a, reproduced with permission). This image has now been removed from the site.

Like in the image from *Slam* magazine in Mugleston's, dogs in the banner are typically featured on barren ground. Be the setting concrete, a field, desert ground, or as though in a dust cloud, the dogs are featured as if on a cleared horizon, a new frontier, or the frontlines of empire. This type of presentation is styled to position the dog and by extension its breeder – and now, if he is anything like NBA player Michael Dickerson, its "master" – as champion of the horizon and settler of nations. This is a certain redrawing of American history. The language used by breeders further reinforces this image. Breeders describe newborn puppies as "now on the ground" (for example, Strongside Bullies 2016a).



Top to bottom: Fig. 30. ManMade Bullies' Facebook page header (Manmade Kennelz c2016, reproduced with permission). Fig. 31. DaxLine Bullies kennel website header (DaxlineBullies c2003, reproduced with permission). Fig. 32. HQ Bullies' breeder website header (HQ Bullies 2016e, reproduced with permission).

This visual representation of power and prestige is matched by commentary throughout breeder websites, fancier forums, social media, and YouTube comments. One can find a chorus of passionate claims to have achieved power via breeding, and

a willingness to go to proverbial war to keep this achieved status. A congratulatory profile of several American Bully breeders reads, “Dog breeders come and go, especially with such a competitive breed as bullies, but these breeders have been around for years if not decades, and their dogs are here to stay” (Wilson 2016). Accompanying his kennel’s logo, Instagram user murillo_albert (2016) writes, “Home Of The Billseye Blood. [...] We Here And Aint [*sic*] Going No Where! Soon To A Show Near You!” Another breeder writes, “we are here to STAY!!! and stronger than ever!” (Blue Nose Bully Style Pitbulls 2016). In these instances, it is unclear if “we” are the dogs or the people associated with the kennel, or both. This ambiguity is a testament to the degree to which these enthusiasts will go to confirm association with their dogs.

In an online forum post, American Bully breeder Bear Mathews (2016) is insistent that his “family” of fellow breeders has defied a series of odds, and struggled for the right to continue to reproduce dogs with “Greyline blood:”

We started out years ago in the front yard of New Troijan kennels. All though [*sic*] the blood has been around since the beginning of the out break [*sic*] of blue nose pitbulls and bullies, we just got the blessing to carry out the blood and certifying [*sic*] it as a recognized bloodline... We are and always will be a true recognized bloodline.... See a lot of people counted us out, didn’t think we would make an impact on this dog game and or get the respect we demanded, but we are still here and we aren’t going to stop for anybody even if we accomplish what we set out to do! Those that are left obviously really had the heart and passion it takes to push a bloodline.... have a long way to go to succeed our goals [*sic*] we have set, we are going to be here even if [*sic*] we make that major impact...

Conclusion: Something Other

First the All-American patriot and then the Anti-American criminal, the pit bull has had two very divergent images in the American imagination. Both of these characterizations have depended critically on America’s relationship with fear and

terror, and have had very little to do with the inherent traits of the dog. The American Bully, however, indicates a decidedly motivated and directed genetic manipulation whereby the canine product has come to embody characteristics from both sides of the binary that has characterized its forbearers (loyal companions *or* monsters), and, by extension, their human companions (the nation's heroes *or* the nation's most despicable). The move from competing one-dimensional representations to a more complicated articulation of the dogs' social significance articulates a purposeful claim to valid citizenship for owners and breeders, but by a new set of terms. Importantly, this particular shift emerged as an unexpected *result* of the pit bull's connection to poverty and criminality by way of the American War on Drugs. Americans have used, and continue to use, pit bull breeding as a strategy for both integration into, and rejection of, mainstream middle-class America.

The gentle, child-friendly American Bully allows for groups historically and presently disregarded as violent, criminal, and a threat to the American family and the 'public' to claim social normativity. The seeming paradox is that this claim is being made through an animal body intentionally constructed to resonate with public fears. The American Bully's body tells a story to America, about America. It is a story of deceptive appearances. This story asks Americans to consider how fear can be constructed and manipulated and contested to serve an ideological purpose.

The breeders' design of their online market tells an important story, too. American Bully breeders reveal the extent to which American people can and do identify with their dogs. In so doing, they reveal that this bond is not just personal, but political. To disavow the dogs with which one has become associated or with which one has chosen to be associated, regardless of the attendant social discrimination that this association may entail, is to accept discrimination's governing terms. Generations of fear mongering, in combination with growing ghettoization and

imprisonment, has generated the need for the Americans of color to prove belonging in a deeply divided society. An easy continuation of America's long held affection for domestic dogs, American Bully breeding is one articulation of a claim to such belonging.

Junod (2014) argued that the American pit bull "is not *like* other dogs but rather something less and at the same time something more: something Other." Through the design of the American Bully, though, this Other seems to have gained entry into mainstream society without significant reproach. American Bully breeders are narrating the history of an outsider made legitimate. By fanatically designing and tailoring their dogs, breeders are not just announcing their right to belong, but their capacity for competitive industry and obsessive self-improvement – two qualities dear to the American self-image that were key in defining the villain of the War on Drugs. This improved self, though, is contingent on the pit bull's continued Otherness. By way of the American Bully, the new and improved American self is self-consciously Other.

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“I ona byla chelovekom” (For the Dog was Once a Human Being): **The Moral Obligation in Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog***

Andrea McDowell

From on Top of the Doghouse

As both tsarist and Soviet leadership carried out agendas of silencing and oppression, writers often turned to animals, particularly dogs, to explore the power of voice and the freedom to communicate. In the nineteenth century, Ivan Turgenev’s “Mumu” (1852) describes the impotence and suffering of a mute peasant and his dog, both unable to express themselves and therefore unable to influence their own destinies. Their shared voicelessness represents the serf population’s silent suffering, an injustice Turgenev assails throughout his fiction. Later, in the twentieth century, Georgii Vladimov portrays the horrors of Soviet GULags through the cynomorphic perspective of a prison guard dog in *Faithful Ruslan* (Vernyi Ruslan 1975). Many writers under Stalin shared not only the helplessness and victimization of non-human animals, but also their voicelessness: some battled endlessly with censors over the right to express themselves freely, while others abandoned their craft for fear of imprisonment and even execution. This code of silence extended far beyond the creative arena, as words and language became dangerous for all citizens, expected to converse in forms of sanctioned discourse only. Mikhail Bulgakov’s novella *Heart of a Dog* (*Sobach'e serdce* 1925) predated Stalin’s reign of power yet proved alarmingly

prescient with regard to the silencing techniques that characterized Stalinist Russia and the debasing influence of this enforced muteness. And at the heart of his story, he gives voice to a simple mutt. Bulgakov's lifelong esteem for animals must not be overlooked; it mandates that the reader consider Sharik not merely as a symbolic prop, nor as a talking animal from a fairy tale, but as an individual creature with his own right to life. Bulgakov thus structures the narrative with fluid shifts in and out of the non-human animal's *credible* point of view, thereby placing the tale within the literary traditions of the philosophical dog and H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* (1896). The myriad allegorical readings¹ of this tale of humankind's morality (vis-à-vis a dog's) against the backdrop of violent, chaotic post-Revolutionary Russia certainly remain valid; yet the unique *cynomorphic* perspective further underscores Bulgakov's condemnation of humanity's hubris and haste in exploiting others to advance personal and societal goals.

In *Heart of a Dog*, Professor Preobrazhenskii (from the Russian *preobrazit'*, 'transform') conducts medical experiments transplanting ape organs into people seeking sexual rejuvenation. Purportedly hoping to better understand the function of the pituitary gland, Preobrazhenskii obtains the corpse of a drunken thief (Klim Chugunkin) and transplants his testes and pituitary gland into a street mutt named Sharik. Preobrazhenskii is assisted by his protégé, Dr. Bormenthal, whose detailed medical notes become part of the narration. In principle, the scientific experiment

¹ Peter Doyle effectively summarizes these interpretations: "Contemptuously allegorized as a bloody operation on a dog's testicles, the Bolshevik Revolution has been an experimental and violent attempt to bring about enforced evolution, whose consequences were not fully appreciated" (1978, 479). Bulgakov's "The Fatal Eggs" (*Rokovye iaitsa* 1924) also offers a science fiction treatment of this theme of artificial attempts to accelerate social progress.

succeeds: the dog ‘evolves’² into the mostly-human proletarian “Poligraf Poligrafovich Sharikov.” In actuality, the foul-mouthed Sharikov falls in with the Bolshevik housing committee, denounces the Professor (who maintains servants and a multi-room apartment) as a White sympathizer,³ and exhibits such erratic, anti-social behavior that the Professor and Bormenthal reverse the operation and return the creature to its fully canine state. The novel ends with Sharik watching the Professor as he continues with mysterious experiments.

The power of this final gaze, combined with a fluctuating narrative voice, imbues the dog with greater significance than his human protagonist counterparts; yet few scholars have examined the role of Sharik *as a dog* in the novella.⁴ One must examine the presence of a real canine (albeit endowed with some extraordinary skills) to fully understand the author’s moral philosophy; not by chance does Bulgakov select as his observant mouthpiece the animal with the richest cultural history of human-animal relations, particularly in Russia. Henrietta Mondry explains that

² The ‘evolution as ladder’ metaphor (a widespread teleological conception that in actuality represents neither Darwin’s nor modern theories of evolution) fails to represent the simultaneous development and regression (biological and social) occurring throughout the story.

³ That is, those who supported the monarchy (in opposition to Lenin’s ‘Reds’) and represented the intelligentsia—scientists, doctors, painters, authors, lawyers, etc. The Bolsheviks derided such individuals as ‘bourgeois,’ particularly for interests in non-utilitarian endeavors such as fine arts and music. Thus, Preobrazhenskii’s love of opera also marks him as out of line with the Revolutionary order.

⁴ Yvonne Howell’s “Eugenics, Rejuvenation, and Bulgakov’s Journey into the Heart of Dogness” (2006) discusses the dog character only briefly in the context of biology. And despite the title of Erica Fudge’s “At the Heart of the Home: An Animal Reading of Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*,” in which she claims to return the dog to the center of the narrative, she instead mentions human-animal relations to focus almost exclusively on the construction of the concept of the “human” and offers a reading of the story as “human struggles to define themselves” (2009, 13). Henrietta Mondry’s recent *Political Animals: Representing Dogs in Modern Russian Culture* (2015) analyzes the dog in the story as the subject of metaphysical/scientific transformation, not as a character/creature in its own right (although she does offer excellent discussions elsewhere in the book regarding contemporary understandings of animal rights and human–animal relations).

despite the common association of the bear with Russian identity (which she claims represents a Western viewpoint), in actuality, “the dog is modern Russian culture’s most representative and most political animal” (2015, 1). Mondry examines Bulgakov’s choice within the context of Russian folk belief.⁵ She draws on Boris Uspenskii’s study of Russian phraseology, which demonstrates an interrelation between humans and dogs in Russian culture, and determines that the “interchangeability of human and dog nature lies at the basis of folk beliefs in parallelisms between humans and dogs” (1996, 3). Similarly, Susanne Fusso refers to the role of the dog in Russian figurative language by quoting the proverb: *Ne bej sobaku, i ona byla chelovekom* [Do not beat a dog, for it was once a human being] (1989, 391).⁶ Indeed, a mere glance through any collection of Russian proverbs and sayings reveals innumerable dog references, positive and negative.⁷ Finally, despite Bulgakov’s light treatment of the scientific aspect,⁸ submitting a dog to physical alteration was already a common practice among dog breeders, as Harriet Ritvo indicates: “Even the dog’s body proclaimed its profound subservience to human will. It was the most physically malleable of animals, the one whose shape and size

⁵ Mondry notes that while Preobrazhenskii used ape ovaries for a sexual rejuvenation operation, he selects a dog for the transformation process. From this, she concludes that Preobrazhenskii considered dog material “more closely related to humans than ape material” (1996, 3).

⁶ Fusso also cites Vladimir Dal’s note to the proverb: “*obrashchena v psa za prozhorlivost*” [changed into a dog/mutt for gluttony] (1989, 391).

⁷ For example: One dog is more faithful to its master than two servants; Dog does not eat dog; A barking dog rarely bites; A greedy dog needs much; He who sleeps with dogs gets up with fleas.

⁸ Although a medical doctor, Bulgakov deliberately avoided detailed scientific rationale in the text. In fact, with regard to the science behind Sharik’s transformation, Ellendea Proffer states, “Bulgakov did not intend the scientific side of the story to be taken seriously. Here he ascribes to the pituitary gland functions he knew it did not have” (1984, 603n9). Howell, however, sees Preobrazhenskii’s interest in eugenics as an extension of Bulgakov’s awareness of contemporary research in the field, and calls the Professor an “exaggerated portrait of his nonfictional contemporaries in the scientific world, for whom the research agenda of broadening our understanding of heredity and the philosophical goal of bettering humanity through science were not at all opposed” (2006, 559).

changed most readily in response to the whims of breeders” (1987, 21). Of course, this statement begs the question whether the dog truly proves the most physically malleable, or whether humans have concentrated their efforts of domestication primarily on the dog.⁹

The question “Why a dog?” thus seems clear; however, in addressing the further query “To what end?” most scholars support a comedic rationale, which proves less satisfying. In her consideration of point of view in *Heart of a Dog*, Helena Goscilo suggests the animal presence, which defies the usual human–animal boundaries, contributes a “rich vein of humorous possibilities” and identifies the “fundamental incongruity of a dog who is cogently articulate and, moreover, given to philosophical rumination” (1978, 282). Fusso justifies this incongruity by reaching the “inevitable conclusion” that the opening narration actually reflects only one voice: the “*imitation* of a dog’s-eye view—a kind of ventriloquism” (1989, 390). Claiming that the narrator imperfectly transforms himself into a dog, Fusso further states, “This is not a dog’s narration but a dog-like narration.”

In contextualizing Bulgakov’s canine narrator within the nearly two thousand-year-old literary genre of the philosophical dog, Ziolkowski aligns Sharik with a more contemporary watchful—and comedic—commentator: “it is no accident that Schulz chose a dog [Snoopy], rather than a cat, for the outside observer who lies on top of his doghouse making cynical observations on the foibles of human nature; that

⁹ Despite opposition from animal rights activists, as well as legal challenges, these practices often continue, for example, in the cutting and reshaping of a dog’s ears (‘cropping’) or tail (‘docking’) according to breeders’ specifications (particularly with Boxers and Doberman Pinschers). In fact, citing ear cropping as medically unnecessary, several European countries, as well as Australia, New Zealand, and a few others, have banned the practice (Canadian Federation of Humane Societies n.d., para 4). In the United States, limited regulations exist state by state, but only a few require a licensed veterinarian to perform these so-called “elective” procedures (American Veterinary Medical Association 2014).

has been the dog's role since Plato" (1983, 114). Ziolkowski notes the multiple transformations of the motif in the twentieth century, and calls *Heart of a Dog* an "exuberant inversion of the genre:"

His novella gives every appearance, for the first three or four pages, of belonging to the conventional genre of picaresque narratives recounted by a dog; our expectations lead us to believe that another dog will appear to pick up the conversation. No other dog shows up, however. Instead, the doctor performs an operation that enables the dog literally to talk, thus providing an ironic modern twist to the conventional justification of speech A second inversion is evident in the fact that the dog, who begins as a cynical critic of human society, following his operation degenerates into the worst specimen of human being. His behavior causes the professor and his assistant to make cynical observations on the nature of dogs—a total reversal of the normal convention of the genre (1983, 116).

Furthermore, Ziolkowski maintains that because Bulgakov must have been aware of the convention of the dogs' colloquy, *Heart of a Dog* thus represents not merely a genre reversal but a parody. In this parodic aspect, Bulgakov goes beyond Nikolai Gogol's talking canines in "Diary of a Madman" ("*Zapiski sumasshedshevo*" 1835), where the dogs retain their form but speak only of mundane issues such as food and romance. Bulgakov 'elevates' (a term used with great irony) Sharik to the mostly human Sharikov, who uses his newfound voice to spout lewd wisecracks and Soviet propaganda—the 'correct' use of language. As such, his character contradicts any belief that the power of human language inherently results in acquiring and sharing valuable knowledge.¹⁰ In Sharikov's case, human colloquy represents the most debased and vacuous speech of all, whereas the dog, Sharik, alternates between mundane and profound observations.

¹⁰ Eric Laursen offers a compelling analysis of the failure of language to advance Sharikov's position—either through the efforts of Comrade Sharikov to instill the new "human" with egalitarian language or the efforts of Professor Preobrazhenskii to elevate him through the cultured speech of the bourgeoisie (2007).

Such readings give due credit to Bulgakov's cleverness and wit, but remain limited in that they ignore his deliberate stylistic narrative choices and thereby eclipse the message of individual suffering. Obviously on the literal level, the narration merely simulates a dog's point of view (unless Bulgakov possessed a truly remarkable skill *à la* the fictional Dr. Dolittle). But within the fictive universe of the story, the reader *must* acknowledge and accept the non-human animal voice as independent and valid; otherwise, only the anthropomorphic perspective dominates, thereby diminishing the transgressive nature of Preobrazhenskii's actions. With the same goal of establishing intimacy with the reader, Lev Tolstoi hands over the narrative voice to a broken-down horse in "Kholstomer" (1885), which represents a plea for humane treatment of all creatures—human and non-human. Because a human narrator could not have conveyed adequately the horse's sense of shame and violation at being gelded, Tolstoi attempted to set aside human consciousness and assume the perspective of the hapless animal.¹¹ Similarly, in *Heart of a Dog*, if the canine element functions primarily as a *comedic* device, a reader maintains greater detachment from the protagonist and fails to acknowledge the full atrocity of his victimization.

In discussing the problem of animal history, Erica Fudge argues that scholars must move beyond viewing animals as only representational, where "the actual animal doesn't seem to matter very much; it's a symbol; not real" (2002, 9). Tolstoi and Bulgakov adopt the voices of non-human animals not merely symbolically or allegorically, but indeed as "real"—so that a reader's compassion and guilt weigh

¹¹ In Tolstoi's company and amazed by his speculation on the thoughts of a decrepit gelding in a field, fellow author Ivan Turgenev commented, "Listen, Lev Nikolaevich, you must have been a horse once yourself" (Eikhenbaum 1982, 101). Critics frequently dismiss "Kholstomer" as a didactic animal fable due to the animal narration and moral lessons, but the deliberate simulation of the horse's perspective serves to intensify Tolstoi's metaphysical concerns (McDowell 2007).

more heavily in witnessing the mistreatment. Sharik's canine voice must rise in accusation above the human one as when he condemns Preobrazhenskii for violating his rights as a fellow living being. As Fudge notes elsewhere, "an allegorical reading that interprets the dog as always symbolizing something else silences the presence of that dog as the suffering center of the story" (2009, 13). Thus, when these animals ask, "What have you done to me? Why do you do this to us?" they speak not as symbols but as fellow beings addressing human animals, whose human *status* inherently implicates them in these fictional transgressions.

For example, after Preobrazhenskii brings Sharik home and prepares to treat his injured side (burned when a cook poured scalding water on him), the dog fails to understand their intent and asks, "Brothers, knackers why are you doing this to me?" (Bulgakov 2002, 231).¹² Some translators have omitted the slang term knackers,¹³ but preserved the sense through "Brothers, murderers" (Ginsburg 1968, 15; Pyman 1998, 9). Other translators altered this line more significantly: "My dog-killing chums" (Aplin 2005, 17) and "You butchers" (Glenny 1968, 19). But these latter examples, while accusatory, fail to connote the sense of *equality*—and indeed fratricide—that Sharik senses in that moment of perceived injustice (although at this point, the professor's intentions remain wholly beneficent).

In "Diary of a Madman," Gogol employs a common frame of justification for animal communication: the dogs' correspondence reflects the delusions of a madman. In contrast, Bulgakov provides no external explanation for Sharik's power of narration (as later Vladimov gives narratorial independence to the dog Ruslan). Eric Laursen analyzes the shifts between first- and third-person narration throughout the

¹² Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

¹³ The word *zhivodery* refers to those who dispose of animal corpses not fit for human consumption, such as old horses rendered into glue or other by-products.

tale, and argues that while the dog's perspective tends to be retained, the first-person narration is "lost completely when the dog enters the apartment" (2007, 497). But scholars consistently fail to note the important literary device Bulgakov uses to empower the canine voice *after* the first-person opening. A favorite technique of nineteenth-century realist authors, free indirect discourse (FID) is a narrative style in which third person limited narration takes on features of first person speech.¹⁴ Monika Fludernik defines FID "by means of the conjunction of an interpretative intervention on the part of the textual recipient, who posits a discourse of alterity (that is, a notional discourse SELF different from that of the reportative SELF of the current narrator-speaker), with a minimal set of syntactic features, which constitute a sort of necessary condition, a mold that has to be fitted" (1995, 95). By including emotive punctuation (such as exclamation points and question marks), tonal shifts, and value-laden adjectives—yet *omitting* quotation marks to denote direct speech or the verb-plus-complement clause structure (*She said that* or *He claimed that*) of attributed indirect speech, FID often creates ambiguity in the narrative voice whereby one cannot always distinguish between the emotions and opinions of the narrator and those of other characters. Even when a clear delineation exists, however, FID seamlessly blends both the distancing effect of the third person and the intimacy of the first person *without* marking the latter as such, thus drawing the reader closer to a character at pivotal moments with less obvious subjectivity than a shift to direct

¹⁴ Vast scholarship exists on free indirect discourse (also termed free indirect style) in general, and in relation to the literature of specific countries, as well as authors (e.g. Pascal 1977; Bakhtin 1982; Fludernik 2014).

speech. In *Heart of a Dog*, FID serves to elevate Sharik's voice/perspective above that of the humans.¹⁵

Certain English translations of the novella omit narrative tags and conventional direct-speech punctuation to *generate* FID in critical passages, such as in Ginsburg's acclaimed 1968 version:¹⁶

Then his legs dropped off, and he slid somewhere sideways. Thank you, it's all over, he thought dreamily, dropping right on the sharp splinters. Goodbye Moscow! Never again will I see Chichkin's and proletarians and Cracow sausage. I'm off to paradise for my long patience in this dog's life. Brothers, murderers, why are you doing it to me? (15)

In the above translation, no quotation marks divide the third-person narration ending with the word "somewhere sideways" with the first-person voice initiating with "Thank you." While these renderings enhance the immediacy and first-person connection of FID, they invert Bulgakov's Russian text, which places the last four sentences (Sharikov's statement) into direct quotes:

"Спасибо, конечно, - мечтательно подумал он, валясь прямо на острые стекла. - Прощай, Москва! Не видать мне больше Чичкина и пролетариев и краковской колбасы. Иду в рай за собачье долготерпение. Братцы, живодеры, за что ж вы меня?" (Bulgakov 2002, 231).

"Thank you, it's finished – he thought dreamily, collapsing directly onto the sharp glass shards – Farewell, Moscow! I'll no longer see Chichkin's and proletarians and Krakow sausages. I'm going to that paradise for long-suffering dogs. Brothers, knackers why are you doing this to me?"

¹⁵ FID functions similarly in Tolstoi's "Kholstomer" and Vladimov's *Faithful Ruslan*, thereby providing a further connection with *Heart of a Dog*'s animal voice.

¹⁶ See also translations by Avril Pyman (1988) and Michael Glenny (1968). Hugh Aplin (2005), however, follows Bulgakov's original punctuation.

In contrast, Bulgakov uses FID throughout the opening two chapters, in which the dog takes center stage as introductory protagonist: these chapters create an immediate connection to Sharik by shifting frequently between the voices of the third person narrator and 'the dog.' Bulgakov then uses traditional third-person narration with direct speech for all characters, including Sharik, until Bormenthal's medical notes provide a first-person account of the transformation of the canine Sharik to the ill-bred Bolshevik Sharikov. Subsequently, a return to the third-person limited narrator again provides predominantly direct speech for the thoughts and emotions of Preobrazhenskii and Bormenthal, with the occasional indicator of "he thought" or "he felt." Bulgakov provides no such internal access for the *human* Sharikov, and instead, portrays him from an exclusively external perspective. In the epilogue, however, when the man-dog is restored to his original canine form, FID again emerges in the narrative.

Some scholars have suggested that Bulgakov does not preference any one voice throughout *Heart of a Dog*. Alexander Zholkovsky even calls the tale "polyphonic" and states that, "On balance, no voice, not even the Professor's authoritative basso, has the final word, which sounds an overture rather than closure to a dialogue" (1994, para. 21). However, as part of that uncertainty in the ending, one voice indeed rises above the others—that of the non-human animal. In the last paragraphs of the epilogue, 'the dog's' direct speech mulls over his lucky fate in a wealthy home. (He remembers neither the accident nor his time as Sharikov.) Then the FID resumes, but in an ambiguous form: "The dog saw terrible things [*strashnye dela*]. Hands in slippery gloves, the important man plunged them into jars containing brains. A stubborn man, persistent, always striving for something, cutting, scrutinizing, ..." (Bulgakov 2002, 330). Who deems these things "terrible" and Preobrazhenskii "stubborn" and "persistent"? The narrator? The dog? As in the early

chapters, the two voices here alternate fluidly, at times seeming almost as one. Hence, the calculated narrative shifts throughout the story, including the use of FID, ensure that the reader remains firmly sympathetic to the mutt, *Sharik*, who—together with the more distant narrative voice—passes judgment upon Preobrazhenskii, the transgressor.

Of Arrogance and Atavism

Scholars disagree as to whether the text ultimately casts the Professor as hero, villain, or something in between. Comparing Preobrazhenskii to his literary predecessor, the title character of H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau*,¹⁷ offers one framework for assessing his character; when we add another interpretive layer by legitimizing the animal subject as an autonomous being with individual rights, our perspective deepens further. Many statements in the novel attest to Bulgakov's abhorrence of all violence, as when Preobrazhenskii vehemently claims: "No one should ever be flogged Remember that, once and for all! Man and animal can be influenced only by suggestion!" (Bulgakov 2002, 255). Preobrazhenskii plainly unites humans and animals in deserving kind treatment. Earlier when relating how he calmed Sharik, he explains: "With kindness. The only method that's possible in dealing with living creatures. With terror you cannot do anything with an animal, no matter what step of development it stands on *They* are wrong thinking that terror will help them. No sir, no sir, it won't help, whether white, red, or even brown!" (ibid., 232; added emphasis). We must note Preobrazhenskii's abrupt reference to "they" (a separate word present in the original Russian, where verbs often denote subjects without a

¹⁷ Wells maintained enormous popularity in Russia at the turn of the century, and numerous scholars have traced the influence of his works on such writers as Bulgakov, Evgenii Zamiatin, and Aleksander Kuprin. Additionally, Richard C. Borden (1992) examines how Wells' legacy translated into a theme of "lost paradise" for writers such as Iurii Olesha, Valentin Kataev, and Vladimir Nabokov.

pronoun): “*Oni naprasno dumaiut, chto terror im pomozhet*” (ibid.; added emphasis). Clearly by “they” he does not mean only those who deal with animals. He also refers to Bolshevik methods of threatening and intimidating citizens; the violent nature of the uneducated, amoral proletariat; and anyone (even the ‘Whites’) who use violence to ensure submission. However, Preobrazhenskii’s attitude toward violence arises from a genteel, almost elitist disdain for coarse/brutal methods, combined with his arrogant attitude of inherent superiority toward those in subordinate positions: animal subjects, human-animal creatures generated by experiments, or the lesser proletarians.

In Wells’ novel, Moreau conducts grisly and painful operations on animals to reshape them into human form. His god-like qualities extend beyond the initial physical transformation: Moreau establishes strict behavioral codes and threatens pain and retribution for those who fail to comply. (Similarly, Preobrazhenskii’s assistant, Bormenthal, beats Sharikov when he misbehaves or attempts to assert his independence.) But Moreau’s coercive, artificial development—enforced by fear-based domination—fails, and chaos ensues. Unlike Preobrazhenskii’s deliberate decision to restore the dog Sharik, the unplanned reversion to animal form in *The Island of Dr. Moreau* occurs as a result of Moreau’s death, after which the narrator Prendick eliminates the creatures.¹⁸

Also justifying his experiments in the name of science, Preobrazhenskii manifests not only Moreau’s beliefs, but those of his Bolshevik opponents: that a lesser being (whether dog or common citizen) may be transformed according to the

¹⁸ Another variation of the *Moreau* tale occurs when Bormenthal mistakenly attributes Sharikov’s offensive language and base conduct to his dog’s background, and begins to “look at oncoming dogs with secret horror” when he walks in the street (Bulgakov 2002, 275). Bormenthal’s reaction reverses Prendick’s persisting terror after the experience on Moreau’s island: “My trouble took the strangest form. I could not persuade myself that the men and women I met were not also another, still passably human, Beast People, animals half-wrought into the outward image of human souls, and that they would presently begin to revert, to show first this bestial mark and then that ...” (Wells 1996, 204).

designs of its 'elevated,' enlightened leaders. Because Preobrazhenskii later realizes this particular mistake and restores Sharik to his original form, several scholars award him status as a sympathetic, even positive character (Graham 1977; Burgin 1978; Rydel 1978). One analysis suggests Preobrazhenskii understands the full implications of his actions and consequently undergoes a fundamental change in attitude. Goscilo asserts that the Professor "passed honorably the stringent moral test of acknowledging his colossal blunder" and therefore has "exonerated himself" before the reader who "deplores man's gratuitous tampering with the processes of nature" (1978, 290). Christine Rydel goes even further, calling *Heart of a Dog* a "complete reversal" of Wells' novel (1978, 306). She summarizes Wells' novel as a "story of cruelty and sadism, all embodied in Dr. Moreau himself" and maintains that unlike Moreau, Preobrazhenskii—"unusually kind" and "never cruel"—does not deserve to die. Lastly, Yvonne Howell sees the tale's significance lying in its "exploration of the conundrum of where nature meets nurture in efforts to enhance humankind" (2006, 545). She deems the Professor a eugenicist who, like Bulgakov's Woland in *Master and Margarita*, "in his extreme elitism seems to will evil (through his impatience with all forms of human weakness and with the schemes to improve them) but eternally works good (raises the bar of the arts and sciences, creates new frontiers of knowledge)" (561). While Howell accurately resists simplistic binary categorizations of Preobrazhenskii as either a sinister, mad scientist or a positive voice of the novella's anti-Soviet thrust, she does not address that this eternal greater "good" (scientific exploration and furthering knowledge) comes at the cost of the rights of others, such as non-human animals.

Other scholars hold Preobrazhenskii far more accountable for his actions. Carl and Ellendea Proffer indicate that Bulgakov's "scientific heroes" as seen in "The Fatal Eggs," *Adam and Eve*, and *Heart of a Dog* illustrate "the confident misuse of

knowledge which, while promising human good, leads only to injustice and inhumanity” (Bulgakov 1972, *xix*). In discussing the novel’s “underlying tragic significance,” Diana Burgin takes this position further and asserts that the “misuse of knowledge is not only confident, but supremely arrogant, and perhaps most important, ultimately tragic for the misuser” (1978, 496). Both Preobrazhenskii and Moreau operate from presumptuous, egotistical beliefs: first, that those in lesser positions—human or non-human—possess virtually no rights, even over their own existences, and second, that a being may be artificially altered to fulfill a different, supposedly higher role. As a result, they consider both the animal and man-animal as their own sub-human subjects to tamper with, control, and kill, if necessary.¹⁹ Such abuse of power remains Bulgakov’s overriding concern; therefore, any evaluation of Preobrazhenskii as a benign version of Moreau erroneously mitigates his culpability.

While Bulgakov may hold deep respect for scientists, he systematically undermines readings of the professor as benevolent. Fudge suggests that a consensual relationship in *Heart of a Dog* naturalizes “human dominion.” She points out Sharik’s relatively quick adjustment from life as a free-roaming stray to a collared pet, who internalizes a “hierarchical, anthropocentric” domestic order (2009, 15). She then notes that the Professor betrays the pet and master relationship. Yet Preobrazhenskii never truly engages with Sharik as a beloved, chosen pet, but only as a convenient necessity. He bribes him with food, offers him warm shelter, and treats him with kindness for one express purpose: to have a handy, healthy subject for experimentation. Preobrazhenskii does not even expect Sharik to survive after the

¹⁹ Rydel persuasively identifies basic philosophical differences between the two works in that whereas “Moreau feels that man is the pinnacle of creation ... Preobrazhensky decides that man is not God’s most desirable creature” (1978, 309). Moreau’s attitude differs from Wells’ own pessimism about the inherent cruelty and backward nature of humanity, masked by a façade of civilization. Bulgakov proves more optimistic about humanity’s ability to develop, but he cautions against revolutionary methods and the accelerated speed of unnatural transformation.

reversal surgery, commenting, “So, damn. Not dead! Well, he’ll die anyway. Ah, Dr. Bormenthal, I’m sorry for the mutt. He was affectionate, though sly” (Bulgakov 2002, 268). Nothing about Preobrazhenskii’s attitude toward Sharik indicates that he sees the dog—or for that matter his two female servants—as fulfilling any purpose other than servitude.

Bulgakov also creates divergent portraits of the Professor: model of genteel civility and intellectual advancement versus experimental scientist who snorts and snarls in a terrifying manner while performing the operation that turns Sharik into Sharikov. In fact, like the dog’s body, the Professor often demonstrates a similar level of mutability, which Mondry ascribes to the fluctuation between positive and demonic overtones: “He is a person whose face changes all the time, it becomes sinister at times, his fingers change from short and plump to long and elastic” (1996, 4). Additionally, his overall physical appearance alters significantly—becoming more stooped and grey in distress over Sharikov’s antics.

Suffering the consequences of his actions, the Professor experiences not only physical decline, but also psychological anguish—particularly when he realizes his experiment has created not an intellectually heightened but a debased individual. Discerning Sharikov’s true nature, the Professor questions the validity of his work: “And now I ask you—for what? So that one fine day I might transform the sweetest dog into such scum that it makes your hair stand on end” (Bulgakov 2002, 312). When Bormenthal refers to Sharikov as a “man with the heart of a dog,” Preobrazhenskii counters, “You, Doctor, are making a grave error. For God’s sake, don’t slander the dog.” He continues: “The whole horror lies in the fact that he no longer has a dog’s heart, but precisely a human one. And the most rotten one that exists in nature” (ibid., 314).

Probably the best-known passage of the novella, this statement, paradoxically, tends to be the most superficially treated by scholars. Although they generally agree that Sharikov's degenerate behavior stems from his criminal *human* background rather than his canine genes, they nevertheless proceed to discuss the story using stereotypical, speciest language about "beastly" or "animal" behavior. In analyzing the reader's attitude toward Sharikov, Goscilo proposes that "the major reason for our dismayed withdrawal of sympathy is the paradoxical discovery that with his newly acquired human form, Sharikov becomes an *utter animal*." She then elaborates: "In other words, Sharik, his *animal nature notwithstanding*, was immeasurably more acute, tasteful, and honorable than the pseudo-human Sharikov" (1978, 287; added emphasis). Burgin expresses similar sentiments in discussing the Professor's acknowledgment of his mistake: "In this admission the Professor seems to recognize his inability to change (*preobrazit'*) and to transcend the low human and animal material with which he was working" (1978, 500). She further describes Sharikov as an "anti-creation composed of a soulless sexual 'blueprint' grafted onto an animal's body (surely a demonic inheritance!) [who] combines all the basest and most savage instincts of both the dog and the con-man, thief, and drunk" (501). Even after Goscilo and Burgin acknowledge the implications of Preobrazhenskii's statement concerning the nobility of a dog's heart, their discussion still suggests that while Sharik emerges superior to the criminal Chugunkin, his "animal nature" inherently renders him an inferior (perhaps even diabolical) being.

True, vestiges of his dog heritage lead Sharikov to snap at fleas with his teeth and jubilantly kill cats, but Bulgakov never implies that these instinctive canine traits somehow demean a dog, nor at any point does he depict Sharik as savage or predatory. Sharik exhibits fierce behavior only in self-defense, when he believes he will be tortured or abused. In fact, only the *human* facets of Sharikov's behavior pose

a threat to others, particularly when he writes a denunciation of the Professor and threatens Bormenthal with a revolver. Burgin contends Preobrazhenskii is “unable to breathe soul into Sharik’s animal body ...” (1978, 502). This claim completely disregards the opening narrative, in which Sharik exhibits as much soul, sentience, and sensibility as any other character. Sharik himself eloquently asserts in the opening: “I’ve experienced everything, and am reconciled with my fate; and if I’m crying now, it’s only from the physical pain and cold, because my spirit hasn’t yet failed ... A dog’s spirit is tenacious” (Bulgakov 2002, 2).

Lev Anninskii, in his analysis of Vladimov’s *Faithful Ruslan*, maintains that Bulgakov uses the metaphor “heart of a dog” to indicate humanity’s “general loutishness, our high-handedness, our blind lack of culture.” He suggests that “Vladimov, probably, went right against the grain of Bulgakov by making the heart of the dog the locus of honor, nobility, and undivided, open-hearted self-sacrifice—all directly opposed to loutishness” (1991, 57).²⁰ Vladimov himself also takes umbrage at Bulgakov’s canine portrayal:

... I will honestly confess that this piece [*Heart of a Dog*] grates on me. Why was the dog insulted? Why was its heart presented as a repository for our sins, vileness, and nastiness? It is said that Mikhail Afanas’ich respected cats, but he obviously knew

²⁰ Although Anninskii’s claim of honor and nobility for Ruslan and loutishness for Sharik proves entirely unfair to Bulgakov’s canine, one should note a key distinction between the two dogs. Sharik is a street mutt of indeterminate breeding with no apparent training. Ruslan, however, is a kennel-bred prison dog. Mondry indicates that during World War II, Soviets developed their own variant of the German shepherd—for a time renamed the East European sheepdog to distinguish between the Soviet animal and that of the Nazis. Seeking the pup with the greatest ferocity, handlers in police kennels would select only one dog out of a litter of five (and typically drown the rest). These ferocious dogs would then be trained to “hate the enemy and love and obey their masters” (Mondry 2015, 230). After the dismantling of a labor camp, Ruslan’s handler (unable to shoot him as directed), runs the dog off. Ruslan then begins to ‘guard’ a former inmate, but like the other surviving dogs, he cannot overcome his training and eventually dies a violent death.

nothing at all about dogs;²¹ they are whatever we want them to be (Anninskii 1991, 67).

Vladimov also seems to have missed the point about not “maligning the dog.” Interestingly, the original title of Bulgakov’s tale did not focus on the dog’s heart, but rather his happiness: *A Dog’s Happiness: A Monstrous Story* (*Sobach'e schast'e: Chudovishchnaia istoriia*). This shift in focus emphasizes not only his right as a unique individual, but also the monstrosity of the violation in stripping him of happiness.

In the essay “Why Look at Animals?” John Berger writes, “The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary” (1980, 4). He identifies language as the primary differentiator that bridges the gap of understanding of a look between two humans and a look between human and animal. Bulgakov closes that gap and gives interpretive language to this watchful gaze of pre-operation Sharik, who observes the goings on in the apartment with a moral superiority free from ‘civilized’ human vices. When he begins to understand the nature of Preobrazhenskii’s rejuvenation services (helping clients regain their sexual drive), he experiences shame and considers the office offensive. After dinner, the scientist and his assistant begin to smoke, which Sharik also regards as foolish.²² Moreover, Sharik espouses clear hierarchies of behavior and morality, based on his canine experience. For example, of a cook who tosses meaty bones to hungry strays, Sharik says “Heavenly blessings to him for being a real character” (ibid., 219). But “of all the

²¹ Actually, Bulgakov and his family knew about and cared very much for dogs, as evident by their deep affection for their pet Bouton.

²² Prior to his victimization, Sharik’s denunciations prove fully comical and innocuous, particularly as they reverse the nature of dog attributes in Russian folk culture. As Mondry explains, “Dog culture was a marker of ungodly behaviour: excessive sexuality, deviousness and subversive talk” (2015, 13).

proletarians, janitors are the vilest rubbish. Human dregs, the lowest category.” That is, until Sharik encounters a doorman, whom he calls “many times more dangerous than a janitor. A completely hateful breed. Nastier than tomcats. A knacker in gold braid.” And the dog gleefully ponders biting the doorman’s “calloused proletarian leg” (ibid., 220).

Although the dog invokes Soviet terminology such as “proletarians” in his typology of class structure, his hierarchies remain benign—based primarily on whether various individuals exhibit kindness or tolerance toward dogs. Not until after the operation does the canine host metamorphose into “loutishness,” reflecting the depraved character of the dead human criminal. Bulgakov’s regard for animals combined with his deliberate selection of a canine protagonist further justifies placing blame for the failed experiment not on any inherent inferiority of “dog material” but exclusively on flawed human material, as Mondry asserts (1996, 2). This conclusion further validates Sharik’s significance as a positive, non-human character; it also bears pessimistic overtones for Preobrazhenskii, who so casually sacrifices the life—and happiness—of an innocent Other for experimentation.

Before and after the main events of the story, Preobrazhenskii already supported himself by performing sexual rejuvenation operations, which not only altered natural processes but *killed other non-human animals* to obtain the required materials (such as apes’ ovaries). Therefore, the Professor had been “gratuitous[ly] tampering” (Goscilo 290) with these processes for some time before his experiment with Sharik. Only when his principal experiment went awry and threatened his own security did he *somewhat* repent of his error. More significantly, one cannot ignore the “disquieting last impression” (Proffer 1984, 130) created by the final lines of the novella, where Preobrazhenskii continues to experiment under Sharik’s watchful gaze.

Laursen concurs with this narrative lack of absolution for the Professor (2007). In discussing Preobrazhenskii's reacquisition of linguistic dominance, Laursen emphasizes: "It would seem that the professor has learned little from the experience. His power has returned, and with it the desire to change minds" (510). Moreover, in the epilogue, the Professor specifically works with *brains*—the organ responsible for thought, reasoning, communication, and directing the activity of the body. The brains of which species, or how they were acquired, the reader never learns; nevertheless, this detail reveals Preobrazhenskii intends to try the experiment again—this time with more 'suitable' material than the corpse of a criminal.

Discussing Moreau's downfall, D.B.D. Asker remarks that "in his egotistical belief that he can play the god-nature role Moreau is himself subject to the irony of his own beliefs; his power is all too human and all too limited" (1982, 28). Moreau pays for this egotism with his life. But Preobrazhenskii, though paying lip service to his fallibility, *continues to experiment*. Just as Moreau's attempt to 'civilize' the natural world results in anarchy, this same instability pervades Bulgakov's tale, thereby highlighting a subtheme of atavism. If Sharikov's baseness cannot be attributable to his canine (animal) origins, does it represent a throwback to the original ignoble nature of human animals? If so, then does his fate bear larger implications regarding the impotence of modern science, education, and 'social progress' to ennoble and elevate humankind in perpetuity?²³ These questions demonstrate how traditional human-animal hierarchies and categories destabilize "in times of revolutionary upheaval, social transformation, or disintegration" (Costlow

²³ This question provides the central argument behind several of Wells' works, and in particular, *The Time Machine* (1895), which provides the author's highly pessimistic answer. In the novel, a time traveler ventures to the future to find that humanity has degraded into two polarized castes: the feeble, fatuous Eloi and the brutal, savage Morlocks. Wells' text provides a warning that despite societal progression, humankind must recognize its inherent animal nature and perpetually guard against regression in the form of atavism.

and Nelson 2010, 7). And whereas some may view the destabilization as leading to positive outcomes, Bulgakov shared similar concerns as Wells, although the former retained a more positive view of humanity's potential.

A Moral Obligation

Who bears responsibility when a new 'species' (whether dog-man or Soviet man) lacks the abilities or inherent qualities to fulfill its new role? Sharikov's lawless tendencies may originate with the dead Chugunkin (the deceased criminal whose body parts were harvested for the experiment), but his failure to develop as a conscientious human lies with both Preobrazhenskii, who created him physically, and the Bolsheviks, who created him socially. In this capacity, even Bulgakov seems to award Sharikov some small amount of pity because dogs should not be made into men, and proletarians should not be made into leaders.

Bulgakov witnessed the cataclysmic events of the October Revolution of 1917, which profoundly transformed Russian society. While some writers greeted the Bolshevik Revolution enthusiastically and committed themselves to advocating for a bright, new future, Bulgakov watched the same societal reconstruction with increasing skepticism and trepidation, fearful that the speed of revolutionary transition would result in widespread ruin.²⁴ Many believed true change necessitated violent upheaval. Bulgakov believed revolutions produced a "moral vacuum in which values are destroyed, power is given to the ignorant and unworthy, and evil consequently

²⁴ Bulgakov ridicules Soviet propaganda when Sharik mangles the famous advertising slogan by the Futurist poet Vladimir Maiakovskii: "*Nigde krome kak v Mossel'prome*" ("Nowhere else but Mossel-prom" ~ a Soviet building that housed chocolate, tobacco, flour, and other factories). Instead, the dog caustically pronounces, "*Nigde krome takoi otravy ne poluchite, kak v Mossel'prome*" ("Nowhere will you get such poisons as at Mosselprom") (Bulgakov 2002, 224). Fusso points out that in *Heart of a Dog*, "Soviet products are shown to be contaminations, substitutions, or pure fictions..." (1989, 393), thus negating the transformative power that Maiakovskii's jingles often implied.

predominates, violently and bloodily” (Doyle 1978, 480). He saw in Soviet Russia the disintegration of the spiritual self and the lack of higher ideals as resulting from atheistic materialism (Haber 1985, 345). Furthermore, he viewed the new Soviet individual as falsely enlightened and unprepared for the demands of the new society.²⁵

To those Soviet leaders who arrogantly believed in their transformative powers (“*preobrazim mir*”—“we will transform the world”), Bulgakov answered with the failure of *Preobrazhenskii*: the transformation story exposes the myth of the *tabula rasa* by demonstrating Sharikov’s retention of both the criminal elements (Chugunkin) and common elements (Sharik), neither of which can be transformed into a *higher* being. Moreover, those who attempt to alter certain social/natural hierarchies will face dire consequences. Mondry reads the ending of the novella as bearing ominous forebodings for the unfortunate canine, and submits the following conjecture: “Sharik waits in the microcosm of Preobrazhensky’s apartment for a proper and true *preobrazhenie*, which is still to come” (1996, 2).

But can a “proper and true” transformation ever transpire? Could any Sharikov be an improvement over the original Sharik? And although the violation of the dog, Sharik, stands out in sharpest relief, the same principles of autonomy apply to the dog-man Sharikov as well. Bulgakov portrays Sharikov from such a negative perspective that the reversal process at the end appears justified; nevertheless, one must acknowledge that, likeable or not, Sharikov had in fact become an independent

²⁵ Owning a pet during Preobrazhenskii’s time denoted status—although mocked and condemned by the Bolshevik regime; and in present-day Russia, dog-ownership also confers on city dwellers a similar status: “Acquiring a pet is the easiest way of showing one’s elitist status because dogs are more affordable than Jeep Cherokees and Cartier watches” (Barker 1999, 270). However, many who purchase the dogs cannot afford their upkeep, resulting in packs of abandoned dogs roaming the city and a dire crisis for animal shelters (*ibid.*). Thus history continues to repeat itself when attempts to transform a country without the appropriate infrastructure or resources results in the suffering of many—both human and non-human animals.

being. Thus, does Preobrazhenskii possess the right to destroy this *new* creature because of a “failed” experiment?²⁶ In his seminal book *The Case for Animal Rights* (1983), Tom Regan identifies one of the three tenets of the animal rights movement as the total abolition of the use of animals in science, together with an end to animal agriculture and hunting (2004). This goal remains unfulfilled, yet greater measures exist today to ensure some protections for animal subjects (although debate continues over the presumptuous use of other living beings incapable of giving consent).²⁷ And our awareness of and support for regulations regarding the ethical treatment of animals in science and medicine cannot help but inform our reader response to the character Sharik, thereby advancing his plight and awarding him increased status not necessarily congruent with the concerns of the author or his contemporaries.

A.C. Wright suggests that the conclusion we might draw from Bulgakov’s works as a whole is that human and non-human animals are clearly interrelated, and that “in some ways humans may differ very little from animals; in some ways they may be worse” (1991, 228). Locating the “mystical subtext” of the tale within Russian folk narratives, Mondry suggests that the novella’s end indicates a quest to

²⁶ Sharikov’s fate aligns somewhat with the guard dogs who became obsolete upon the closing of many Soviet prison camps. Trained for one purpose only, to guard the prisoners and keep them from escaping, the dogs were slaughtered by KGB dog handlers with machine guns (Kyncl 1987). A significant difference, of course, lies in the fact that the dog-man suffered execution because he could *not* be ‘appropriately’ trained. Later, after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, German authorities took a more humane approach by attempting to find homes for nearly 10,000 suddenly ‘useless’ border dogs (“Reforms” 1989, 14). But one police official questioned whether dogs who have “never learned anything except killing” could be domesticated (“Open Border” 1989, 1). From fiction to reality, these events underscore Mondry’s assertion that: “Nature against nurture, determinism against progress, hereditary [*sic*] and genetics against the environment—these themes are at the core of the problematics of human–animal encounters” (2015, 5).

²⁷ For example, Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees approve and oversee most animal research experimentation in the United States, under policies developed by the National Institutes of Health Office of Laboratory Animal Welfare (OLAW). In the UK, the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act of 1986 (revised in 2013) mandates the principles of the “3Rs”—the “replacement, reduction, and refinement of the use of animals in research” (“Research and Testing Using Animals” 2016).

“return the dog and the man to the paradise from which they were both expelled when they were one” (1996, 9). But as a medical practitioner vested in scientific understanding, Bulgakov likely neither considered humans and animals to be metaphysically linked, nor did he consider animals to be unconditionally *superior* to humankind. Instead, in *Heart of a Dog*, Bulgakov constructs—to the best of his human ability—a canine voice that reminds humanity of its moral obligation to protect and care for those less powerful and more susceptible to victimization—be they human animals, dog-men, or actual (not merely symbolic) starving canines. To value all living beings reflects an awareness of one’s place in a larger hierarchy of life and exemplifies humane priorities. In contrast, when individuals follow a path of blind ambition, fall prey to apathy, or embrace the short-sighted teachings of morally suspect leaders (for Bulgakov, the Bolsheviks), they help create a dehumanizing world of suffering, fear, and isolation for everyone—human, animal or otherwise.

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Crossing the Threshold: Domestic Territory and Nonhuman Otherness in Colin McAdam's *A Beautiful Truth*

Laura Jean McKay

In this article, I explore the representation of animal otherness in Colin McAdam's novel *A Beautiful Truth* (2013), in which a young chimpanzee is purchased and brought into the home of a human family. Otherness is discussed in this essay through Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's notions of territorialisation and also through the animal studies interpretations of the human/nonhuman divide as theorised by Margot Norris, Donna Haraway and Val Plumwood. Through this discussion, I explore the ways in which a constructed environment, such as a work of fiction, might navigate unfathomable otherness in human/nonhuman animal relationships.

In 2015, I regularly encountered a female magpie sitting on the deck attached to my home, an area that I considered part of my domestic space, and that she possibly considered part of hers. We both used the deck in similar ways – to eat on and to rest. The magpie was being a magpie in her territory and I was being a human in mine. Because these territories crossed over, we met in a zone of territorial exchange, where my fascination with and want of contact with the nonhuman other was indulged by her want of food. She would perch on my lap and eat food out of my hand. As long as I didn't try to touch her, we were okay. Humans and magpies are both predator species, but humans are apex or super predators (Goldman 2015, n.p.). Despite all the niceties and polite forms of

exchange between two animals that couldn't communicate very well with each other, she was always the one at risk. In every encounter, she was the one taking the chance, the one who might die. It was she, who was being fed unnaturally, who was losing her fear of humans, who, if she became violent, would suffer the consequences of death or removal. It was always an unfair exchange, it would never be equal.

In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987) Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari argue that territory is 'a result of art' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 316) in that territory is established by marking (for example, with rocks, barriers, scent and paint). Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of 'territorial signs' or indexes (ibid., 55) focuses on physical territory. Territorialisation exists in a constant motion of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation for these theorists, in which territory is established and redefined. Of this action they ask, 'how could movements of deterritorialisation and processes of reterritorialisation not be relative, always connected, caught up in one another?' (ibid., 10). Deleuze sheds more light on these notions in an interview with journalist Claire Parnet, *Gilles Deleuze from A to Z* (2012), which was released after Deleuze's death. Here, Deleuze explains that 'territory is defined in relation to a movement by which one leaves the territory' (Deleuze 2012). Deleuze continues:

there is no territory, without a vector of exiting the territory; there is no exiting the territory, that is, deterritorialisation, without at the same time an effort of reterritorialising oneself elsewhere, on something else. All this functions with animals and that's what fascinates me (ibid.).

This process of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation is indicated by mark making, which Deleuze and Guattari term as 'territorial signs' and 'indexes' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 55), distinguishing 'three kinds of signs: *indexes (territorial signs), symbols (deterritorialised signs), and icons (signs of reterritorialisation)*' (ibid., 65, italics original). They further note that 'Signs are

not signs of a thing; they are signs of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, they mark a certain threshold crossed in the course of these movements' (67). In Deleuze and Guattarian thinking, territory can also be considered in terms of otherness and the portrayal of the other through 'territorial representation' (Deleuze and Guattari 1977, 184).

I focus on the notion of territory in a domestic setting to consider how fiction about nonhuman animals navigates otherness. The word 'domestic' originates from the Latin for 'house' or 'home' (*domus*). The term domestic territory, in the context of this article, indicates the space marked out as home by human or nonhuman animals, often used for nesting. Fiction that imagines domestic territory may depict a space that is shared, transgressed and disputed by humans and other animals. Novels that represent human/nonhuman animal interactions often attempt to navigate the borders and territories of human and nonhuman otherness. In doing so, they confront what is known as 'the question of the animal' (Derrida 2008, 8),¹ that is, the impossibility of a human understanding of nonhuman animals. Fictional imaginings of human/nonhuman interaction explore territories that are often not navigable in reality, ones in which humans and other animals can communicate, have sexual relationships, in which power is held by the nonhuman and where animal minds are imagined into human worlds and vice versa. As I explore the complex plot of *A Beautiful Truth*, I expand this notion of domestic territory to include the physical body and the invasive encounters that humans have with other animals. I also wish to draw attention to the idea of psychological terrain (an area that isn't explicitly discussed by Deleuze and Guattari) as perhaps the most invasive area of human interaction with animals, where notions of training, breaking and experimenting are synonymous with human/animal relationships. In my discussion of domestic territory, I include

¹ Jacques Derrida draws from Heidegger to discuss 'the question of the animal' in *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.

the physical space that beings inhabit, as well as bodies and minds in these spaces. I argue that *A Beautiful Truth* is a case study of a fiction that is especially concerned with the physical and psychological aspects of non-human bodies, and how these spaces are used by humans in the domestic sphere.

Along with notions of territorialisation, the persistent gap between human and nonhuman animals is a preoccupation in philosophical studies of human/nonhuman relationships, and one that arises in fictional portrayals. Animal studies theorists Margot Norris, Donna Haraway and Val Plumwood focus on this divide in their work. In *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (1985), Norris discusses human/nonhuman interactions in the context of 18th and 19th century thinking. This was a time when the conceptualisation of humans versus animals was polarised into the cultural (human) and creatural (nonhuman) (Norris 1985, 3-4). Norris shows how these categories were collapsed by the seminal findings of Charles Darwin and the biocentric creations of Franz Kafka and D. H. Lawrence (among others) who wrote ‘as the animal – not *like* the animal, in imitation of the animal – but with their animality speaking’ (ibid., 1). Anthropocentric thought continues despite Darwinian and subsequent contributions and, as Donna Haraway explains in *When Species Meet* (2008), human exceptionalists still place humans ‘on the opposite side of the Great Divide from all the others’ (11). However, Haraway’s arguments across a number of works also demonstrate how this binary can be passionately disrupted. Haraway describes this as ‘mak[ing] a mess out of categories’ (ibid., 19), through a discussion of humans as ‘companion species’ (see also *The Companion Species Manifesto*, 2003) and an emphasis on ‘species interdependence’ (19).

Philosopher Val Plumwood also offers a critical framework to think about animal bodies and how they are separated from the animal being by anthropocentrism. In her article ‘Babe: the Tale of The Speaking Meat’ (2011), Plumwood discusses the dichotomy of human relationships to animal bodies –

especially when the terms of engagement change, such as when an animal is moved from farm animal to pet. Plumwood argues that:

There is injustice for such a being in being conceived reductively as body, first because such conception singles its referent out for treatment as radically less than it is, and second because such an instrumental reductionism defines the Other in terms that assume the right of a “higher” group to treat them as a resource for their ends. (2011, 205)

In terms of territorialisation, the shifting boundaries of human/animal engagement that are considered by Norris, Haraway and Plumwood, allow a discussion of novels that challenge the human/animal binary, and reveal what interspecies relationships may look like when the binary is destabilised, reversed or eradicated. To this discussion of animal bodies, I would like to add the work of animal studies theorist Vinciane Despret, who examines the lives of working animals and animals in captivity. Despret argues that, even in livestock and institutional situations, nonhuman animals can be understood to have agency through an acceptance of nonhuman perspective and exchange. She discusses the exchange between a parrot, Alex, and the researchers working with him, who have come to understand the bird’s ‘right to “want”’ (Despret 2008, 125). Despret argues that ‘By restating and inverting the question of control – no longer a solution requiring purification but a problem to be negotiated – the laboratory authorised a superb exchange of properties between the researchers and their subject’ (ibid., 125). *A Beautiful Truth* proves a difficult case study to explore notions of animal agency, as the chimpanzee character’s body is used as a resource in different scenarios of domesticity throughout the book and is repeatedly placed in situations where he is ‘other’, often responding to this othering through violence.

The notion of violence might be discussed more fruitfully as a form of agency through Norris’ theories. Norris maintains that the function of ‘animal violence’ is ‘a discharge of power for its own sake, as an expenditure of

superfluous, opulent energy and strength, and it is therefore simply appropriative, destroying its victims without malice or hatred, as the simple fulfilment of its biological destiny' (Norris 1985, 10). According to Norris, humans (in biocentric thought) are 'militaristic' in their violence, which is a natural 'fatalistic assent' (ibid., 10). Norris implies that violence is conveyed differently by humans as compared to other animals. While humans plot violence, other animals are more likely to react immediately. These arguments about militarised human violence relate to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of 'the abstract machine' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 7), in which human processes are mechanical ones. The abstract machine is 'a technical and physical construct that operates *on* bodies and social or concrete assemblages according to symbolic and transcendent imperatives (producing *mechanical* effects); that which territorialises and captures desire by limiting it to concrete forms' (Young, Genosko and Watson 2013, n.p.). Similarly to *A Beautiful Truth* both Norris and Deleuze and Guattari's discussions of human and nonhuman violence leave little room for animal agency. Even so, violence may be examined as the only form of agency open to Looee in *A Beautiful Truth*.

The Other Truth

The character of Judy in *A Beautiful Truth* is a woman of rural 1970s United States who is unable to conceive with her husband, Walt – and both want children. Judy muses that she 'had seen enough hours and days to know that when things are truly strange their strangeness doesn't appear until after the strangeness has passed' (McAdam 2013a, 10). These thoughts come after the announcement from Walt that he has purchased a baby chimpanzee so that they can raise it as their child in their own home, a domestic arrangement that promises to be truly strange. *A Beautiful Truth* portrays the confines of emotional and physical domesticity with a complexity befitting human/nonhuman animal interactions and relationships. McAdam weaves together an enormous cast of human and

nonhuman characters, perspectives and locations in order to tell the story of Looee, a male chimpanzee who was taken from Sierra Leone and sold to Judy and Walt by way of exotic animal smugglers, then rented to a pharmaceutical company for experimentation, and then finally housed in a field research centre with other chimpanzees. The novel is told from first, second and third person perspectives, from the points of view of different – sometimes multiple – characters, and in present, past and occasionally future tenses. Significantly, the novel also depicts the voices and interiority of human and nonhuman characters. This risky narrative style, where the author is attempting to present multiple sides of the story, highlights the complex relationship that modern Western cultures have with animals, enabling a broad reading of human/nonhuman animal relationships. The narratives, while at first seemingly disconnected, are united as Looee becomes increasingly significant to each. Through every shift in location and perspective, Looee's body and Looee's self are redefined as he moves from being Judy and Walt's child/pet, to being leased by a pharmaceutical company, to being part of a community for field research.

The complexity of *A Beautiful Truth* makes the novel both broad and confronting. Critical readings of the work must also navigate this sweeping portrayal of human/animal relationships and nonhuman otherness. In his essay 'Non-Human Otherness: Animals as Others and Devices for Othering', Sune Borkfelt argues that 'non-human animals are arguably placed in a constant, almost irredeemable state of alterity and are unable to speak for themselves from this othered position, which distinguishes their otherness from that of humans' (Borkfelt 2011, 137). This is particularly the case in the portrayal of Looee, who is taken from his home and forced to make do in new domestic spaces. In Judy and Walt's home he is always other; and this is also the case when he is sent to live with chimpanzees. It is easy to imagine that, had the narrative placed Looee back in Sierra Leone, Looee would have been other there too, after a childhood

raised by humans, and the damage of research experimentation on his mind and body. This unflinching look at Looee's domestic situations offers an example of the possible states of constant alterity that Borkfelt suggests.

The territories of otherness are explored in *A Beautiful Truth* through bodily and perceptual differences. At the beginning of Looee's journey, his otherness is super-imposed upon the otherness of parenthood. When it comes to the reality of adopting Looee, Judy and Walt simultaneously relate to his body and distance themselves from it. Looee has a fascination with body parts, and Judy attempts to set rules around this fascination. This relates to what film theorist and historian Kaja Silverman (discussing Lacan) describes as 'corporal zones – because they in effect represent those zones (mouth, anus, penis, vagina)' (Silverman 1983, 155-156). In the novel, Judy

looked down sometimes and saw this little hairy creature and thought is he my baby or a beast. He handed her blossoms and smiled. She could tell him to fetch his toys from the upstairs landing and he would. But he walked on all fours, always grunted before he ate, and idly put his finger in his anus and smelled his finger, sometimes licked it, although he heeded Judy on occasion when she said dirty Looee don't do that (McAdam 2013a, 42).

This focus on body as domestic space signposts Looee's later experience in The Girdish Institute, where his body is rented out to a pharmaceutical company and effectively becomes commercialised by humans.

In her book *Chaos, Territory and Art* (2008), Elizabeth Grosz discusses Deleuze and Guattari's theories of territorialisation in relation to art. Grosz argues that bodies are remade through territorialisation and chaos 'forestalled, framed, and welcomed through a regulated, tolerable if perhaps bracing and transformative dose' (Grosz 2008, 21). The transformation of Looee's body through human regulation adds to the confusion of the domestic situation in Judy and Walt's home. After adopting Looee, Judy's thoughts progress, from, 'is he my baby or a beast' to 'what's an animal?' (McAdam 2013a, 45). Neither is

answerable, or articulable, especially to people outside Walt and Judy's home. Judy and Walt keep to themselves initially, but eventually realise the way in which their family is seen by others: as an oddity and, ultimately, an alterity: 'One of them in the corner said is that a dog and Mike said that's a monkey in a suit' (ibid., 41); 'Susan just wasn't sure that Judy was spending her days as she should, and was really, frankly, afraid of seeing her with a chimpanzee' (41); 'the look on some people's faces – she saw judgment or arrogance or hints of dark questions she had not yet found the answers to' (87); 'Looee's days seemed sad to Larry, sometimes, and he would feel angry with Walt for taking him from wherever it was he belonged' (106). This transformation, of Looee the chimpanzee-as-other to Judy and Walt human-as-other-by-association, serves to both separate and unite the human and nonhuman characters. McAdam creates a kind of vortex of paradoxes for Judy and Walt, with Looee drawn in unwittingly. Judy and Walt are at once ashamed of and defiant in their roles as Looee's parents, despairing and delighting at difference and rejoicing in the unique experience of parenthood. Judy feels 'aware of other realities: that what she saw was not the whole truth, or what other people saw was simply not her truth. It was a lonely feeling' (98). While much of Judy and Walt's delight is in the upbringing of a small being, there is also joy and pride in Looee's different abilities, such as his love of swinging and climbing – the strength of his body – a joy that almost serves to overcome the realities of human-to-human versus human-to-nonhuman parenting.

McAdam warns in an interview that the relationship between humans and exotic animals brought into homes rarely goes well. This is an idea explored in other contemporary novels, especially in what reviewer Barbara J. King describes as a 'growing genre of chimpanzee fiction' (King 2013, n.p.). Books in this category might include Karen Joy Fowler's *We Are All Completely Beside Ourselves* (2013), Benjamin Hale's *The Evolution of Bruno Littlemore* (2011), and Neil Abramson's *Unsaid* (2011), not to mention fiction about other human-

simian relationships, such as Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* (1995), about a human and a gorilla. Fowler's *We are Completely Beside Ourselves* is similar to *A Beautiful Truth* in that it depicts domestic territory gone tragically wrong. Fowler's book is narrated by a young woman who tries to come to terms with her 1970s childhood, and ultimate separation from her family's adoptive chimpanzee 'Fern'. Like Looee, Fern also ends up at an animal research facility, which uses her body for experiments. McAdam says that the 1970s was 'the heyday of people trying to raise chimps in their homes [...] It still happens. And it always has the same tragic consequences' (McAdam 2013b). In 2013, I visited The Centre for Great Apes in Florida, United States of America, where ex-show chimpanzees and orang-utans were housed, along with a number of primates that had been rescued from homes where they were often raised on beer, cigars and doughnuts. The staff at the centre advised that the animals they rescue often arrive at the centre obese and some had been housed in cupboards when they grew too big and their owners didn't know what to do with them. While an infant chimpanzee is manageable and easily anthropomorphised, an adult chimpanzee has four times the strength of a human being (Walker 2009, 229). Unlike Fowler's book, where the chimpanzee is distinctly missing from the narrative (we never actually meet Fern), *A Beautiful Truth* gives voice to Looee and other chimpanzee characters. Instead of being told about Looee's experiences, the reader is invited to experience *with* the nonhuman character, 'Nights of hunger and bony moons, steel and rubber teat' (McAdam 2013a, 10).

The territorial boundaries of Looee's body are also explored in terms of his burgeoning sexuality. Moving from infancy to childhood and then adolescence, Looee masturbates with increasing frequency, preferring human women in magazines. Judy's female friends are at times treated with suspicion, yet also the objects of his desires. In one scene, 'Susan came over and Looee was very excited. He didn't go to shake her hand, he crawled right up to her and Susan

said oh. He liked her big stiff boobs' (McAdam 2013a, 46). Susan is horrified when he squeezes her breast, and Judy tries to placate her by reminding her that Looee is a teenager, like Susan's children once were. Judy says 'You remember what it was like. It's just his age,' to which Susan responds, 'Well, yes, but he's not' (ibid., 49). The sentence is unfinished, emphasising that Looee is not a teenage boy, but a male chimpanzee. Just as Looee's body is owned by different human characters, Looee also tries to take ownership of women's bodies by becoming possessive. At one point, he throws the radio out the window because the song 'American Pie' seems to him to be threatening Judy. He is acutely sensitive to emotional shifts, but interprets these through a lens that the human characters neither share nor understand.

As the novel progresses, Judy and Walt's story is infused with Looee's perception of the world. Looee is eventually provided with an enclosure off the side of Walt and Judy's 'big house'. The enclosure is fitted with a doorbell, which Looee can ring if he needs to see his adoptive parents, 'But when he was in his own house he never heard no, Looee, no' (91). This domestic freedom, with constraints, allows Looee to develop in two directions: within the rules of human culture and within the rules of his innate world-view: a lonely world without the company of other chimpanzees, but one where certain needs can be met, such as climbing and swinging. In his house, Looee is territorial and lets 'no one cross his threshold unless he really liked them' (93). With this territorialised space, the relationship that Looee has with humans becomes blurred and the categories that the humans have put in place become messy – to use Haraway's phrase. A family friend, Larry, arrives early for a Christmas party and Looee becomes suspicious of his presence. I quote extensively from the following section in order to explore this human/nonhuman animal encounter and how power, territory and otherness are represented.

As Judy and Larry enter Looee's enclosure,

there was the warmth of alcohol on their breath, the warmth of distant light – and Looee felt immediately removed from both. Concrete at his feet and at his back. Larry and Judy had gathered affection as they had walked to Looee's door, and Looee mistakenly sensed it as affection for each other rather than for him. Judy didn't notice when he made a quizzical noise.

I shouldn't leave the candles burning she said. She touched Larry's arm and said will you come and help me for a second.

Looee watched them leave and pull the steel door behind them. He didn't trust their movements tonight and didn't understand why Larry wasn't staying longer. He stared at the door and listened. He couldn't hear them walking away or talking and thought they were just outside his door. Hiding and whispering secrets. He banged on the door but they wouldn't open it. He banged again and got angry (176).

Later, Larry enters Looee's room and props the door open to spend time with him, as he has done many times before, and 'They drank. Looee wasn't looking at Larry, and Larry wasn't comfortable sitting close to him. There was a prickliness to Looee, and it felt like they were staring forward like rivals at a bar' (177). Larry comments that Looee is in a bad mood, but 'Larry seemed equally confrontational to Looee. He looked at the open door and was all the more confused' (177). When Larry bids him goodnight 'Looee jumped at him and pulled him by the arm' (178). This understated sentence has power when it is understood that Looee is so strong that he has broken the man's arm.

Judy's husband Walt arrives home to find Larry and Judy maimed – Larry with a broken arm and one of his buttocks bitten off and Judy with a hand missing, her face disfigured. Walt finds Looee

sitting in a corner of the living room, his eyes slow blinking and brown. As the ambulance raced towards them through a horizontal snowstorm, Walt chased Looee the two of them screaming into a corner of Looee's house where Looee cowered and hugged himself. Walt had his rifle and aimed it at Looee while the paramedics took Larry out of the room. Larry remembered nothing. Walt couldn't imagine the creature that was taken away. Tranquilizers and game wardens. Was he screaming or muttering his own weird story, that animal they found. [...] Why can't a man turn his back on his son (178-179).

The final question in this scene is an interesting one. Despite Walt's apparent inability to turn his back on his son, Walt *does* disown Looee, who is sent to The Girdish Institute and never sees Walt or Judy again. If Looee was human, he would also be incarcerated for his actions. Human incarceration does not usually include clinical trials resulting in permanent physical and psychological damage, however. Judy will remain disfigured for life, but after the initial point of violence, will slowly heal physically and emotionally. By contrast, Looee will be subject to painful experimentation, disease and a cramped cage for the next twenty years, the subject of medical tests to his decline. This is the most blatant example of interspecies disconnection in the book – the pivotal moment where human and animal territories collide, power dynamics shift and both species retreat to familiar territory. Norris' theory of human and animal violence can be applied to this scene, which depicts Looee enacting immediate and violent creatural retribution and the humans resorting to long term, and equally violent cultural punishment. As Norris argues, 'exchanges between natural and cultural life has its most disturbing consequences in connection with the redefinition of human violence' (Norris 1985, 9).

Looee is removed from Judy and Walt's home and taken to a section of the Girdish Institute nicknamed 'The Congo' for the lack of light in the facility and the secrecy of its experiments. The reference to the Congo also nods to Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899), a novel often used as an example of fictional representation of colonisation and othering. In the research facilities, Looee encounters his own species for the first time since infancy, describing them as 'dogpeople'. He 'awoke to the smell of nothing and a dogperson sitting in a close dark corner of his cage. He sprang and screamed and banged his hands and feet on the cage to scare the creature away' (McAdam 2013a, 194). In this encounter, Looee is confronted with the horror of his own otherness: he sees the chimpanzee as he himself has been seen by humans, and the horror is almost insurmountable.

Physically, Looee may be similar to the other chimpanzees at the institute, and they may even share a history of being kidnapped and raised by humans, but he has been taught that looking and behaving like a human is correct, and looking and behaving like a chimpanzee is incorrect. He faces a kind of purgatory in the confrontation with self, where everything he has been taught is put into question by the reality of his own species.

McAdam addresses the shock of the other from the perspective of the nonhuman animal, in which encounter is portrayed with horror, then familiarity and then denial – a repressing representation, to borrow from Deleuze and Guattari's term (Deleuze and Guattari 1977). In the cages:

Both were shivering like orphans in an alley. They wouldn't look each other in the eye. Looee hit the cage with the back of his arms and Dusty had nowhere to go. He wouldn't look at Looee but was grinning in fear. Looee saw the grin, saw it as fear instead of a caricature of an ugly man's smile. He understood Dusty for a moment, and then reverted to understanding nothing (McAdam 2013a, 194-195).

This glimpse of understanding, followed by a state of confusion is mirrored in Judy and Walt's reaction to parenting Looee, and then later in the field section at Girdish. McAdam appears to use this repetition of encounter to show similarity between human and animal others, rather than difference. Indeed, the book trailer for *A Beautiful Truth* focuses on this point, depicting footage of a chimpanzee completing a series of tasks on a computer screen. The text accompanying the trailer reads:

Genetically we have more in common with the chimpanzee than a spinner dolphin does with a bottle nose dolphin, or a red eyed vireo does with a blue eyed vireo. Two related birds with different color eyes. It's a 98% DNA match. We are not descended from apes. We are apes (McAdam 2013c).

A Beautiful Truth confronts the perverse and complex issues of human intervention in nonhuman animal lives, where one ape (human) invades another

(chimpanzee). This provides a challenge to the notion of de- and reterritorialisation. How can a body, which has been invaded, be reclaimed? If Looee's body has been effectively remade into human commercial territory by being leased by a pharmaceutical company, how does the process of de- and reterritorialisation occur? I pose these questions without seeking to answer them in the scope of this paper; rather, they are theorisations of the questions that the novel raises.

Challenging Territory

After years of experimentation on his body, Looee once again becomes other when he is moved from The Congo and introduced to the established community of chimpanzees housed in the field research section of Girdish, headed by a human researcher called Dave. The field section is described by the collective chimpanzee voice as The World: 'The World needs fruit. The World needs sleep. The World needs touch and the quick pink heat' (McAdam 2013a, 12). It is soon apparent that this is the voice of a group of chimpanzees, the collective noun for which is a 'cartload' – interesting to note, given the fact that these are animals that have effectively been kidnapped. The voice that McAdam employs for this section is present tense and unconventionally syntaxed, revealing the inner world of the non-human characters:

Dave was full of questions.
? What does Ghoul want.
? What is name-of this which-is black.
And Ghoul had to answer in a certain way or Dave would not understand.
Banana give Ghoul which-is black.
That is not right.
Please machine give Ghoul banana which-is black (ibid., 19-21).

McAdam expands on his use of language in an interview, in which he explains that he 'wanted to look as roundly and honestly as I could at chimpanzees and

tease out from that what it means to be an ape. I'm an ape. You're an ape. We're all great apes, but we don't have a language for that I think. The book was my attempt to find a language for that' (McAdam 2013b). Where English language is inadequate, McAdam supplies his own, with words such as 'yek' to describe Looee's otherness; 'oe', a term to indicate a blissful sense of peace and security; and 'jharag!' to indicate an almost violent excitement. These terms are used exclusively by the characters in the chimpanzee community of Girdish. This has the effect of bringing the reader into the voice and mind of the other. A number of contemporary novels (not to mention poetry, such as Les Murray's *Translations from the Natural World* [1992]) use this technique, including *The Art of Racing in the Rain* (2008) by Garth Stein, told through the perspective of a dog, and *The White Bone* (1999) by Barbara Gowdy, told in the collective voice of a herd of elephants.

The World of the field section of the Girdish Institute is cramped, passionate and violent, dominated by food, sleep and sex, along with the ever shifting battle for male supremacy over the group. The other in this world view is human – a controlling, yet very foreign body. Mr. Ghoul, a chimpanzee who has been at the institute long enough to remember times when the humans would smoke with him, reward him if he used a computer and occasionally beat him with sticks, is the primary voice in these sections. Humans are presented as violent and confusing, with occasional acts of kindness: 'Sometimes the people were good and he would walk with them down the hall and hold their hand' (McAdam 2013a, 19). When Mr Ghoul first encounters Looee, he describes him as 'the yek' – indicating Looee's alterity. Mr Ghoul watches as 'a yek appears. He walks oddly. Mr Ghoul sits. He doesn't challenge the yek. He watches [...] The yek doesn't move or make a sound. He is black in the corner [...] There is no fear in that room. Mr. Ghoul stares at him' (ibid., 238). In describing Looee as a 'yek', Looee is at once other and also similar. A recognisable otherness.

While Mr Ghoul accepts Looee, the rest of the chimpanzees in *The World* struggle with the change. In *Strangers to Ourselves*, psychoanalytic philosopher Julia Kristeva describes the meeting with the stranger as ‘a choked up rage deep down in my throat [...] the image of hatred and of the other’ (Kristeva 1991, 1). McAdam portrays a similar reaction in the field section of *Girdish*. One of the chimpanzees watches Looee enjoying the sun, thinking of him as ‘A foreigner [who] takes our jobs and our women. He has greasy hair, kinky hair, blond hair and no hair, smells like armpits and cumin, patchouli and Ralph Lauren, and I swear I can smell his ass. [...] We used to know everyone here’ (McAdam 2013a, 281). In contrast, Looee ‘sees a dogperson running at him and it looks like he won’t stop. It’s the crazy one who lost a tooth. He gets hit and is scared despite feeling that he shouldn’t be afraid of these animals. He cowers while he is hit, and then runs’ (ibid., 246-247). Disassociation between nonhuman primates who have spent their lives with humans, even in cruel situations, is common. In *The Centre for Great Apes in Florida*, I met a chimpanzee who was housed separately from other chimpanzees because she couldn’t accept living with animals. She had been exposed to human culture to such a degree that the creatural was incomprehensible to her and beyond curiosity. She seemed a lonely figure in a separate enclosure, unable to exist in the human world because of her nonhuman strength and otherness, and unable to exist in the chimpanzee world because of her over-exposure to human culture.

After the death of a benevolent alpha male, the community of chimpanzees in the field centre is in disarray – ruled by two violent alpha males. The introduction of Looee to the group brings about change, in that ‘the presence of the yek is a brief new perspective, a momentary catalyst for correcting the state of the World. Soon there is a fight involving six of them’ (247). The notion of de- and reterritorialised space can be applied to the sections of McAdam’s book set in

The World. For example, on arriving at the field research section, Looee feels that:

For these, his past, and most of the rest of his days, he does not know where he is. A diplomat's son. He is not Looee. He is not a number. He is not he without others to need and define him. There is a truth in every corner of Girdish. Every ape has a home and leaves it; every ape is lost without other apes (249).

This loss of country is also akin to the concept of the foreigner. Looee is a foreigner in his own body – unable to rectify his human experiences with his nonhuman physicality; his animal reactions with the human punishment; his animal companions with his human memories. However, the community in the field research area are equally without country. Though they have thoroughly territorialised their space, and are largely left to their own lives – within the confines of the sanctuary and where food, shelter and medicines are available – almost all of the chimpanzees have experienced life under intensive human intervention and have trouble leaving these memories behind. As well as Looee's history, which spans most of the novel, Mr Ghoul's history is also revealed as that of a chimpanzee used to research the possibilities of interspecies communication. After this research is defunded and abandoned, he still attempts to communicate with Looee using a symbols chart to 'lazily, autistically, [point] at the symbols for up and window and vodka, meaning that when the bed is up you can look through the windows at the moon' (249). Referring back to Deleuze's and Guattari's signs, Ghoul's relationship with his old self is with a deterritorialised space, one that he hasn't quite moved on from.

Looee is also stuck between worlds. Despite being disfigured by cage life in the lab, he climbs to the top of a tree in the research wing and makes the same sounds that he made in the trees when living with Judy and Walt. Looee

moans and snaps and coughs and eats and speaks a language almost human.
Pentecostal kitchen gossip. Brandy swoons and lonely comfort and orgasms
baffled by swells of new delight.
He is calling for someone.
Laughing.
He stops and hools that song from where beginnings and endings join.
;Hoooooooooooooooooooo!
He's eating spaghetti with meatsauce.
;Whoo!
Friends too far to hear him (289).

While Looee is depicted as finally free amongst his species, there is a melancholy to this final scene, as he calls for Judy and Walt, who are far away both in distance and in their unwillingness to ever see him again. The incarcerated Looee holds the guilt at his creatural violence and is punished for it, while Judy and Walt's cultural guilt goes unpunished.

Conclusion

One of the great successes of *A Beautiful Truth* is McAdam's replication and even-handed depiction of the imbalance imbued in human/nonhuman animal relationships. The complexities of human and nonhuman behaviour are portrayed through the deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation of bodies and domestic spaces, and the tension builds as the boundaries between human and animal are blurred. McAdam shows where domestic territory shared across species fails. Although the immediate victims are the human characters of Judy, Larry and Walt, the ultimate victim is Looee. He is forcibly removed from his original Sierra Leonean jungle territory and given a new space. Then, when he brings the animal-instinctual into human domestic territory, he is taken away to the Girdish Institute. At this point the notion of domestic territory moves from the human home and depictions of Looee as a body in that home, to Looee's body leased to a pharmaceutical company.

In *A Beautiful Truth*, mechanical process is aligned with loss, for both humans and other animals. A veterinarian in one of the scenes in the research laboratory is dissecting another deceased chimpanzee in the section where Looee is housed, and sees his hands inside the animal's body and loses 'all sense of whose hands they were' (McAdam 2013a, 216). Due to the effects of repeated ketamine injections, Looee also loses sense of his hands, and attacks them regularly. McAdam regularly visited a chimpanzee sanctuary in Montreal to research his book and describes an interaction with a male chimpanzee who spat water on him in order to make it clear that he wanted a bottle of Gatorade. McAdam says that the chimpanzee's

struggle was to communicate his desire to get that thing. First it began with play and then it escalated and became more desperate and when he finally got what he wanted he reasserted his authority by dinging the water bottle at my head. As I stood there humiliated, I also stood there with open eyes, thinking all the stuff that I'd read to that point about our genetic and immunological relationship with chimpanzees is there in a nutshell. I've been thinking of human life since those times as ape life. As an interplay between individuals wanting something and other individuals either arbitrating or providing (McAdam 2013d).

McAdam's views align him with Despret's theories of animal agency; however, his novel also points to the fact that there is a big difference between human and nonhuman agency. Despite the correlations that McAdam continues to draw, the separation between cultural and creatural always becomes clear: at the end of the day the veterinarian is able to leave the institute, Looee is not, and will not for the remainder of his life in the book.

McAdam's portrayal of the similarities between human and chimpanzee primates is Darwinian in its attempt to 'collapse' (Norris 1985, 3) difference. Norris argues that, by contrast, 'Hegel made the function of the "other" in human desire the cornerstone of the symbolic life that marks the radical distinction between Nature and culture' (ibid., 3). For Norris, biocentrism allows the traditional view of nonhuman animals' deficient lack (in intelligence, ability and

power) to be instead prescribed to humans, in which ‘it is cultural man, rather, who is engendered by an imaginary lack that gives birth to desire, language, intersubjectivity, social life, that is, the entire Lacanian Symbolic Order that is governed by the “other”’ (3-4).

Is the overarching message to *A Beautiful Truth* (for it is certainly a novel with a strong moral compass) that we should leave nonhuman animals alone? In terms of territorial engagement, the depiction of human domination is not one of invasion as such (at least, not at first) but of bringing the nonhuman into the human space. McAdam shows how this can work (to a degree) in a human/baby chimpanzee relationship, as long as the chimpanzee behaves as a human – as much as this is possible. When Looee returns to chimpanzee nature, he is punished and his body effectively taken from him. The Girdish Institute is described by one of the characters as a ‘perverse abattoir where the animals were efficiently denied their death’ (McAdam 2013a, 216). It is also a space that takes human territorialisation to a level where other bodies are, as Plumwood suggests, resources to be owned, manipulated and discarded. Norris also argues that in terms of biocentric thinking, ‘mimesis acquires a negative value as inimical to the animal’s power and to the body’s life. Mimesis is the negative mark, the mark of absence, castration, and death’ (Norris 1985, 5). In the theorisation of *A Beautiful Truth*, the territorial mark (index or sign) described in Deleuze and Guattari’s and Norris’ notions is that of Looee’s ruined body at the hands of human intervention, and Looee is left in a between state of motion and de- and reterritorialisation. If McAdam’s intention was to show how badly human love for another animal can go, it has been starkly realised in *A Beautiful Truth*.

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Divine Wings: Literary Flights between the Cyclic Avian in Emily Brontë's Poems and Oblivia's Swan Song in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*

Susan Pyke

Introduction: a Readerly Aesthetic of Ecological Consciousness

A readerly aesthetic of ecological consciousness, outlined in recent ecocritical scholarship, has led me to connect a number of Emily Brontë's poems (from an oeuvre created between 1835 and 1848) to the swooping turns in Alexis Wright's third and latest novel *The Swan Book* (2013). I respond to Brontë's strange avians in the company of Wright's stranger swans, even as Brontë's Romantic poems strongly connect to the Christian Book of Nature as conceived in the Middle Ages, and Wright's work draws upon her Waanyi nation's millenniums of Dreaming. Reading Brontë's poetry and Wright's novel together moves me towards a promising conceptual space beyond human centrality. There are critical historical and cultural differences that separate Brontë's and Wright's representations of human relations with fellow creatures, but both writers share an acute awareness of the physical dependencies shared by human and avian bodies and suggest a divine unrestricted by the human image.

The speakers in Brontë's poetry often evoke birds as responsive others, drawing particular attention to the shared cyclic patterns between the human and

avian species in ways that indicate an affinity with German Romanticism. The efforts of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling, a philosopher Brontë read and admired, to bring together the physical world and transcendental affect, is at the heart of her writing. James McKusick has argued that such strands of Romantic thinking help create the 'holistic paradigm' that offers a 'conceptual and ideological basis for understanding the potential of salvaging our damaged world' (2000, 11). Brontë's poems form part of this foundation for current ecological perspectives that seek to break free from exclusionary humanist thinking by recognising the interconnection of all creatures.

Brontë's ecologically Romantic depictions of the avian also reflect her immersion in the works of Romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth, even as she departs from the more anthropocentric perspective found in his poems. For Brontë scholar Marianne Thormählen, the work of Wordsworth 'engendered views of Nature as a manifestation of God' in ways that departed from earlier understandings of 'Nature as a repository of evidence for Christianity' (1999, 67). Lyn Pykett also describes how Brontë followed the Romantic poets' conceptualisation of 'nature in its cyclic continuity' as 'a source of harmony', but makes the point that in Brontë's poems 'death is figured as the resolver of all contradictions' and is a 'means of transcendence that will liberate the imprisoned spirit' (1989, 68). For me, Wordsworth approaches a secularised divine through human imagination in a way that inflates human capacities. In contrast, Brontë's poetry is interested in a spirituality that goes beyond human limitations.

Micael Clarke has explored the complexities in the divine represented in Brontë's poetry, through the context of Victorian religious discourses. Clarke's insights support my contention that Brontë's poems disrupt assumptions that humans have a right to a God-given dominion over the world. Working with Jacques

Derrida's theoretical differentiations between the holy, faith and religion, Clarke focuses on the 'mystery and awe' that accompanies a sense of the holy (2009, 199). Clarke's analysis demonstrates the intellectually rigorous ways in which Brontë's poems engage with the immanent. It is this mix of Romantic and Christian philosophies of her time that makes Brontë's work unique.

I extend Clarke's analysis of the spiritual imaginary in Brontë's poems to include a more material divine, building on the work Kathleen Stockton has done with Luce Irigaray's 'spiritual materialism' (Stockton 1994, xv). Stockton's reading of George Eliot's and Charlotte Brontë's work through Irigaray reveals a Victorian spiritual materialism that escapes the conventions of patriarchal religion through a deeply embodied sense of 'escape, shadow and inarticulate utterance' (27). This material mysticism is also present in Brontë's work, giving her poems contemporary force, particularly when they offer an allowance for more balanced relations between humans and avians.

The nascent posthumanism of Brontë's work is extended in Wright's critically acclaimed novel, *The Swan Book*. Where Brontë stresses co-existence, Wright's mix of contemporary and traditional storytelling takes readers further, towards a premise of co-creation, by describing a dreamy world-making between Wright's central protagonist Oblivia, and the equally displaced swans that claim her as kin.

Wright's literary work is increasingly included in tertiary reading lists and her second novel, *Carpentaria*, won Australia's prestigious Miles Franklin Award in 2007. *The Swan Book* was shortlisted for the same prize. The powerful eclecticism that attracts readers to her work is reflected in its literary criticism. Ben Holgate describes her writing as magic realism, then, following Linda Hutcheons, as 'historiographic metafiction' (2015, 635). For Linda Daley, *The Swan Book* sits squarely on the stage of 'world literature' (2016, 8). In an interview with Wright,

Arnold Zable suggests the novel is something like campfire storytelling (Wright and Zable 2013, 28). Arnaud Barras brings together these various claims, working with the postcolonial insights of Alison Ravenscroft to show how Wright's work is constructed to resist 'straightforward fixation of meaning' by 'self-consciously' combining 'Aboriginal storytelling and worldly folklore' to create an 'allegory of reading' (Barras 2015, 5, 7, 9). In this reflexive context I suggest, with care, that to *my* reading Wright evokes an agential nonhuman divine that nurtures more productive dynamics between humans and other earth beings, including, in *The Swan Book*, the avian.

Daley offers a strong critical appreciation of the ontological alterity in Wright's work. She argues its 'material, aesthetic and political nature' has 'a force that opens a world' because of the way her writing resonates with 'her people and ancestry to which she is intimately connected' (2016, 8, 13). Wright supports this contention by emphasising the importance of the stories handed to her by her people (Wright and Zable 2013). Her stories are fleshed into her very being, together with the beings of her elders and ancestors.

The ontological alterity of *The Swan Book* is further empowered by its flexible temporal and spatial boundaries. As Daley incisively notes, *The Swan Book* complicates Western 'cartographic bounds of territory or space' (2016, 13). This is vital to the novel's impact. Wright's novel makes real Giorgio Agamben's theoretical perspective that refuses classifications and exclusions, creating a world that is akin to his 'zone of non-knowing' where the 'mystery' of the nonhuman is accepted (2004, 91, 92). As Daley argues, Wright's central character, Oblivia, is 'connective to ... the untimely different time of the nonhuman' through an 'animation' of Country that 'occurs through the interconnection of human and nonhuman forces' (20, 22). This

connectivity activates Agamben's evocative descriptions of the ways in which time and space are necessarily different for each species.

There is, at the same time, a contemporary punch to the novel, provided by Wright's focus on the impact of climate change. Positioning her work as 'describing the hornet's nest of the world' where displacement induced by climate change is already underway for many species, she asks 'What happens to a bird – or to anyone – who has no story for that country?' (Wright and Zable 2013, 28, 30). In this sense *The Swan Book* is an elegy, lamenting a loss written into the past, present and future of the Waanyi inhabitants. It is also deeply cognisant of the broader world at risk.

The empathetic imagination of contemporary readers approaching the work of Brontë and Wright will be sparked differently depending on their reading position. As Barras has argued, the 'relationality' of the reader is critical to their approach to Wright's work (Barras 2015, 2). The same can be said, to a lesser extent, for Brontë's poems. I approach the work of both authors as an ecocritical reader, concerned about my role in a beleaguered world acutely damaged by sustained human pollution. This mode of ecocritical reading has been contextualized by Timothy Morton, who argues that ecocritical readings can create a 'difficult, disturbing, and potentially traumatic encounter with enjoyment' (2008). This melancholic mode of reading becomes, for Morton, the 'ecological thought' (2010). Beginning from the conclusions reached by McKusick and others, Morton describes the ecological thought as a direct descendant of Romanticism. Ecocritical readers, he suggests, might well understand the interdependence between humans and other creatures as a 'vast' and immeasurable 'mesh' (2010, 15). The links I find between Brontë's material mysticism and Wright's expansive kinship suggest this Romantic enmeshment. Beyond this understanding lies the possibility of a non-Indigenous 'not-knowing' that looks towards Agamben's challenge. As Barras points out, Wright's ontology is not open

for conceptual adoption, in and of itself. It does, however, suggest there are alternative routes to the Western trajectories driving global carbon pollution.

The unspeakable and mysterious interconnections between material objects and discourses of spiritual imagination have been partially described by Karen Barad. Bringing together the insights of quantum physics and literary analysis, Barad has argued for more ‘radical political imaginaries’ pointing to ‘aboriginal cultures’ for understandings of the ‘other within’ (2015). This need not involve the appropriation prudently criticised by Barras. In her earlier work Barad describes, in illuminating detail, the enfolding intra-actions that allow for a physical materiality (2007). As she explains, with other new materialists such as Jane Bennett, humans are, at a molecular level, anything but purely human. Such understandings assume the agency of all phenomena and allow for ways of being that escape human understandings. Such a premise necessarily does away with any sense of one species being privileged over the other. The idea that humans are but one mode of potentiality supports Wright’s contention that ‘If you do the wrong thing to the country, the country will get sulky and cause harm’ (Wright and Zable 2013, 30). As there is no self-contained act at the molecular level, humans can never fully understand the implications of their partial embodiment. Further, they will variously experience the ramifications of their intra-actions with others. Attentive care is therefore required to live with a minimum of harm to others.

Barad’s fusion of discourse and materiality justifies the attuned responses to encounters with nonhuman others that are found in the works of Brontë and Wright. These intra-actions do not, however, mean that it is possible for humans to speak *for* nonhumans. What *is* possible is acting on a recognition of mutual enmeshment. Cary Wolfe evocatively describes this awareness and attunement to the other as a ‘constitutive dependency’ (2010, xxvi). To understand the human inability to see, or

to speak for the other, to know there are blind spots that come with being human, creates a starting point for newly attentive encounters. This attunement has practical ramifications. Once humans allow for nonhuman agency, then the work to reduce carbon pollution and other damage against the world shifts towards a more ecological orientation. If the earth is to remain liveable for *all* creatures, not just humans, inadequate and ill-conceived human-oriented ‘solutions’ no longer apply. Brontë and Wright both provide literary responses to the nonhuman that make space for these more inclusive actions.

Brontë’s Strange Birds: the Fearsome Talon of the Hawk and the Power of the Piercing Eye that Glares Askance

My reading of Brontë’s poetry has much of the melancholy imbued in Morton’s ecological thought. Her poems depict a ghostly world that might, in less than two human generations, only exist in cultural imaginaries. Further, as Barad has argued in the context of Fukushima, ‘multiple times’ are ‘at the same place’ most clearly when past damage manifests as present loss; ‘hauntings are not immaterial’ (2015). Like swirling radioactive deposits in the ocean, the great acceleration towards current levels of global warming can be traced back to Brontë’s time and place (Steffen et al. 2015). In the mid-1800s the rapidly industrialising textile industries of West Yorkshire were busily producing deposits now counted in the 400 parts per million CO₂ that is already shifting weather and habitats, thus displacing many species, including the threatened avians so evocatively described by Thom van Dooren (2014). With this spectre of loss in mind, Brontë’s divine within her poetry is strikingly relevant.

For Brontë’s speakers, birds are both singular beings and metaphorical allusions. In the first instance, what generally occurs between the represented birds

and the speakers are moments of mutual attunement. Animal studies scholar Vinciane Despret describes these moments as ‘situations of exchange’ (2008, 135). As Barad makes clear in her description of a network of interconnected relations that cross back and forward through a dynamic co-affectivity, humans might ignore these relations, but they cannot exist outside these relations. Of course Brontë does not write directly to Barad’s concept of material intra-action, but her particular articulation of Romanticism allows for this mutual agency by representing the other-than-human in non-hierarchical ways.

Where Brontë’s poems refer to birds specifically, a sense of shared morbidity often emerges, with death being depicted as an inevitability that accompanies creaturely vulnerability to cyclic seasonal change. This important metaphorical emphasis in Brontë’s work makes it clear that as death comes to birds, so too will it come to humans. As Wolfe, with others, has argued, this animal vulnerability, with its ‘shared embodiment, mortality and finitude’ is that which makes humans attend to other creatures in ways that are not human-centred (2010, 62). This shift from human exceptionality and privilege is how Wolfe defines the term posthuman. From this posthuman ecological perspective, if the human aim is to live well, then it is equally important that all other creatures also live well.

Brontë’s (1992) lyrical non-hierarchical perspective is evident in her rousing epic poem ‘The Death of A. G. A.’, where, as a heroine dies on a battlefield, a ‘lark sang clearly overhead’ (line 139). This poem, set in Gondal, an imaginative world created by Brontë and her younger sister Anne over many years, sounds out a death knell that signifies, for the speaker, the transitory nature of life. It also signals that life will continue on beyond the death of the heroine and the lark. As the battle continues, the heroine’s corpse will become carrion for the ‘hungry hawk’ and other watchful ‘wild birds of the air’ (line 319). The birds’ uncanny watchfulness suggests a

perspective as strange ('wild') and familiar ('hungry') as the cry of the lark harmonising with the last breath of a human. As Morton puts it, 'compassionate coexistence' involves getting used to the idea of 'strange strangers' that are 'at the limit of our imagining' for this is where things become 'open and ambiguous' (2010, 17). In this poem, both hawk and lark have an agency of their own that is not beholden to human comprehension.

Brontë's refusal of a presumptive anthropocentrism is also present in another Gondal poem, 'Julian M. and A. G. Rochelle'. A 'tender child' does not brutally grab or catch a much desired object (line 113), yet still the childish 'hands did just enfold / Safe in its eager grasp' a bird (lines 113-114). As this child 'wept to hold' the bird (line 114), as if the bird's gaze was the point of a sword, the child is 'pierced with one wild glance from the troubled hazel eye' (line 115). Power shifts in this poignant moment. Affect takes away sovereignty. The artery of co-existence is opened, the life-blood of interconnectedness flows, and the child 'gushes into tears and lets its treasure fly' (line 116). Recognition of the fragility that comes with being a creature vulnerable to the actions of another creature is enough to overcome the child's anthropocentric eagerness to control, to possess, to make a 'treasure' of that which is not designed to be owned. In this moment of an attuned shared gaze, a new flow of co-existence begins. The 'troubled' bird is present and powerful and will not be held in the prison of the child's gently intentioned hand and eyes. The 'wild glance' that pierces, like talons that carry the spoils of human flesh, remind readers how strange the bird's world is to the human. The avian is, as Agamben might put it, in the 'open'. Yet still there is a blind spot, conveyed in the speaker's 'knowing' preconceptions of the 'wild'. Brontë's avian is not 'outside of being' in the way Agamben proposes (2004, 91). Despite this limitation, Brontë's poems do important work in offering the reader both the strange avian and the strangeness of the grasping

human. By pushing these creaturely boundaries, Brontë's speaker shows an acceptance of the impossibility for humans to fully understand the strange avian.

In an earlier untitled poem, beginning 'Still beside that dreary river' (line 1), a deeper strangeness appears through metaphor. As a murderer muses, a 'raven's screaming' is heard overhead (line 7). The scream of the raven does more than enter into the realm of the human imaginary by marking the murderer inhuman, just as the lark's cry does more than show the futility of war. The speaker is demonstrating Despret's moment of engagement. The raven functions as a symbol of death and, at the same time, the interruption of the raven is material. This bird is a carrion seeker who will assist, like the scavenging hawk, in the processes of death, decay and new life. This specific raven, that screams and that will consume, is an agent of the life that swoops in after death.

Brontë often conflates death with night and winter in the avian flutter of a life briefly lived. In 'Stars' the importance of night is emphasized through a 'hostile' morning that harshly interrupts the speaker's repose by stimulating the 'birds' that 'sang loudly in the woods' (lines 43, 35). The birds, like the morning, are as intrusive as the 'fresh winds' that 'shook the door' (line 36). Night, valorised as necessary and as welcome as death, creates space or new beginnings.

Like the welcome night, Brontë's poems accept winter's deathly cold without denigration. The presence of summer's birds speaks to their inevitable demise; they sing to death as much as to life. The speakers must accept the onset of winter as do the birds. This is particularly clear in the untitled poem beginning 'A little while, a little while' (line 1). Readers are presented with a 'mute bird sitting on the stone' (line 17) surrounded by 'dank moss dripping from the wall' (line 18). The speaker, like this 'mute bird', is part of the 'all' (line 20), both will be there for just a 'little while' and both would rather die (in a 'little while') than leave their beloved home.

The metaphorical directions here position the sense of belonging to place as transitory, like a season, like a life.

This acceptance of the presence of death within life is also realized in 'Song' (1992, 11). The lilt in the opening lines, 'The linnet in the rocky dells / The moor-lark in the air' (lines 1-2), is followed by slower lines with a longer perspective, where individual 'wild birds' of a specific place are part of an ongoing series of repetitions (line 6). Like generations before and after, these birds 'raise their brood' and then they will be gone (line 6). The linnet and moor-lark, and by implication, the speaker, share equally in this recurrent pattern. They are singular and yet part of a generalized whole. These sentiments are echoed in an untitled poem beginning 'Loud without the wind was roaring' (line 1). This poem positions the speaker in winter, reflecting on a time when it was 'spring, for the skylark was singing' (line 11). Death is, again, ever present. Even as 'the wild skylark was filling / Every breast with delight like its own' (lines 49-50), there is a sombre 'brown heath' a little to the distance (line 54), 'stunted' (line 55), on a 'lonely hill' (line 53). The barren landscape amplifies the whisper of winter closing in. The moment of fullest life for the avian body – and by implication, the human body – is a fanfare for its mortal end. Death is as much a part of life, as day must dissolve into night.

In this time of rapid climate change, Brontë's depictions of transient individual lives held within a broader certainty of repetition can no longer be assumed as a given, not for humans and nor for birds. This broader shared vulnerability of humans and avians, read through the ecological thought, resonates strongly when reading 'Loud without', where the 'linnet' is 'trilling / Its song on the old granite stone' (lines 47-48). Brontë's speaker juxtaposes the life and death of animal species, brought about by seasonal change, with a larger cycle, a deep time told through the layering of life that creates hardened rock. This unfleshed becoming

world is a bittersweet offering to an ecocritical reader. The world will go on, with or without birds and humans. There are other ways in which the earth can live.

Aware that it is no longer possible to take for granted the cycles depicted by Brontë's speakers, ecocritical readers may feel like the 'sullen' wedding guest, in 'A Day Dream' ruminating that 'these bright things' will be 'vanished like a vision vain' once 'winter' comes (lines 12, 25-27). Like those 'birds that now so blithely sing' (line 29), humans may also, soon enough, be 'Poor spectres of the perished spring' (line 31), that fly towards extinction 'In famished troops' (line 32).

Brontë's attention to the hawk's watch, the linnet's trill and the deserted nest serves as a reminder to contemporary readers of what is at stake. Brontë's speakers appreciate the lack of exceptionality in the seasons. Summer and winter, death and life, night and day might be expected to carry on into the next two human generations, but these cycles may not include the flourish of diversity offered by creatures suited to seasons as they are. In the stony face of such a future, Brontë's poems are highly pertinent. No fleshy creature, neither human nor avian, can demand dominion over the other, or over the earth. Flesh and blood, together, they need a world that remains largely as it is.

With this in mind, the deathly quiet of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1963) echoes through Morton's ecological thought back to Brontë's mortal winters. The gate on global emission reduction targets is closing. It may be that a four-degree rise has already bolted, like a horse through an open gate, into an apocalyptic future. Just as Brontë's speakers shiver with foreboding for the vulnerable, so too might contemporary readers fear a final end, particularly those who feel the talons of endangered birds in a citizenry of science. Each cycle may be the last. There is, however, hope in the piercing eye of the bird held in a child's hand. New human/avian relations are possible, beyond the desperate throes of DNA capture in a

time of mass extinction. Humans have the option to look and respond to nonhumans in more inclusive ways.

Wright's Swan Song

In Brontë's poems, creatures are responsive *to* each other, co-existing in an attuned way. In Wright's novel, creatures are responsive *with* each other. Wright brings her Waanyi nation's world into a post-apocalyptic future, while also making present the oral stories known to her community for over forty thousand years. Her work suggests that in a world suffering extreme environmental degradation, it is imperative that birds, as well as humans, are invited to co-create the world through more co-affective ways of being.

The Swan Book is a tragic and fiercely political novel, set in an imprecise future in the next century. The setting traverses two areas in remote northern Australia, a busy urban southern city and finally, the long walk between both places. Severe environmental degradation has displaced many humans and other species, including the black swans who share the centre of the text with Oblivia, a fragile girl-woman who is estranged from her family, her body and her country.

It is not possible to provide a clear method or synopsis for this far-ranging tender novel. It draws on the Indigenous knowledge Wright is privy to as a respected elder of the Waanyi nation, but, as Barras cautions, with Ravenscroft, *The Swan Book* does not provide access to the ontology and epistemology of this community. It is this disallowance that creates the productive uncertainty that makes *The Swan Book* so affective. As Barras goes on to argue, readers are encouraged to acknowledge the cultural inaccessibility of the novel in a reflexive way through a 'process of interpretation and meaning-making' created by 'the figure of the inscribed reader', Oblivia (5, 9). These hermeneutics fostered by Wright's novel may well include a

consideration of extended relations between humans and nonhumans. For Oblivia, the deep and unquestioned kinship that the black swans claim with her provides a sense of hope, even in a tortured world where the spring of growth can barely be discerned. Readers approaching this work through Morton's ecological thought might hear Wright singing to the despair of a world out of patience. Wright is acutely aware of the harm that comes with pushing climatic cycles towards an apocalyptic future. Her song to a future rise of four degrees is an elegy for all creatures, including the humans and birds that share in and shape each other's stories. As Wright says, telling stories is one of the ways 'business' can be done (Wright and Zable 2013, 28). This novel is very serious business indeed.

Wright's novel is set in a dystopic future but its concerns are very much of this time. The devastating impact of climate change is already being experienced by those on the margins, including people of the Waanyi nation. Yet the past, the present and the future are not separate in *The Swan Book* as they are in Western representations. Daley calls this the 'double time of chronology and events' (2016, 21). For Daley, Wright's work places readers in a world outside the confining logic of the Western bounded rational individual (9). While non-indigenous readers cannot access this world, they can be given a sense that such a world exists. This perspective aligns with Barad's application of quantum physics to literary discourse, insofar as the world is more than Western logic has traditionally allowed.

The generative relations Wright depicts between humans and birds maintain the absolute otherness between species, even as she evidences the ties of kinship between Oblivia and the swans. These swans are stranger than Brontë's moor-larks, hawks and linnets. Their metaphorical weight is also different because of the way Wright continuously reminds readers of the swans' textual and ancestral familiarity to Oblivia. As Daley evocatively puts it, the blurring of Oblivia's characterization

suggests that she may be also ‘a figure of relationship itself, to the land, or to the animal and spirit beings’ (2016, 20). The same too might be said of the swans depicted by Wright. They tell stories in their actions, most particularly in their responses to the humans they encounter. The details of these stories are not discoverable in the text but they influence the force of the narrative.

The agency of Wright’s black swans ensures they are not subsumed in the human narration of Oblivia’s swamp country, even as they enter her world through her traumatised dreaming. They have their own dreaming that exists outside human stories. In this way, the swans exist in Agamben’s ‘zone of non-knowledge’ (2004, 91). Wright’s novel never represents human perceptions as the beginning and the end of what is possible, veering off from human exceptionalism with something akin to the intellectually rigorous material mysticism suggested through the work of Clarke and Stockton. The first sound of the swans is ‘like angels whispering from the heavens’ (Wright 2014, 15). The swans this novel evokes are textually divine as well as being sacred in a materially ancestral sense.

With the arrival of the swans, Oblivia’s world and its stories begin to change. A displaced swan gazes upon ‘the little girl far down on the red earth’ and then, as the swan falls ‘through the air’ the narrator wonders if ‘perhaps’ the swan ‘placed itself within the stories of this country’ (18, 19). This swan, and those that follow, bring with them stories that cannot be charted through human cognition. Yet, the ‘swamp people’ did know these stories in an earlier time; even while ‘nobody in the North remembered the stories in the oldest Law scriptures’, it is, importantly, understood that ‘these big wetland birds’ also ‘had Law’ (67). White swan stories are contained in the books and stories granted to Oblivia by her European foster-mother, Bella Donna, but the black swans embody stories that exist beyond human recounting. It is

this narrative, beyond and with European stories, that compels Oblivia to accept the black swans as her kin.

These ‘angels’ settle gingerly, as have the humans inhabiting this murky damaged ground, littering the swamp with ‘floating feathers’; there is something divine in this flagrant waste, it is as if ‘black angels had flown around’ (51). This complex divine both reveals and challenges the culturally loaded concept of the Judeo-Christian angel. The scriptural Word and Wright’s work with traditional stories rub against each other, sparking new spiritual imaginaries for the reader.

As Oblivia feeds her kin, running ‘through the water with the fledging cygnets’, she, like the story, is re-birthed and begins to ‘take flight’ (69). The material mysticism I propose, through Clarke and Stockton, has an ineffable materiality here for non-Indigenous readers, a strangeness harder to grasp than the fecundity of the past world in Brontë’s poems. The avian enters Agamben’s zone of not-knowing through this cultural blockage of perception.

There are complicated intra-actions between the swans and the endangered swamp community. The swans hungrily devour the food Oblivia gives to them, scraps gathered by her carer, Bella Donna, because they are worthy of eating. The ‘people grew skinnier’ as ‘the swans became fatter on their food’ (70). Humans are not, in Oblivia’s world, a priority. She is driven to look after her kin. As the community changes, so too does Oblivia. The swamp, like the world, is no place for stable entities.

When Bella Donna dies, relinquishing her questionable care of Oblivia, Warren Finch, the President of Australia in Wright’s dystopian world, arrives, determined to marry Oblivia. By the ancestral law of their families, she is his promised wife, and he has come to seek her after a dream of a swan woman who becomes a ‘black angel cloud flying in a starry night and playing harp music’ (109).

The mix of irony and Romantic sensibility in these lines becomes more complex as Warren Finch's dream continues. Such a sight 'should be easy enough to find' but Warren Finch can only sense 'slithers of a woman's naked body' that had 'come to him like a promise', flowing along a 'river that flowed as slowly as his blood. He felt her presence bonding with his own' (109). The vulnerability of swan and woman is as apparent as the potential harm of a righteous man. The world in change will be remade.

With inexorable confidence, Warren Finch hunts down his 'mangkarri', his promise wife, Oblivia, despite being told he is no longer obliged because she has been gang-raped, then disowned and lost (136). Finch too, is of the avian, but his cultural affiliations are unclear. His ancestors are owls but he bears the name of a small European bird through his adoptive parents. He embodies both destiny and contingency, a hope of salvation shaped by the past and a sloughing thick invasive muck that he now enfolds into Oblivia's story. He is a flawed saviour, and despite his powerful status the community's response to him is cautious. Oblivia is their kin, but also their ostracized. The idea of a promise wife only lightly presses upon their memories. Yet there he is, close to a god. His will must be done. The fatalism in the narrator's story-telling is as fixed, yet as salvageable as a rise in global temperatures forced by the silencing of the earth's voice.

The avian swamp inhabitants are less hospitable than the humans. As Warren Finch rows to Oblivia's home 'swans swooped at the boat' to stop him, they 'hissed' and they 'stabbed' and 'he could feel the warmth of their soft bellies as he brushed through their barricade' (154). His violation of their bodies mirrors the rapes that destroyed Oblivia's voice, her memory, her sense of self, his obligation to marry her. When he enters her domain she cannot speak, she cannot move. He calls her the 'swan maiden' and she meets his deflowering voice 'with a knife in her hand' (154).

He takes the knife as easily as he has taken the world but the mastery Finch would grasp slips away like a dream. Like porous matter, Oblivia will not be held in stasis. She escapes through the presence of the swans. Warren Finch may be an earthly godling, but Oblivia is kin to black angels. She has the ability, the gift, the madness of being able to take herself to a place beyond her body. She may seem to be in the same place as Warren Finch, but in fact she is reaching towards the swans, readying to depart with them. As he talks, the swans panic. Oblivia feels them ‘becoming disconnected from her’ even while she feels their ‘erratic and chaotic struggle’ (158). She has ‘the very same nervousness running through her own body’, she falters, she cannot yet comprehend the extent of ‘the swan’s electrified sense of danger, the sudden readiness to lift in one synthesized movement’ and so she is unable to fly with them (159). The reader and Oblivia are stunned into stillness as the birds swan away like a ‘midnight storm’, disappearing ‘in a cloud that looked like a black angel lit by lightning’ (160). Like weather, the complexities in the interconnections between Oblivia and the swans are difficult to contain in sure analysis. The angelic swans and the dreamy Oblivia are not completely separate entities but their responses differ. This is the hope I find in Wright’s novel and it blends with the philosophy of Barad. The intra-actions flow both ways in a confused and unpredictable way where the human is not the only force at play.

The narratorial logic of the novel refuses to place the needs of Oblivia over the swans. As Oblivia dreams herself after them, they dream themselves towards her. This mutual desire is powerful enough for the swans to begin ‘forming their spirits through films of salt to reach her during the night’ (191). Oblivia works her fingers skinless in her efforts to help them fly, peeling away salt, straightening their feathers. Her compulsive grooming also saves herself. Oblivia and the swans co-create a world that will hold them safe.

When the swans find her, at last, in a prison-like apartment in a dilapidated southern city, Oblivia can barely lift her wings to help them. She is the First Lady, Warren Finch's tribal bride, present on television. At the same time Oblivia is living in a dark world of alterity, bending the rules that Daley points to, through Wright, that encapsulate the 'bitterness of pure logic and rational thought' (Wright in Daley, 2016, 21). As the swans circle the apartment, injuring themselves in their need to be closer to Oblivia, children jump in the streets that are their home, readying to fly, becoming holy, 'calling the very ordinary land a sacred site' (247). The swans' drama envelops the children, as it does Oblivia. The swans circle her building in hundreds 'driven by nervousness' and 'their bond with the girl', coming 'so close their wings clipped the buildings' (247). The old zoological gardens, canals and other semi-stagnant waterways are soon thick with swans. The birds multiply until their numbers grow so vast that they block the night sky. Privy to this inversion of power, Oblivia readies to 'fly with the swans so they do not leave her behind' again (277). The presidential world of Warren Finch has become immaterial through the swans' dreaming circling dance.

Then the wind changes, the swans' escape is foiled by the force of hostile traditional powers, their 'wings' are 'buffeted' (277). At this point in this lavish always-unravelling story, when hope seems gone entirely, the trap of Warren Finch opens through his death. Oblivia's shadow self, the self who is real enough to be captured by television cameras, may have assassinated him. The Oblivia known by readers is full of fear. She flees after the swans, escaping ceremonies held to create Warren Finch and his promise wife into a performative story on the fringes of the novel. His corpse continues to travel the roads as a moving tourist destination while Oblivia seeks refuge in another world. Once again the 'wind intensified through the ruffling feathers on their breast' and the swans ready to leave (303). When 'a startled

swan flies up' there is 'the roar of the lift off, and the sky is blanketed by black swans in the cold night' (303). The redemption in this passage ripples with reflexive irony. The fairy tale 'bright starry night' with its 'northerly flowing breezes' lead readers, with Oblivia and the swans, like a 'heartbeat' all the way back to the swamp (303). The tone is sardonic, but also poetic, only the swans can take Oblivia 'safely through the laws of the country' if 'the spirits who were the country itself' have not yet been exterminated (321). The novel, like the swans, is filled with songlines, making this section of the text, like the country that the swans seek, 'holy and beautiful to behold' (323). For the swans, these stories are strong enough to take 'the oldest swan to the youngest cygnet' all the way from the 'abandoned botanical gardens' of the south towards the 'northern swamp' of Oblivia's home (323). It is, the narrator suggests, 'as if the ancestors had pulled the swans across the skies' taking Oblivia with them 'to be cleansed' (324). There is a baptism of sorts also available to the reader. This closing section sings with epiphany as Indigenous story and European folktale conflate in the flute Oblivia uses to create a 'swan tune that dances around the hills' (324). The flute, an ancient keepsake from the family of her carer, Bella Donna, is made from the 'wingbone of a Mute Swan' and has been played with by the rescued 'cygnet' (324). This swan, aptly named the Stranger, has saved Oblivia by keeping her head down to care for him, ensuring that she is not revealed as the president's wife who may have killed her husband. Oblivia's flimsy notes create a 'sound known to be sacred to swans' and it is heard 'among the din of winds' (324). It welcomes the swans 'into the country's song' (325). It is a tune that only the swans can access, but human kin is needed to help bring the song into being.

Upon her return Oblivia enters the water and is cleansed, a doubling rebirth that repeats an earlier time when the black swans first entered her life. As she runs through the water with their babies, the swans 'observe her as though she is a newly

hatched cygnet' and then they rest 'beside her, necks curled over their backs and asleep' (326). The story finishes here, more like the end of a species than the turn of a season. As 'the winds grow warmer' and the 'land dries' and 'the spirit of the drought' enters, the expectation of a returning wet season disappears (328). Many 'stranded swans' scatter and fall under 'hotter skies', they 'fly in every direction' until their only option is to 'stand on baked earth and hiss at the sky they cannot reach' and then, soundless, as silent as an apocalyptic spring, 'with wings spread they wait for the spirit flight' (328).

In the fallout from this devastating conclusion, Oblivia nurses the 'old Stranger swan' she nurtured from a cygnet, who has saved her from facing those who would destroy her, and he sleeps on her lap when not 'gazing over what had been a swamp' (330). The 'old swan leader' has changed after the loss of his kind. In a conventional fairy tale he might wait for a millennium to pass but instead, when Oblivia tells him that regeneration is not possible, the swan 'swooned and dropped its head to the ground' in profound grief (332). So too might the reader despair. The world that offers life to flesh and blood has dried up and gone.

In this arid finale, Wright's narrator still manages to offer some kind of hope. 'This might be the same story about some important person carrying a swan centuries ago, and it might be the same story in centuries to come when someone will carry a swan back to this ground where its story once lived' (333). The business of this story might be attended to, change might emerge in its telling. To my reading, this is possible without raiding the dreams that belong to Oblivia. Wright's novel allows for a space to be given to other beings, like the black swans of the swamp, so they can make their own stories as fit them best.

Conclusion: the Fragile Nest of the Dying Stranger

One of Australia's foremost ecocritics, Kate Rigby, has called on writers (and, implicitly, readers) to attend to literature in a 'mode of prophetic witness' that includes being open to 'communications from the nonhuman other' so that the world's 'warning call' might be heard (2013, np). Reading back to Brontë's nineteenth-century poems, there is a preparation for this call in the silence that follows the trill and the cry of birds in the flush of their season. The silent dirge of a 'mute' bird on a 'still grey stone' becomes the heartbreak of humans and avians all out of season.

Yet the Stranger that flies across Wright's apocalyptic sky urges readers to find ways to respond to the wash of swan stories told in birdsong and wing. The readerly trauma of ecological thought that Wright evokes through her critique of human-inflicted damage upon the world harkens back to Brontë's Romantic depictions of the impact of wintry seasons on the fragile nests formed by creatures such as humans and birds. The cyclic seasonality in Brontë's poems is fiercely awry. There is much to lose. While Brontë's poetry and Wright's novel are centuries and cultures apart, they both support a posthuman reading. Through this lens these works gravely reinforce the fact that the world will go on, with or without humans or birds. A stony future will suit at least some species, if four-degree climatic havoc is the best that humans can do. If this trajectory is followed, then Brontë's poetry of life, death and rebirth will be left behind as absolutely Romantic, *The Swan Book* will be disastrously real and humans will be very strange indeed to themselves and the rest of the surviving world. There is an alternative. Brontë's poems remind readers that the avian and human begin and end with the seasons and places they inhabit. Her work soars towards Wright's swan song of a winged divine beyond human making. These avian divines, these nonhuman holies, have potential to extend acceptance of

human/avian co-existence to a search for a co-creative kinship beyond the zone of human knowledge. It is a search that begins with the heart-rending spread of the dusty wings of the black swans. The possibilities in an unknowable nonhuman angelic mentorship are needed to help humans relinquish control over a world not designed for their ruination. To be mentored in this divine way, humans must listen and follow.

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