



humanities

Animal Narratology

Edited by
Joela Jacobs

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Animal Narratology

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Special Issue Editor

Joela Jacobs

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About the Special Issue Editor

Joela Jacobs is Assistant Professor of German Studies at the University of Arizona, and she is affiliated with the Institute of the Environment, the Department of Gender and Women's Studies, and the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies. She earned her Ph.D. in Germanic Studies at the University of Chicago, where she subsequently held a postdoctoral position as Humanities Teaching Scholar. Prior to coming to the US from Germany, she studied at the Universities of Bonn, St. Andrews, and the Freie Universität Berlin to receive her M.A. in German and English Philology. Dr. Jacobs' research focuses on intersections of 19th to 21st century German literature and film with Animal Studies, Environmental Humanities, Jewish Studies, the History of Sexuality, and the History of Science. She has published articles on monstrosity, multilingualism, literary censorship, biopolitics, animal epistemology, zoopoetics, critical plant studies, cultural environmentalism, and contemporary German Jewish identity. Currently, she is working on a monograph that examines a preoccupation with non-human forms of life, such as animals and plants, in the German modernist microgenre of the Literary Grotesque (*die Grotteske*). In 2016, she founded the *Literary and Cultural Plant Studies Network* (<https://plants.sites.arizona.edu/>), and in addition to editing two Special Issues of *Literatur für Leser* on animals and plants, respectively, she is currently co-editing *Pflanzen: Kulturwissenschaftliches Handbuch* (under contract with Metzler).

Preface to "Animal Narratology"

"Storytelling is often cited as one of the characteristics that distinguishes humans from animals. Yet a look at world literature reveals many animals as the narrators of our tales. Animals speak not only in fables and fairy tales, but also narrate novels, voice love poems, and deliver philosophical treatises. Across genres and time, both wild and domesticated animals give accounts of their lives and their worlds, which usually contain human beings. Animal narrators negotiate their relationship with humans, while defamiliarizing the human way of perceiving the world. And yet, these texts are written by human authors who chose an animal voice, a specific species, and a literary genre for a particular purpose—one that tends to be as much, if not more about the human than it is about the animal. In fact, analyses have predominantly focused on the human side of these texts until the recent "animal turn" in literary studies. This focus on the animal in literature vows to take the animal seriously, which has been generating new readings and discoveries regarding texts from the canon and beyond. Literary animal studies has the potential to reveal the history of animal narration, such as clusters of animal species, type, or even breed at certain times; to interrogate animal narrators' appeals to particular audiences, from children's books to political satire; and to uncover writers' ways of avoiding censorship and persecution by channeling an animal voice in their works. In addition, concepts from animal agency to zoopoetics have increased the theoretical complexity of the investigation of animals in literature and are connecting animal studies to some of the concerns of fields such as environmental humanities, race and gender studies.

Studies of animal narration are still scant and scattered, however, and there seems to be a need to close a perceived gap between classical scholarship on animals in literature (such as Theodore Ziolkowski's insightful 1983 genealogy of "philosopher dogs" in the Western canon) and newer theoretical premises brought forth by literary animal studies that petition for reading the animal as animal. There also appears to be a problematic tendency toward taxonomy inherent in approaches both to animals and narration that has yet to be addressed. This special issue of *Humanities* on the theme of "Animal Narratology" therefore aims to paint a fuller picture of animal narrators from various species, from different times, and from a variety of literary traditions. The breadth of this approach is to be supplemented with systematic considerations of the specific texts and contexts, so as to account for larger developments relevant to the literary history, genre, and narratological strategies exemplified by each animal narrator. *Humanities* thus invites contributions that bring together the close reading of texts containing animal narrators with (a) theoretical deliberations about narratology (such as dialogism, diegetic levels, empathy, focalization, framing, graphic storytelling, metaphoricity, realism, reliability, representation, serialization, simultaneity, structure, suspense, symbolism, etc.) and (b) relevant questions of ethics, religion, race, gender, sexuality, history, philosophy, sociology, science, and the arts. Texts from literature in any language are welcome (with translation), and an even distribution of Western and non-Western literature is desired."

In response to the Call for Papers you just read, nearly forty quality contributions were proposed in the summer of 2016, and between fall 2016 and spring 2018, twenty-four of them were published in an open-access special issue for whose e-book edition I am composing this preface. As I had hoped, the contributors hail from a wide range of disciplines, countries, and career stages, and they engage with animals in texts and films of various genres. Their articles touch on crucial questions about the nuances of accounting for and encountering animals narratologically, and they call for the acknowledgment of non-hierarchical human-animal entanglement in ways that prompt empathy for non-humans and the environment. In order to structure this wealth of ideas, the e-book has been divided into four sections: 1) *Conceptualizing Animal Narratology*, which features contributions that approach animal narratology from a more theoretical angle, 2) *Nonhuman Companions in Animal Narratology, or Horses, Dogs, and Apes*, which contains case studies of animal narratology that center on familiar companion species, 3) *Nonhuman Others in Animal Narratology, or Under-Examined Species*, which engages with instances of animal narration involving less frequently considered or more distant species, and 4) *Seeing and Hearing Animal Narratology*, which explores the role of voice and vision in animal narratology. Before turning to the details of each section and their contributions, I would like to thank the authors, the many constructive peer reviewers who volunteered their time and energy, the artist who provided our cover image and illustrations for one of the articles, Tamara Schneider, the academic editor of *Humanities*, Albrecht Classen, and the tireless journal editors, especially Jie Gu and Gloria Qi, for all the effort and time they invested in ensuring a quality outcome. Without their work, mine would not have been possible.

1. Conceptualizing Animal Narratology

The first article in this e-book was also the first to be published, and as such, it set a high standard and became a point of reference for many of the contributions that followed in its wake. In *Animal Autobiography; Or, Narration beyond the Human*, **David Herman** (Freelance Writer) puts forward a nuanced account of autobiographical acts that entail speaking for or on behalf of animals. Drawing on linguistic semantics, politeness theory, and discourse analysis, and focusing in particular on Erving Goffman's analysis of framing and footing, Herman explores the relevance of this work for modes of narration that include but extend beyond the human. He interweaves these ideas with a wide range of case studies to establish two categories of autobiographical acts that cross species lines: 1) those in which, anthropocentrically, the human teller remains the principal as well as the author (in Goffman's terms), while the animal serves chiefly as a means for expressing human priorities and concerns; and 2) those which can be understood as arising from more biocentric acts of co-authorship, where solidarity-building projections of animal voices both reflect and help create hybrid, humanimal principals. Herman's book *Narratology beyond the Human* (2018) expands on these considerations, while also juxtaposing animal autobiographies with other forms of narration beyond the human.

Corinne Donly (Lecturer in English at Brooklyn College, CUNY) proposes an alternative approach to storytelling in *Toward the Eco-Narrative: Rethinking the Role of Conflict in Storytelling*, which is meant to create stories that can help humankind adapt to the catastrophic conditions of the Anthropocene. Engaging with ecocritical and ecological thought, Donly suggests a mode of composing *with* non-human characters, which problematizes the typical plot structure of conflict/climax/resolution for its anthropocentric approach to the animal other. The analysis juxtaposes the conflict-motivated storyline of the Pew Commissions' report on *Industrial Farm Animal Production* with Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington's *They're here—I can feel them*, whose

playful approach to narrative helps Donly construct, in conjunction with James P. Carse's theory of "infinite play," a new, flexible storytelling framework called the eco-narrative.

In *More than Stories, More than Myths: Animal/Human/Nature(s) in Traditional Ecological Worldviews*, **Amba J. Sepie** (freshly minted Ph.D. in Geography at the University of Canterbury) turns to indigenous traditions, particularly so-called myths and stories about human encounters with animals and the natural environment. Arguing against a dismissal of these stories as "mere myths," she calls for the decolonization of westernized selves, defined as a mode of being in the world that is attuned to our human entanglement in ecological relationships with more-than-human life. Bringing in a wide range of ethnographic and posthumanist research, especially by indigenous scholars, Sepie makes a case against the biases that discredit intuitive and instinctive knowledge, which she considers inherent to our species-being as humans.

Christina Gerhardt (Associate Professor of German at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa) pursues the question of the non-anthropocentric autobiography in *Narrating Entanglement: Cixous' "Stigmata, or Job the Dog."* By engaging with acts of border-crossing in Hélène Cixous' autobiographical essay, which prominently features deliberations about being and narrating dog, Gerhardt maps the shifts in narrative voice from human, to entangled, to animal. Based on these epistemological moves in the text, she argues for a zoopoetic mindfulness of entanglement; one that makes humans realize that, even in autobiographical voice, the human I is always entangled with and in kinship with others. This research expands Gerhardt's publications on animals in the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and Schopenhauer, and in the writings of Adorno read together with Derrida and Levinas.

In *Animal Poetry and Empathy*, **Tirza Brüggemann** (Ph.D. Candidate in the Humanities at the Free University Amsterdam) discusses the concept of empathy, showing that our understanding of it is based on Cartesian dualism, so that narrative empathy has become associated with the high-level, imaginative work of the mind, while empathy prompted by non-fictional work is said to be a low-level act of bodily mirroring. She rejects these dichotomies by drawing on Merleau-Ponty, who considers consciousness as embodied and speaks of a human-animal intertwining of experience that takes place in interweaving landscapes. Her analysis of two animal poems, *Inventing a Horse* by Meghan O'Rourke and *Spermaceti* by Les Murray, demonstrates that aesthetic empathy requires a retraining of the senses in order to see animals and ourselves as psychophysical wholes who are intertwined with each other and the environment.

Tua Korhonen (University Researcher and Docent of Greek Literature at the University of Helsinki) approaches the ethics of killing other beings in her discussion of Greek texts featuring animals in *A Question of Life and Death: The Aesopic Animal Fables on Why Not to Kill*. In both Aesopian fables and Homeric similes, animals plead for their lives with a powerful predator that is set on killing them. Comparing the two different genres structurally and narratologically, Korhonen focuses on the role of animals qua animals in these texts, rather than following the generic prompts to interpret them as allegories for human behavior. This methodology allows her to show that these texts, despite or perhaps precisely because of their strongly humanizing tendencies, invite their readers into the animal point of view in order to elicit ethical consideration and empathy.

In *Eloquent Alogia: Animal Narrators in Ancient Greek Literature*, **Tom Hawkins** (Associate Professor of Classics at Ohio State University) analyzes the role of speaking animals in classical Greek literature across time. Pointing to the connection between rhetorical success and social standing, he demonstrates that loquacious animals generally present a complication in ancient Greek society,

which he exemplifies with detailed analyses of classical animals with linguistic abilities. While earlier ancient authors therefore explain human language in animals with divine intervention, thus invoking the notion of a past Golden Age, Hawkins argues that later writers use talking animals as a vehicle to challenge philosophical concepts and values.

2. Nonhuman Companions in Animal Narratology, or Horses, Dogs, and Apes

Frederike Middelhoff (now Junior Professor of German at the University of Frankfurt) turns to early nineteenth-century autobiographies of horses in German-language literature in *Literary Autozoographies: Contextualizing Species Life in German Animal Autobiography*. She shows that these texts negotiate and produce species-specific knowledge about animal emotion and cognition by drawing on historical discourses about equines in natural history and “horse-science.” Outlining literary autozoographies alongside the genre of fictional autobiography, Middelhoff contends that this text form makes a case for the humane treatment of horses around 1800 and simultaneously undermines traditional autobiographical conventions. For a more comprehensive development of literary autozoographies, look for Middelhoff’s articles and recently published book.

In *Narrating Animal Trauma in Bulgakov and Tolstoy*, **Anastasiya Andrianova** (Associate Professor of English at North Dakota State University) revisits the figure of the horse Strider and the titular character in *Heart of a Dog* in order to examine the depiction of animal pain in non-allegorical ways. She finds that the empathetic ventriloquism employed by the Russian authors can only result in animal-like discourse, rather than authentic animal narration. As a consequence, her close readings demonstrate that the authors approximate animal pain best in their use of ellipses and onomatopoeia. Ultimately, Andrianova urges us to take these ethical considerations about the status of animals into the classroom and expand them from literature into life.

Anja Höing (Postdoctoral Fellow in English at the University of Osnabrück) explores *Unreliability and the Animal Narrator in Richard Adams’s “The Plague Dogs,”* which tells the story of two dogs escaping from a research lab. She argues that the novel defamiliarizes the conventional talking animal story by introducing both two unreliable, mentally ill canine narrators who relay subjective-cum-fantastical perspectives and a narrative voice with zero focalization that provides sarcastic commentary on the anthropocentric conditions of the dogs’ situation. The dogs are unaware of these circumstances, so that the combination of their narratives and the dark comments exposes the “rational” order of the world (in which animals rank low) as a carnivalesque farce. Höing shows that the unreliability of the narrators oscillates between what Phelan calls “estranging” and “bonding,” and that reading animals as animals requires a re-reading and reconceptualization of all the notions that contribute to the traditional place of animals in the Western world.

In *“Against the Dog Only a Dog”: Talking Canine Civilizing Cynicism in Cervantes’ “coloquio de los perros”* (with *Tentative Remarks on the Discourse and Method of Animal Studies*), **DS Mayfield** (Postdoctoral Fellow in Comparative Literature at the Free University Berlin) demonstrates why members of the canine species are endowed with human language in Cervantes’ *Dialogues of the Dogs*. Tracing the discourse-historical tradition of the talking dog to the Cynics, Mayfield interrogates animal studies methodology and discourse by drawing on Montaigne, Descartes, and Derrida, before analyzing the ways in which plausibility for the dog dialogue is crafted in the frame narrative of Cervantes’ novella. Mayfield concludes that the ability for dialogue makes dogs the animal species of choice for the novella’s performance of cynical discourse, thus arguing that Cervantes’ text re-socializes cynicism.

By mapping the appearance of canine figures and their connections across Cervantes' oeuvre, **Ivan Schneider** (Freelance Writer) takes us on *The Search for Dog in Cervantes*. Schneider points to *Don Quixote's* less frequently investigated *galgo* (Spanish Greyhound) who is introduced in the text's beginning in a way that suggests the potential to become a talking dog. Yet, since the narratological strategy of conversing dogs is only fully utilized in the later *Dialogues of the Dogs*, Schneider argues that Don Quixote sets up the notion of human-like reasoning and speech in the canine species that the *Dialogues* will fully unfold. The article is accompanied by original illustrations of the *galgo* and his canine friends, and more of Schneider's work on talking dogs can be found on www.ivantohelpyou.com, where you can also sign up for his email list.

In *Narrative Transformed: The Fragments around Franz Kafka's "A Report to an Academy"*, **Doreen Densky** (Lecturer in German at New York University) approaches Kafka's famous ape-turned-human from the perspective of textual development by scrutinizing the sequence of partial drafts of the story that are extant in Kafka's papers. Her analysis of these fragments details the various narrative angles with which Kafka experimented, which show the metamorphosis of the text itself into the format of first-person animal narration. Densky's article thus addresses questions of production and reception, representation and speaking for the animal, as well as mediation and immediacy in animal narration, upon which her recently published book on the rhetoric and poetics of speaking-for (*Fürsprache*) in Kafka's oeuvre expands.

3. Nonhuman Others in Animal Narratology, or Under-Examined Species

Damianos Grammatikopoulos (freshly minted Ph.D. in German at Rutgers University) explores multiple implications of the notion of the Kafkaesque and its imitations in *Insects and the Kafkaesque: Insectuous Re-Writings in Visual and Audio-Visual Media*. He interrogates the meaningfulness of the label of the Kafkaesque by following references to Kafka's work—specifically those involving hybrid figures—in contemporary visual and audio-visual media such as cartoons by Judy Horacek, Pat Bagley, and Jiri Sliva; comic books by Charles Burns, and films by David Cronenberg. Grammatikopoulos concludes that Kafka's works act both as the host that nurtures the ever-growing body of (insectoid) imitations and as a parasite that enters the artist upon the consumption of Kafka's texts.

In *Out of Time, Out of Space, Out of Species: Deictic Displacement of the Exiled Self in Hans Sahl's "Der Maulwurf" (The Mole)*, **Carla Swiderski** (Ph.D. Candidate in German at the University of Hamburg) analyzes the temporal, spatial, and physiological changes that accompany the metamorphosis of the formerly human speaker of Sahl's role poem into his new existence as a mole. She argues that these transformative shifts of the poem's I on the deictic axes represent the displacement of exile that is a persistent theme in Sahl's work. In the absence of explicit references to exile, Swiderski's reading works out a persistent strategy of alienating displacement on every plane of existence that is embodied in the figure of the animal.

Karin Molander Danielsson (Senior Lecturer in English at Mälardalen University) parses out examples of critical anthropomorphism in "*And in That Moment I Leapt upon His Shoulder*": *Non-Human Intradiegetic Narrators in "The Wind on the Moon."* Examining detailed intradiegetic narratives by a puma, a falcon, and a bantam hen in Eric Linklater's children's novel, Danielsson contends that these characters' direct speech gives us access to species concerns, consciousness, and characteristics of animal others that would otherwise remain out of reach in this particular form. Drawing on Genette's narrative levels and functions, speech act theory, and cognitive narratology,

Danielsson brings discourses in animal studies into conversation with narratological concerns in order to show the posthumanist tendencies of a text that insists on non-binary species oppositions and makes a case for inter-species connection.

Steffen Röhrs (Postdoctoral Fellow in German at the University of Hannover) examines the multidimensional account of German colonialism presented by human and non-human voices in *An Animal-Centered Perspective on Colonial Oppression: Animal Representations and the Narrating Ox in Uwe Timm's "Morenga"* (1978). He shows how the many descriptions of suffering animals in the novel are linked to the plight of the Herero and the Nama during their brutally subdued uprisings in Southwest Africa in the early 20th century. In particular the figure of a talking ox highlights not only the novel's criticism of colonialism, but also expands the possibilities of narrating colonial history in a way that raises productive questions about agency, self-determination, and emancipation.

In *Animal Dystopia in Marie Darrieussecq's Novel "Truismes,"* **Päivi Koponen** (Ph.D. Candidate in the Humanities at the University of Turku) presents the dystopian reality of a female protagonist whose physical appearance is slowly transformed into that of a sow. Her new body elicits reactions that showcase the economic principles governing the assessment of animal lives: as a hog now even more strongly a cog in a capitalist system, the sow-woman struggles to find a better way to live. Koponen argues that the novel urges the reader to identify with the non-human world, to acknowledge agency beyond the human, and to understand that agency is intra-acting and entangled, rather than neatly separable into human and animal, which embeds these discourses within the larger ecological crisis.

4. Seeing and Hearing Animal Narratology

Kári Driscoll (Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Utrecht University) pursues Derrida's proposal of rendering audible animal utterances by thinking about them in musical terms in *An Unheard, Inhuman Music: Narrative Voice and the Question of the Animal in Kafka's "Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk."* Drawing on Sheehan, Agamben, Deleuze, Derrida, and Nancy, he explores the vocalizations of Kafka's mouse-singer in the context of scientific discourses about the ultrasonic songs of mice, which brings out the stakes of inhuman music to the concept of narrative voice by arguing for the importance of *zoopoetic* literature that does not silence the animal voice, or interrupt the song. The notion of zoopoetics is expanded upon in the 2018 collection *What is Zoopoetics? Texts, Bodies, Entanglement*, co-edited by Driscoll and Eva Hoffmann (Palgrave Macmillan).

"In the Empire of the Senses" and the Narrative Horizons of Comics by **José Alaniz** (Professor of Slavic Languages & Literatures at the University of Washington) introduces readers to the potential of visual storytelling to create an animal point of view through line work, framing, panel progression, and sound effects. Focusing on comics techniques in a chapter of Stephen Murphy's and Michael Zulli's *The Puma Blues* that presents a puma's hunt at night, Alaniz contrasts the distinctive capability of the graphic genre for the representation of animal ontology with that of film, using the example of Bill Viola's ethnographic documentary *I Do Not What It is I am Like*, which brings out the vast range of possibilities that visual storytelling holds for non-human narratology.

Sean Meighoo (Associate Professor of Comparative Literature at Emory University) outlines the *The Function of HumAnimAllegory* in the animated films *Animal Farm* and *Chicken Run*. Developing the concept of the "humanimallegory," i.e., the animal-human allegory, Meighoo examines both the reduction of animal characters to mere stand-ins for real human figures in *Animal Farm* and the ways in which *Chicken Run* resists such a simple metaphoricity. Both films refer allegorically

to specific historical acts of political violence, and Meighoo contends that the concept of allegory ultimately remains caught up in the philosophical traditions of humanism. This article complements Meighoo's work on "HumAnI(m)Morality," "Suffering Humanism, or the Suffering Animal," and "Human Language, Animal Code, and the Question of Being."

In *Seeing Beings: "Dog" Looks Back at "God": Unfixing Canis familiaris in Kornél Mundruczó's Film "Fehér isten"/"White God"* (2014), **Lesley C. Pleasant** (Associate Professor of German at the University of Evansville) argues that the film defamiliarizes the typical human gaze at dogs with its cinematic strategies in order to create a new model of empathetic and non-hierarchical seeing of non-human species. With its focus on abandoned dogs in Budapest, the film highlights the anthropocentric conditions of canine existence in urban spaces and shelters that rely strongly on breed-specific designations, as Pleasant makes clear in her examination of the frequently violent encounters between humans and dogs in *White God*. By making dogs visible and audible in ways that suggest a "looking back" and prompt a "becoming with" the animal other, the film "unfixes" the anthropocentric gaze, which ultimately leads to a restructuring of the cityscape and its human hierarchies.

Oliver Völker (Postdoctoral Fellow in Comparative Literature at the University of Frankfurt) argues against a purely allegorical reading of non-human nature in *Whiteout: Animal Traces in Werner Herzog's "Grizzly Man" and "Encounters at the End of the World."* Contrary to Herzog's own insistence on taking "nature" as a representative of human protagonists' inner nature or landscape, Völker reads both the encounters with grizzlies and the experience of Antarctica's snowscapes in Herzog's films as autonomous and lively presences that interact closely with humans and cameras, the latter of which are self-reflexively present, rather than hidden as in typical wildlife films. The ways of seeing and hearing the non-human in these films defamiliarize and disrupt the human observers/operators and thus raise questions about how humans make sense of nature by way of narration and representation.

In *Barking at Heaven's Door: Pluto mehra in the Hindi Film "Dil Dhadakne Do,"* **Alessandra Consolaro** (Lecturer in Hindi Language and Literature at the University of Turin) examines the first-ever Hindi movie narrated by a dog, a creature that is generally considered dirty and lowly in Indian culture. Yet the animal narrator of the Bollywood movie is a beloved pet who lives his life as the equally accepted member of a rich, dysfunctional family. Consolaro maintains that the film demonstrates a generational change in the perception of pet keeping in the Indian middle class, which is turning animals into family members and style statements and is displacing previous, more pragmatic reasons for animal keeping. In her analysis of the canine narrator, Consolaro traces the causes of this shift to several global and local factors, especially economic reason and consumer attitudes.

Together, these articles shine a light on the multifaceted dimensions of animal narratology. They interrogate what it means to narrate, to speak—speak for, on behalf of—and to voice, or represent life beyond the human, which is in itself as different as insects, bears, and dogs are from each other, and yet more, as individual as a single mouse, horse, or puma. The contributions also highlight assumptions about the human perception of, attitude toward, and responsibility for the animals that are read and written about, thus demonstrating that just as "the animal" does not exist, neither does "the human." In their zoopoetic focus, the analyses are aware that animal narratology ultimately always contains an approximation of an animal perspective in human terms and terminology, yet they make clear that what matters is *how* the animal is approximated and that there is an effort to approach and encounter the non-human in the first place. Many of the analyses come to the conclusion that literary animals give readers the opportunity to expand their own points of view both

on themselves and others by adopting another's perspective to the degree that such an endeavor is possible. Ultimately, the contributions call for a recognition of the many spaces, moments, and modes in which human lives are entangled with those of animals—one of which is located within the creative bounds of storytelling.

Joela Jacobs
Special Issue Editor

Conceptualizing Animal Narratology



Article

Animal Autobiography; Or, Narration beyond the Human

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Abstract: In engaging with acts of self-narration that cross species lines, creators of animal autobiographies also broach questions about genre, truth status, and the structure as well as the politics of narrative representation. To address these questions, the present article draws not just on scholarship on (animal) autobiography but also on ideas from the fields of linguistic semantics, politeness theory, and discourse analysis, including the “framing and footing” approach that focuses on talk emerging in contexts of face-to-face interaction and that derives most directly from the work of Erving Goffman. On the basis of this research, and using case studies that range from animal riddles to Ceridwen Dovey’s *Only the Animals* (2014), a collection of life stories posthumously narrated by a variety of nonhuman tellers, I profile autobiographical acts that reach beyond the human as ways of speaking for or in behalf of animal others. Some animal autobiographies correlate with acts of telling for which humans themselves remain the principals as well as authors; their animal animators remain relegated to the role of commenting on human institutions, values, practices, and artifacts. Other examples, however, can be read as co-authored acts of narrating in behalf of equally hybrid (or “humanimal”) principals. These experiments with narration beyond the human afford solidarity-building projections of other creatures’ ways of being-in-the-world—projections that enable a reassessment, in turn, of forms of human being.

Keywords: animal narrators; anthropocentrism; cultural ontologies; discourse analysis; fiction–nonfiction distinction; framing and footing; life writing; narratology; politeness; self-narratives

1. Introduction

In animal autobiography, a nonhuman teller provides an account of situations and events in which he or she has, over the course of the life history leading up to the current moment of narration, participated as an experiencing self. As in other kinds of autobiographical acts ([1], pp. 11–55; [2], pp. 63–102), these earlier experiences at once shape and are shaped by the assumptions, values, and priorities that, it can be inferred, now lie at the heart of the nonhuman narrator’s self-conception, and that manifest themselves not only through the substance of the story that the animal tells but also through the teller’s manner of narrating [3]. In such contexts, questions that have crystallized around the study of self-narratives¹ told by human selves apply *mutatis mutandis* to animal autobiographies, where a kind of doubled or layered relationality is at work: that between the human author of the narrative and the nonhuman agent whom the author projects as telling it, and that between the

¹ As in Herman [4], I draw here on Gergen and Gergen’s definition of self-narratives as “the individual’s account of self-relevant events across time” ([5], p. 162). Resulting from persons’ attempts “to establish coherent connections among life events” ([5], p. 162), for Gergen and Gergen these accounts must be characterized in social and relational terms, since they are ultimately “symbolic systems used for such social purposes as justification, criticism, and social solidification” ([5], p. 163; see also Ritivoi [3], pp. 27–36).

animal narrator and the range of others, human as well as nonhuman, to whom the animal teller, in turn, orients in recounting, contextualizing, and explaining or justifying the actions and reactions that make up the story of the teller's life. But what is more, in engaging with acts of self-narration that cross species lines, creators of animal autobiographies also broach questions about genre, truth status, and the structure as well as the politics of narrative representation—in this case, the practice of narrativizing the experiences of subjects who communicate via resources that extend beyond human language systems.

To address questions of this sort, the present article draws not just on scholarship on (animal) autobiography but also on ideas from the fields of linguistic semantics, politeness theory, and discourse analysis, including the “framing and footing” approach that focuses on talk emerging in contexts of face-to-face interaction and that derives most directly from the work of Erving Goffman [6,7]. This research allows cross-species acts of speaking-for to be situated on a continuum that parallels the one stretching between “butting in” and “chipping in” in the domain of face-to-face interaction among human interlocutors [8,9]. When butting in, a speaker voices an utterance of which he or she is not only author but also the principal, whereas when chipping in a speaker voices an utterance in which the spoken-for party or parties function as co-principal(s). Along the same lines, using case studies that range from animal riddles to Ceridwen Dovey's *Only the Animals* (2014) [10], a collection of life stories posthumously narrated by a variety of nonhuman tellers, I profile autobiographical acts that reach beyond the human as ways of speaking for or in behalf of animal others, situating such acts within their broader sociointeractional and institutional—as well as narratological—contexts.

2. Approaches to Animal Autobiography

DeMello [11] comments on the range of purposes informing autobiographies by nonhuman tellers, in effect situating instances of this narrative mode at different increments along what Herman [12,13] describes as a continuum of strategies for projecting nonhuman experiences in storyworlds.² At one end of the scale are methods for presenting animal experiences in relatively summative, globalizing terms—as refracted through human-centered practices and values. At the other end are accounts designed to anchor interpreters in a conception or model of what it is or might be like for nonhuman agents to interact with their environment on a moment-by-moment basis; these accounts project nonhuman experiences in a more detailed, granular way. DeMello describes the two poles of this continuum as follows:

These animals [i.e., animals narrating their life experiences] often speak for us—allowing writers to discuss concepts like loneliness, alienation, or slavery, through the voices of animals—helping us understand what it is to be human. But speaking animals today are much more than simply allegorical devices. Increasingly today, animals are allowed to speak for themselves, demonstrating a new awareness of animal subjectivity, and a desire on the part of many animal lovers to give that subjectivity a voice. ([11], p. 4)

Dwyer [16] demonstrates the fruitfulness of investigating how animal autobiographies situated near the more explicitly human-centric end of the spectrum can be used to allegorize unresolved tensions and contradictions in the broader culture. Focusing on the production and reception of such narratives in post-Civil War America, Dwyer suggests that even as they adopted the conventions of slave narratives, these animal autobiographies remained entangled in social and species hierarchies that are consonant with slavery. More specifically, argues Dwyer, in cross-mapping species difference onto racial difference, animal autobiographies in this context helped give rise to a “discourse of black criminality crucial to the reconsolidation of white hegemony after the formal end of racial slavery” ([16], pp. 4–5).

² As noted by Bernaerts et al. ([14], p. 75), Ziolkowski [15], in an analysis of texts with canine narrators, sets up a comparable scale between anthropocentric and cynocentric narratives.

For texts situated at the other end of the spectrum of nonhuman self-narratives, a key question is the following: to what extent does the voicing of animal subjectivity, despite the participation of autobiography (as a generic category) in the domain of nonfictional discourse [17–19], necessarily remain a fictional enterprise? Do such accounts, by virtue of their shared premise of a nonhuman agent using human language to tell that agent’s life story, always and everywhere exemplify the mode Saunders calls autobiografiction, or “fictional works in auto/biographical form” ([20], p. 9)? Colombat, for her part, answers in the affirmative, suggesting that “writing the autobiography of an animal is indeed a wonderful idea, and a great temptation and challenge to a writer . . . , but it just cannot be. It can never be anything but fiction” ([21] p. 48). By contrast, Savvides [22], in her account of canine autobiographies used to promote the welfare of street or “soi” dogs in Bangkok, Thailand, finds in those animal autobiographies a more thoroughgoing hybridity. Drawing on Franklin’s sociological studies of human-canine relationships vis-à-vis domestic living arrangements ([23]; see also [24,25]), Savvides describes such accounts as a product of identifications that, result in ontological as well as generic hybridization. She argues that the canine autobiographies in question “allow their human readers to understand...soi dogs as not-unlike-humans, or, perhaps, to understand that humans are not-unlike-soi dogs” ([22], p. 241). From this perspective, the hybrid status of animal autobiographies can be aligned with what Schwalm describes as the broader hybridity of autobiographical discourse as such: “While autobiography on the one hand claims to be non-fictional (factual) in that it proposes to tell the story of a ‘real’ person, it is inevitably constructive, or imaginative, in nature and as a form of textual ‘self-fashioning’ ultimately resists a clear distinction from its fictional relatives (autofiction, autobiographical novel), leaving the generic borderlines blurred” ([26], para. 1; see also [1]; [2], pp. 204–10; [27]).

Indeed, the variety of critical positions on animal autobiography reflects the complexity of the issues raised by this storytelling mode. Ratelle, in her study of animality in literary works and movies targeted at children, suggests that in animal autobiographies “the animal’s-eye view compels the human reader into a close emotional bond with the animal as it relates the story of its difficult life” ([28], p. 10; see also [11], p. 8). By contrast, Huff and Haefner [29], in their discussion of “animalographies” included on websites maintained by organizations and corporations across the political spectrum, from the Animal Liberation Front to the Purina pet food corporation, attribute only limited scope and resonance to accounts presented as if they were authored by nonhuman animals. Huff and Haefner characterize these narratives as instances of “popular posthumanism”, as opposed to the critical posthumanism outlined by theorists such as Donna Haraway [30].³ Meanwhile, Bernaerts et al. [14] have, for their part, established an important precedent for inquiry into narration by nonhuman agents, laying foundations for a narratology beyond the human more generally. They argue that narratives told by nonhuman narrators engage readers in a dialectic of defamiliarization and empathy—defamiliarizing (at least in some instances) human-centric frames of reference while also promoting empathy with other-than-human ways of being-in-the-world ([14], pp. 72–74).

However, in describing nonhuman narration as a super-category containing the sub-categories of tales told by animals and the tradition of it-narratives ([14], pp. 82–88), or narratives presented by inanimate objects [31,32], Bernaerts et al. downplay the differences between these two kinds of narrative situations. In this way, the co-authors in effect follow Latour [33] in making a flattening-out move whereby animals and other sorts of actants that can be categorized as nonhuman (artifacts, built structures, etc.) are lumped together. By conflating animal and object narrators, in a manner that threatens to obscure the contrasting meanings that these kinds of beings have in the broader cultural ontologies in which they figure, insofar as they populate distinctive subregions of the realm beyond the human, Bernaerts and his co-authors become vulnerable to the critique articulated by

³ But see Section 4.1 for a discussion of how some animalographies demonstrate more complexity than Huff and Haefner [29] suggest.

Kohn: “the distinction Latour makes between humans and nonhumans...fails to recognize that some nonhumans are selves” ([34], p. 5; see also [35], pp. 91–92).⁴ At the same time, because all of their examples are fictional autobiographies, i.e., texts that squarely belong to the genre of fiction, the fundamental hybridity that accrues to autobiography in general, animal autobiography in particular, receives short shrift in Bernaerts et al.’s [14] discussion. Thus, the co-authors’ account both under-generates and over-generates necessary analytic distinctions. On the one hand, it does not make sharp enough ontological discriminations between animals and other kinds of beings; on the other hand, by relegating (all) nonhuman narrators to the domain of fiction, it draws too sharp a border within the landscape of narrative genres, and obscures how acts of animal telling can, when resituated in the larger context of autobiographical acts, be viewed as collaborative, trans-species narrational performances cutting across the fiction–nonfiction divide.

To develop alternative strategies for engaging with these issues, I turn now to a discussion of how integrating ideas from the fields of discourse analysis, politeness theory, and linguistic semantics affords different perspectives on autobiographical acts that extend beyond the domain of the human.

3. Nonhuman Narration Reframed: Finding One’s Footing in Animal Autobiographies

As Goffman has argued, participants in the forms of talk that emerge from face-to-face interaction regularly change how they align themselves with one another and with the utterances being produced. Goffman characterizes such changes—that is, changes to “the alignment that [discourse participants] take up to [themselves] and others present in the way [they] manage the production or reception of an utterance” ([7], p. 128)—as changes of footing, with “a change in our footing being another way of talking about our frame for events” ([7], p. 128). Such frames can be defined, in turn, as more or less fully shared understandings of what kind of interaction is unfolding, and what kinds of moves, conversational and other, are expected or normative given the kind of interaction participants take themselves to be involved in and contributing to [6,40,41]. Thus, very different sorts of discourse contributions are expected in a service encounter—e.g., an exchange with the cashier at the grocery store—than in an academic debate, the delivery of a eulogy at a funeral, or for that matter interactions with a companion animal.

In the pioneering analyses that have informed more recent research into framing and footing across different settings for and kinds of conversational interactions, Goffman sets out concepts and distinctions that have proved foundational for research in discourse analysis, sociolinguistics, and related fields (see, for example, [8,9,40–42]). Crucially, Goffman proposes “breaking up the primitive notion of hearer and speaker”, which constitute folk imagery associated with communicative interchanges, “into more differentiated parts, namely participation framework and production format” ([7], p. 153). The terms speaker and hearer, on this view, are insufficiently nuanced to capture the many (and fluctuating) statuses that one can have as a discourse participant at once contributing to and making sense of emergent frames for talk. Relevant statuses include, when it comes to production format, that of author, or “someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded” ([7], p. 144); animator, or “the talking machine, a body engaged in acoustic activity, or, if you will, an individual active in the role of utterance production” ([7], p. 144); principal, or “someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told, someone who is committed to what the words say” ([7], p. 144); and figure, Goffman’s term for contexts in which speakers represent themselves through personal pronouns such as “I”, hedges and qualifiers such as modal auxiliaries (“would”, “could”), remedial statements or corrections of previous utterances, or accounts of what they said on

⁴ Here I draw on the work of Kohn [34,35] as well as that of analysts like Candea [36], Descola [37], and Viveiros de Castro [38] to define cultural ontologies as sets of orienting assumptions that specify, in the form of common knowledge, what sorts of beings populate the world and how those beings’ qualities and abilities relate to the qualities and abilities ascribed to humans. See also Herman [4,39].

past occasions, such that the speakers in question become figures in a statement, that is, “a protagonist in a described scene, a ‘character’ in an anecdote, someone...who belongs to the world that is spoken about, not the world in which the speaking occurs” ([7], p. 147). The possibility of adopting the status of figure thus allows for embedding one’s own or others’ past, future, or hypothetical utterances into a current stretch of talk, including quotations, ironic revoicings, and maxims, as well as stage performances and recitations ([7], p. 150). Such embeddings, which can be recursively nested within one another, also lead to changes of footing, since in reporting what someone else said or reproducing sentiments one used to espouse but no longer condones, one is taking up a different alignment to the ongoing discourse than the alignment entailed by reporting “the [current] feelings of the ‘addressing self’” ([7], p. 151).

When it comes to what Goffman calls participation frameworks, which can be used to rethink the notion of “hearer”, relevant statuses include orienting to the unfolding discourse as an addressee, an unaddressed but ratified participant, or an unaddressed and unratified participant—e.g., an eavesdropper or a bystander. For Schiffrin, such participation frameworks, which in her definition overlap somewhat with Goffman’s production formats, concern “the way speaker and hearer are related to their utterances and to one another” ([8], p. 233). The frameworks in question are anchored in what Tannen and Wallat [40] term interactive frames, or “what people think they are doing when they talk to each other” ([8], p. 233).

In analyses that elaborate on these general ideas, and that provide a basis for rethinking the structures and implications of animal autobiography, Schiffrin ([8]; [9], pp. 106–36) examines microinteractional details associated with “speaking for another”. In this mode of alignment, one expresses knowledge of and sometimes solidarity with the person—more precisely, the discourse participant—whose voice one animates. Depending on the circumstances—and to invoke an indicative range of stances or alignments it will be important to discriminate among, in intra- as well as interspecies contexts—in being animated the voice in question may be assumed, remembered, inferred, hypothesized, or imagined. Further, as Schiffrin [9] suggests, in multiparty talk, speaking for another can be a way of “chipping in” (engaging in a display of what Brown and Levinson [43] term positive politeness and what Goffman [44] calls positive face wants, whereby one signals that one shares so much with another discourse participant that one can take up his or her position in talk, building solidarity) or else “butting in” (engaging in a violation of negative politeness requirements or negative face wants, whereby one fails to respect another’s desire not to be intruded upon, threatening solidarity) (Schiffrin [9], pp. 234, 238; see also [43], pp. 91–228; [44]). Hence “speaking for another can be seen as either deferential, or demeaning, to the one spoken for” ([9], p. 234). What is more, such transfers of the responsibility for speaking can be institutionally allocated, as when a lawyer enters a plea for his or her client in court, and also performed on the fly by conversational peers who thereby signal (and potentially reconfigure) their understandings of gender-related, ethnic, and other aspects of identity—as researchers working in the tradition of Critical Discourse Analysis have explored [45,46].

For their part, building on some of the sociological and discourse-analytic scholarship that informs Schiffrin’s approach, Arluke and Sanders ([47], pp. 61–81) use human-canine interactions in a veterinary hospital as well as a guide-dog training program to underscore the relevance of practices of speaking-for in constellations of social agents that extend beyond the human. Arluke and Sanders identify a variety of reasons that may motivate human caretakers to speak for their companion animals in such settings, whether through first-person, ventriloquizing constructions or through more distanced, third-person attributions of experience. Relevant motives include using the animal as a means to transmit, in a more or less oblique way, possibly face-threatening directives or complaints to a spouse or another family member; offering “surrogate explanations” for behavior that caretakers construe as needing to be excused, whether because of its potentially disruptive or transgressive effects or because of how, in the caretaker’s estimation, the behavior at issue might bear on interlocutors’ assessments of the kind of person he or she is; and empathically identifying with—and giving voice to—the suffering of a nonhuman being in order to obtain appropriate treatment for a sick or injured

animal. As this range of motives suggests, and as my case studies in the next section confirm, acts of speaking-for that cross the species boundary are as much subject to fluctuations between what Schiffrin [8,9] calls butting in and chipping in as are intra-species acts—that is, acts in which both the speaking and the spoken-for parties are human.

This line of inquiry, which connects ideas from discourse analysis and interactional sociolinguistics with work in human–animal studies, and which the present article further seeks to link up with scholarship on animal autobiography, underscores reasons for diverging from Bernaerts et al.’s [14] account—more specifically, from their conflation of object and animal narrators as well as their relegation of (all) animal tellers to the domain of fiction. The ascription of self-narratives to nonhuman tellers should, rather, be situated alongside a multiplicity of discourse practices that involve speaking in behalf of another being who is assumed, inferred, or hypothesized to have a perspective on and interest in situations and events—with such acts of speaking-for encompassing a range of practices that cut across the fiction–nonfiction contrast. As these comments also suggest, when it comes to speaking for another, questions of modality intersect with those of framing, footing, and genre. Accordingly, it is advantageous to shift from the fiction–nonfiction polarity, a binarized distinction, to another continuum—in this case, the continuum that specialists in linguistic semantics have developed to map out the degree to which a speaker is committed to the truth of the proposition expressed in an utterance, with such degrees of commitment falling under the heading of “epistemic modality” ([48], pp. 387–89; [49], p. 141; [50], pp. 508–9).

At issue are the expressive resources—including, in English, sentential adverbs such as “undoubtedly”, modal auxiliary verbs such as “may” or “would”, and statement types such as interrogatives and imperatives—that are used by speakers to signal where their attitude toward a proposition falls on a scale stretching from the epistemic modality of certainty to that of uncertainty (Herman [51], pp. 310–11). One end of the continuum corresponds to the “realis” mode, in which one is strongly committed to truth of the proposition about which one makes a claim; the other end of the continuum corresponds to the “irrealis” mode, in which one is weakly committed to the truth or factual status of the proposition—or even, as in fictional discourse, not committed at all.⁵ Acts of speaking for another can occupy various positions along this scale. Practices of speaking-for that cluster toward the realis end of the continuum include collaboratively written autobiographies ([19], pp. 185–215; [52]), the co-production of discourse in interactions between persons with and persons without aphasia ([41]), acting in the formal capacity as a court-appointed attorney making a plea in behalf of a defendant accused of a crime ([53], pp. 81–82), or taking someone’s side in a conversation in which one defends an absent or present party against the criticisms ventured by an interlocutor. Practices of speaking-for that cluster toward the irrealis end include conjecturing about what a person from a different culture (or even an extraterrestrial being) might say about current world affairs, predicting one’s own future reactions to contemporary events, or projecting oneself into the role of the homo- or autodiegetic narrator presenting a fictional account, whether within or across the species boundary. The point to emphasize here is that, like acts of speaking-for more generally, animal-autobiographical acts can fall at different increments along this scale—even as an extended animal autobiography can span different segments of the continuum over the course of its telling.

Animal autobiography thus piggybacks on the hybrid generic status of autobiography itself [1,26,27], taking advantage of a flexible narrative environment in which the whole range of modes—from realis to irrealis—can be exploited when it comes to presenting an account of the situations and events that make up a given storyworld. In turn, these movements along the continuum of epistemic modalities in the context of animal autobiography translate into changes in the framings and footings entailed

⁵ In Crystal’s formulation, realis is “a term used in the study of epistemic modality: in a realis (“real”) assertion, a proposition is strongly asserted to be true, the speaker being ready to back up the assertion with evidence or argument. It is opposed to an irrealis (“unreal”) assertion, where the proposition is weakly asserted to be true, but the speaker is not ready to support the assertion” ([49], p. 321).

by acts of speaking-for that cross species lines. Who, or what, is the self for whom claims are being made in autobiographical writing, and what is the status of those claims?⁶ These questions are already challenging ones, and they become even more complex and multidimensional when such acts of speaking-for-a-self extend beyond the realm of the human.

As Cosslett [53] notes, Lejeune's [19] work on collaborative autobiographies anticipates some of the issues at stake in animal-autobiographical acts, with the writer of another's life story creating a narrative that would otherwise have remained untold, and thereby taking on the role of "a mediator between two worlds" (qtd. in Cosslett [53], p. 88). Describing the practice of collaborative autobiography as one in which the writer tries to imagine himself as the model, or the autobiographical subject whose story is being presented, Lejeune characterizes the autobiographer-model relationship as parallel to that between a novelist and his or her narrator-protagonist ([19], p. 190; see also [52]). Collaborative life writing thus breaches the boundary between fiction and history, and in doing so gives the lie to the apparent unity and coherence of autobiographies that do not result from explicit collaboration ([19], p. 188). From this perspective, the structure of the animal autobiography not only mirrors the practice of collaborative (inter-human) autobiography, with the difference that the writer projects himself or herself into the position of a nonhuman model; what is more, animal-autobiographical acts also root themselves in the necessity for ghostwriting, or self-displacement, even in cases where, to revert to Goffman's model, the roles of author, animator, principal, and figure would all seem *prima facie* to coincide.

4. Case Studies in Cross-Species Speaking-For

With this additional context in place, consider again how Goffman's [7] approach to framing and footing can be brought to bear on acts of speaking-for that cross the species boundary. These acts can be situated on a continuum that parallels the one stretching between "butting in" and "chipping in" in the domain of face-to-face interaction among human interlocutors [8,9]. To reiterate—and taking into account the complexities of authorship noted by Lejeune [19] and Iadonisi [52]—when butting in a speaker voices an utterance of which he or she is not only author but also the principal, whereas when chipping in a speaker voices an utterance in which the spoken-for party or parties function as principal(s). As the previous discussion suggests, however, the role of principal is no more atomic or indivisible than the role of author. To accommodate the non-primitive nature of principals, or the way an utterance can be voiced in behalf of multiple parties or a single party of more or less uncertain preferences and predispositions, a second continuum can be posited; this continuum, which cross-cuts the one that spans butting in and chipping in, corresponds to a scale of epistemic modalities whose increments fall between the *realis* and *irrealis* poles. By situating acts of speaking for nonhuman others on both continua, those acts can be profiled along two dimensions—not only as embodying more or less human-centric interests (determined in large part by the nature of the author-principal relationship in a given instance), but also as reflecting, and helping consolidate, a stance that marks those interests as ones about which it is appropriate to make assumptions, draw inferences, engage in hypotheses, or bracket as elements of fictional worlds, as the case may be.

4.1. *Nonfictional Animal Autobiographies*

This two-dimensional model helps explain why, in part because of the hybrid status of autobiographical discourse in general, not every act of speaking-for that crosses species lines should be categorized as fictional, or for that matter as centering primarily on human interests and concerns. Some of these acts, rather, can be situated closer to the *realis* pole of the continuum of epistemic modalities

⁶ In Marcus's account, part of the anxiety about autobiography's instability and hybridity arises from a concern over whether autobiography is "a way of ordering and objectifying the self, and thus importing alterity into the self that engenders it, or [a form] mirroring [the self's own] vacillations and alterations" ([1], p. 16).

than fictional projections accomplished through storytelling acts, and also as more analogous to chipping in than to butting in when it comes to the framings and footings involved. Animal riddles, for example, are grounded in an animal's attested habitats and behavioral patterns, and to that extent can be falsified; hence such riddles stand apart from the category of fiction. Thus, on a website containing animal riddles written by Jerry Jindrlich for young children⁷, the riddle whose answer is "frog" reads:

My skin is green and slippery.
I have four legs and webbed feet.
I eat bugs and little fish.
I can swim under water and hop on land.
I am a...

Similarly, the riddle whose answer is "whale" reads as follows:

I live in the ocean.
I swim wherever I want.
I sing to my family.
I can breathe through a hole in the top of my head.
I am a...

Arguably, the acts of speaking-for associated with riddles of this sort sometimes go beyond cross-species paternalism, or forms of human-centric butting in that can be assumed to violate nonhuman creatures' (inferred or inferrable) negative face wants [43,44]. Rather, the acts in question may result from a hypothesized human-animal interchange, in which the sentiments expressed in the riddle are, in effect, shared between a human author and a counterfactual nonhuman co-author—sentiments that the human designer of the riddle infers and seeks to reinforce via an act of co-telling driven by positive face wants. The subject of the riddle, which I am here characterizing as a nonhuman co-author, contributes to a model or profile that derives from what humans know about the animal in question coupled with hypotheses concerning what kind of self-narrative the animal would tell if it were equipped with the capacity for verbal expression. The role of principal is likewise split, or hybridized, in such contexts. Thus, the telling of the riddle can be interpreted both as an act of speaking-for that constitutes cross-species chipping in and—particularly when the riddle is targeted at children learning about the lifeways of animals—a puzzle designed in behalf of a human addressee.⁸

Animal riddles form part of a broader category of nonfictional instructional narratives that serve the purpose of modeling animals' behavioral routines, capabilities, and (potential) viewpoints on their environments. For instance, in the first volume of his multi-volume *Curious Critters* series, targeted at readers aged 3–8, David Fitzimmons [54] includes, along with an image of the animal with its claws extended toward the reader, the following profile for "Ohio Crawfish":

Do you know why I'm waving my giant claws?
I'm warning you: Don't come any closer.
Snap! Snap! Snap!
I catch my food with these claws. I also attack and defend myself with them.
Snap! Snap! Snap!

⁷ The website may be found at <http://www.meddybemps.com/Riddles/index.html>.

⁸ The pervasiveness of animals telling riddles in educational and other material targeted at children speaks to issues raised by Degnen [55]. As Degnen notes, at a time when they themselves are still in the process of acquiring the status of persons, "young children are actively encouraged to invert Western naturalist ontology (whereby human beings and all other living beings are segregated into radically different domains) and invest their imagination in a cosmos where human and nonhuman animals are commensurate" ([55], p. 677).

Do you want to know something really cool? If any of my legs gets hurt, including my giant claws, I can grow new ones. Pretty neat, huh? Now, enough chitchat. Back off!

Snap! Snap! Snap! ([54], p. 4)

This narrative profile, like the ones emerging from the adult- and student-designed animal riddles, can be viewed as the product of trans-species co-authorship. Here too the crayfish's attested display behaviors, habits of predation and self-defense, and recuperative powers contribute to an account that, although it is mock-voiced by a crustacean in dialogue with child readers who are cast in the role of direct addressees, remains within the domain of falsifiability. But note how the footings associated with this act of cross-species speaking-for change over the course of the ventrioloquized self-profile. Some of the crayfish's projected utterances can be taken as the result of chipping in on the part of the human co-author of the profile, whose positive face wants motivate him to infer and co-articulate, on the basis of the animal's observed dispositions and behavioral tendencies, what he takes to be the crayfish's preferences and priorities. Other utterances contained in the profile, however, including the interrogatives "Do you want to know something really cool?" and "Pretty neat, huh?" as well as the locution "Now, enough chitchat," can be glossed as originating from a human—rather than hybrid—frame of reference. Such utterances can be construed as imposing upon negative face wants that may, given the evidence available, be more or less plausibly attributed to the animal. These elements of the profile extend beyond any extrapolation from observed behaviors, or for that matter any technique for modeling an animal's experiential world; instead, they can be interpreted as strategies for enhancing readability through an engagement with forms of dialogic exchange anchored in humans' own communicative practices.

Self-narratives attributed to shelter animals in need of adoption also exemplify nonfictional acts of speaking-for that cross species lines. These autobiographical accounts, like the instructional narratives just described, can involve complex shifts of footing. Thus, whereas the animal autobiographies included in a post to the Animal Liberation Front's website titled "Interview from an Animal Shelter" present hypotheses about (rather than fictionalizing) the lived experiences of shelter dogs, in doing so they reveal fluctuating degrees of alignment with human frames of reference.⁹ In one of the accounts, perhaps attributed to the animal on the basis of a separate (unreported) interview with one or more of the shelter's human attendants, a female Jack Russell terrier named Patsy recounts how "My owner surrendered me. She said she wanted a cute little dog like the one on the TV show, *Frasier*. She didn't bother to look into the type of dog I am...I suppose she expected me to just lie about and only need a short walk each day, just like Eddie [the dog on the TV program], but my energy was so high that I needed to run and play." Granted, the mode of telling here somewhat occludes the experiential texture of the dog's life story; but far from being an instance of fiction, this animal autobiography cautions against using fictional narratives as templates for understanding animal lives, or human-animal relationships. The account attributed to Patsy therefore suggests how animal autobiographies, even when ventrioloquized by tellers familiar with television serials and animal actors, can nonetheless reveal traces of trans-species co-authorship. Such hybrid authorial agents take their place within production formats that feature a more-than-human principal—in this case, a principal that oscillates between the mistreated dog and a human concerned about those who may be prone to adopting (or abandoning) a companion animal for ill-thought-out reasons.

4.2. Fictional Animal Autobiographies

A model integrating research on framing and footing also helps account for the variety of animal autobiographies clustering at the other pole of the continuum of epistemic modalities, with these nonhuman self-narratives framing propositions about the animals' experiences not just in a provisional

⁹ See <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/Practical/Pets/Stories/InterviewAnimalShelter.htm>.

or hypothetical mode but furthermore as fictional, or nonfalsifiable. There are indeed significant differences among fictional animal autobiographies, confirming that a second analytic dimension (in addition to modal status) is needed to account for variation in such virtual acts of cross-species speaking-for. As with the nonfictional examples discussed in my previous subsection, when fictional animal narrators recount their life stories the author-principal relationship determines degrees of human-centrism; at issue is the extent to which the account can be read as one that, having been co-authored across species lines and motivated by the human designer's positive face wants, attempts to avoid any violation of inferred or assumed nonhuman negative face wants. And once again, shifts of footing entailed by the foregrounding of different aspects of hybridized, "humanimal" authors and principals can obtain not only across various fictional animal autobiographies but also over the course of a single text's unfolding.¹⁰

Thus, at a macro-analytic level, provisional distinctions can be drawn between classic as well as contemporary animal autobiographies designed to promote more humane treatment of companion animals, such as Anna Sewell's *Black Beauty* (1877/2007) [57], Margaret Marshall Saunders's *Beautiful Joe* (1893) [58], and Ann Martin's *A Dog's Life: The Autobiography of a Stray* (2005) [59]; the more or less collaboratively composed autobiographies of members of species that have been subjected to scientific experimentation or exposed to the abusive treatment associated with factory farming or industrialized agriculture, ranging from the autobiography told by Nicodemus the rat in Robert C. O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* (1972) [60], who was injected with an intelligence-enhancing serum in a fictionalized research laboratory maintained by the National Institute of Mental Health, to some of the life stories told by the animals who feature in William Kotzwinkle's *Doctor Rat* (1976/2014) [61]; and texts in which writers, sometimes working in different storytelling media [62,63], have enlisted the resources of fictional animal autobiography to unsettle in an even more concerted way broader assumptions about cross-species relationships that both shape and are shaped by practices of giving voice to nonhuman experiences—as in the life narratives told posthumously by the nonhuman narrator-protagonists included in Ceridwen Dovey's story collection, *Only the Animals* (2014) [10]. At a more micro-analytic level, different modalities of speaking-for manifest themselves within (and not just across) these and other texts falling in the relevant subcategories.

Take *Black Beauty* [57], for example. As with other fictional autobiographies featuring nonhuman tellers, it would be a category mistake to attempt to falsify Sewell's acts of cross-species speaking-for; but here again attending to the specifics of the author-principal relationship allows for a finer-grained analysis of the text. Specifically, Sewell's discourse can be positioned at various increments on the continuum of self-other alignments stretching between butting in and chipping in, depending on the scope and quality of the humanimal co-authorship in a given segment of the narrative and also the degree to which Sewell can be read as seeking to uphold the inferred negative face wants of the animal agent(s) involved—in this case, the species of whom Beauty is a representative. To be sure, Sewell's frequent interactions with and close observations of horses maximized opportunities for a cross-species compositional dynamic, in which possibilities for chipping in rather than butting in were increased.¹¹ Yet, the text's reliance on institutions and practices that include slavery as it was constituted in the nineteenth century, filial relations based on the concept of the nuclear family, and others can be read as a superimposition of human frames of reference on equine experiences.

For their part, Saunders's *Beautiful Joe* [58] and Martin's much later *A Dog's Life* [59] are marked by an even more thoroughgoing use of human-centric projections, with the attendant risk of a desire for trans-species solidarity trumping equally exigent, and species-specific, needs for autonomy. Both texts can be read as containing co-authored propositions about dogs based on attested canine behaviors and dispositions, as when Saunders has Joe report that "dogs love variety and excitement, and like

¹⁰ See DeKoven on the concept of humanimals, or "oscillating characters who are neither/both human and animal" ([56], p. 20).

¹¹ As Norris [64] notes, because of illness Sewell was unable to walk and depended on horse-drawn transportation for most of her life.

to see what is going on outside as well as human beings" ([58], p. 40) and Martin's nonhuman narrator-protagonist recounts how he and his fellow stray dog, Moon, survive by foraging for food in the small town in which they spend a winter ([59], p. 135). Yet, human frames of reference preponderate in both texts, and the frequency with which Saunders and Martin rely on such frames as a source domain for fictional world building in effect privileges human positive face wants over nonhuman negative face wants; depending on the cultural ontology in which a given narrative is grounded, these wants not to be intruded upon will be more or less richly ascribed to the animal agents involved. Thus, Beautiful Joe is able to quote, verbatim, an extended discussion about animal treatment that he overhears while traveling on a train ([58], pp. 132–41), while Martin's canine teller grasps the concept of spaying ([59], p. 167), uses the names of tree varieties ([59], p. 179), and refers to specific pieces and styles of human clothing ([59], p. 192).

Other animal autobiographies, in projecting inside views of the experiences of animals subject to scientific experimentation or the methods of factory farming, leverage human frames of reference in order to subvert anthropocentrism, thereby reconfiguring acts of butting in, via ironic or self-reflexive modes of telling, as a kind of chipping in.¹² In O'Brien's *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH*, for example, Nicodemus the rat takes on the role, for part of the novel, of an intradiegetic narrator, presenting his autobiography as a story-within-the-story ([60], pp. 120–210). Nicodemus recounts how he and some fifty-nine other rats, along with eight mice, were captured and conscripted for an experiment designed to test "whether certain injections could help us to learn more and faster" ([60], p. 129). Nicodemus does not explain how he is able to understand conversations among the human scientists about experimental procedures even before he and the other members of the non-control groups of rodents are injected with the potentially intelligence-enhancing serum. Further, after Nicodemus and the other rats escape from the laboratory, they arrange their affairs in a way that appears to mirror human architectural, technological, and more broadly cultural practices, creating an underground meeting hall and library, building an elevator and using electric lights, stockpiling seeds for the purposes of crop production, transmitting to their offspring the ability to read that they acquired after being given the serum, and so on.

Yet Nicodemus's account also reflects the rats' awareness of their own interstitial, between-species status, and hence the limitations of human models for other-than-human social collectivities. Thus Nicodemus reports a fellow experimental subject's remark that "we don't know where to go because we don't know what we are. Do you want to go back to living in a sewer pipe? And eating other people's garbage? Because that's what rats do. However, the fact is, we aren't rats any more. We're something Dr. Schultz has created. Something new" ([60], p. 160). He also recounts how he and the other rats were glad to leave an abandoned estate they had taken over for several months: "we were never really comfortable there. Everything in it was designed for animals who looked, moved and thought differently from the way we did" ([60], pp. 191–92). Hence, in creating this autobiography of a laboratory subject O'Brien has, as Ratelle suggests, portrayed the lab as "a site of intersection between human and animal that...serves to undermine an exclusively human notion of subjectivity" ([28], p. 103).

Indeed, O'Brien's focus on rats' experiences, like Kotzwinkle's in *Doctor Rat* [61], enables his fictional animal autobiography to comment critically on a cultural ontology in which possibilities for subjectivity beyond the human are differentially allocated, often for pragmatic or instrumentalizing reasons, across different forms of animal life. As Ratelle puts it, "unlike companion animals, rodents had few advocates to speak against their inclusion in laboratories, and their small size and easily

¹² In her analysis of Paul Auster's 1999 novel *Timbuktu*, Ittner [65] identifies some of the issues that are at stake in ironized or self-reflexive acts of butting in across species lines. For Ittner, Auster uses Willy G. Christmas's relationship with his dog, Mr. Bones, to suggest how "by thinking of an animal, we construct it within our own consciousness and therefore what is reflected back to us is our own existence, irrespective of the point of view we choose to adopt...[Auster's] approach acknowledges this impasse and integrates it into its inquiry on animal alterity" ([65], p. 182).

facilitated breeding made them ideal laboratory denizens" ([28], p. 100). But whereas *Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH* was written for younger readers¹³ and resorts to a subtly self-subverting overextension of human frames of reference vis-à-vis the story of Nicodemus's life, with the embedded rodent autobiography invoking human-centric conceptions of societies or civilizations in order to imagine other-than-human social collectivities, Kotzwinkle's text, targeted at an adult audience, engages in blunt, sometimes brutal irony to stage its own anti-anthropocentric critique via animal autobiography.

Rather than presenting Doctor Rat's life story as an embedded narrative, about which readers (along with the rat's intradiegetic narratees) learn secondhand, Kotzwinkle uses retrospective autodiegetic narration—not only by his rodent protagonist but also by the other animals whose autobiographical vignettes alternate with Doctor Rat's account of his life history. Taken together these narratives tell the story not just of a variety of nonhuman lives but also of a worldwide animal uprising together with its devastatingly violent suppression by humans. Disturbingly, Doctor Rat, or at least the older, narrating I who produces the account on which judgments about what transpires in the laboratory must be based, appears to have internalized (and perhaps amplified) the instrumentalizing attitudes of the human experimenters. It is not just that Doctor Rat is, at least in his own mind, a recipient of the Claude Bernard Animal Experimentation Award ([61], p. 27), or that he aligns himself with humans by using the first-person plural in his account of the human scientists' experiments on rats and other animals—as when he reports that “naturally, we cut the dogs' vocal cords as soon as they enter the lab” to prevent them from howling or screaming in pain ([61], p. 7). What is more, the narrating I admits that he has come to “enjoy the smell of formaline—a 5% solution is satisfactory for removing all the soft parts of a rat's body. Yes, the smell is pleasing to my nose because I know the bones aren't mine” ([61], p. 1). In one of many echoes of Holocaust narratives found throughout Kotzwinkle's text, Doctor Rat refers to this 5% formaline solution as “the Final Solution”, which “after all is said and done...is death, and death is freedom” ([61], p. 1).¹⁴ Similarly, the narrating I, who at one point addresses his conspecifics by asserting that “You're all just basic models, fellow rats!” ([61], p. 18), recounts the following dialogue he has with a rat whose brain is scheduled to be “sucked out by a pneumatic tube”:

“Help, help!”

“Please, young fellow, there's no need to get so worked up about your little contribution to science. Have a bit of pressed biscuit before you die. Eat hearty and remember—death is freedom!” ([61], p. 4)

He also describes as hysterical and as “not showing the scientific attitude” a young female rat who has had a hole cut into her stomach and a plastic window inserted there so that scientists can use a strand of hair to tickle “the little rattlings as they grow inside her” ([61], p. 13).

It is thus entirely in character for Doctor Rat to tell his fellow rats to ignore the revolutionary message being broadcast, on a nonvocalized, intuitive wavelength, by the dogs and other animal subjects. As he puts it, “I would much prefer microscopic worms in my intestines to these blasted dogs in my eardrums with their slobbering tale of freedom” ([61], p. 23)—any given dog being, for Doctor Rat, “just a basic model. A convenient evolutionary offshoot expressly designed for the laboratory” ([61], p. 29). The degree to which Doctor Rat has internalized human values and priorities as normative (in contrast with Nicodemus and the other experimented-upon rats in O'Brien's text) is evident when he shouts out in response to a group of rebel rat mothers calling for the liberation of laboratory animals: “Close your ears, fellow rats! Don't listen to these irresponsible rabble rousers.

¹³ O'Brien's text won the 1972 Newberry Medal, awarded annually to books that contribute to American literature for children.

¹⁴ Other echoes include Doctor Rat's references to tattoos on rats' bodies, as well as his accounts of scientific papers published on the basis of sadistic experiments involving castration, decapitation, exposure to radiation, the grafting of body parts removed from one rat onto the bodies of other rats, and other abhorrent practices, including placing kittens, fully awake, in a microwave oven, with their paws taped down to the tray ([61], p. 38).

Remember that you are contributing to research, to saving the lives of human beings" ([61], p. 32). Kotzwinkle uses his rodent narrator, then, to ironize practices of speaking-for that disregard possibilities for subjectivity beyond the species boundary, and the negative face wants that can plausibly be associated with such other-than-human ways of experiencing the world. The very sophistication of Doctor Rat's account gives the lie to the unrelenting—and perverse—anthropocentrism that he endorses at every turn. Indeed, Kotzwinkle's use of Holocaust references suggests an analogy between this narrator's pro-animal experimentation stance and Jewish self-hatred—or even the desperate attempts at collaborationism undertaken by Jews seeking to ingratiate themselves with their captors and executioners in the Nazi death camps during the second World War.

In this respect, Kotzwinkle's text aligns itself with other norm-challenging animal autobiographies that use the resources of fiction to explore possibilities for anti-anthropocentrism in acts of speaking-for that extend beyond the human. Such texts bear the traces of trans-species co-authorship, arising from the hypothetical or counterfactual projections driven by humans' positive face wants (compare chipping in); but they also model how to avoid infringing on other creatures' inferred or assumed negative face wants (compare butting in). In turn, autobiographies of this sort not only reflect but also help shape cultural ontologies marked by relatively prolific allocations of possibilities for selfhood among animal agents.

Consider, along these lines, the autobiographies included in Ceridwen Dovey's 2014 collection *Only the Animals* [10], which consists of self-narratives told by deceased animals who die as a result of human projects and—especially—conflicts. Among these autobiographies are the life stories recounted by the soul of SS leader Heinrich Himmler's one-time German shepherd, after the dog has been killed in Poland in 1941, an explosive pack meant to blow up a tank having been strapped on his back; by the soul of a mussel killed after the battleship to which he is attached is destroyed during the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, also in 1941; by the soul of Plautus the tortoise, who, having lived with Tolstoy's daughter, Virginia Woolf, George Orwell, and Tom Stoppard, dies after being rocketed into space in 1968 for an experiment designed to test the effects of space travel on living creatures; by the soul of an elephant who dies while trying to come to the aid of her twin sister, after she is shot by militants during a 1987 civil war in Mozambique; and by the soul of a female dolphin who, having been trained by the US Navy to detect underwater mines and participate in other military operations, writes a letter to Sylvia Plath about how she too committed suicide—after learning that she had unknowingly attached a lethal weapon to an enemy diver during the invasion of Iraq in 2003.¹⁵ Overtly fictional in their use of animal narrators who are already dead at the time of telling, these autobiographies also oscillate between human-centric and biocentric frames of reference.

Thus, although capable of tracking references to vegetarianism, Hesse's *Siddhartha*, and the *Bhagavad Gita*, Himmler's German shepherd is also able to sense an intruder's neck artery pulsing as he frames his jaws around the intruder's throat ([10], loc. 972). Similarly, the roving mussel and his conspecifics are caught up in a wanderlust with distinct echoes of that experienced by Kerouac and the other members of the Beat Generation; yet, they are also able to detect subtle changes in the temperature and salinity of sea water ([10], loc. 1328). For his part, Plautus the tortoise can quote Elizabeth Cady Stanton's 1892 address to the US House Judiciary Committee concerning women's rights, as well as passages from Woolf's *Flush*, but also hibernate for months at a time and detect smells humans cannot perceive, including the icy smell of space outside his capsule's walls. As for the Navy-trained dolphin, even as she develops detailed interpretations of Ted Hughes's animal poems and converses (metafictionally) with the soul of Coetzee's Elizabeth Costello [67], she also embodies, as a "toothed whale" ([10], loc. 2430), distinctive cetacean capacities that she adduces as a

¹⁵ For more on the US Navy's Marine Mammal Program, which has engaged in the documented use of bottlenose dolphins, Beluga whales, and sea lions for purposes of surveillance and which is reported to have used dolphins for "swimmer nullification" missions, see Casey ([66], loc. 733–36).

counter-argument against humans' declarations that they are "a special-case animal", and that part of what makes them special is that they "ask the very question, Am I human or animal?" ([10], loc. 2437):

So I ask them in turn, can you use echolocation to know exactly what curves the ocean floor makes in every conceivable direction? Can you stun the creature you would like to eat using sound alone? Can you scan the bodies of your extended family and immediately tell who is pregnant, who is sick, who is injured, who ate what for lunch? The tingling many humans report feeling during an encounter with us isn't endorphins, it's because we've just scanned you to know you in all dimensions. We see through you, literally. Special case indeed. Perhaps you should be asking yourself different questions. Why do you sometimes treat other people as humans and sometimes as animals? And why do you sometimes treat creatures as animals and sometimes as humans? ([10], loc. 2437–44)¹⁶

In keeping with issues raised by the dolphin's closing questions, Dovey's text as a whole suggests how animal autobiography can be used to create oscillating human–animal alignments via (different sorts of) acts of speaking-for. Some life stories told by nonhumans can be read as co-authored acts of narrating in behalf of equally hybrid (or humanimal) principals; these experiments with narration beyond the human afford solidarity-building projections of other creatures' ways of being-in-the-world—projections that enable a reassessment, in turn, of forms of human being. But other animal autobiographies, or at least segments of them, correlate with acts of telling for which humans themselves remain the principals as well as authors, with their animal animators relegated to the role of commenting on human institutions, values, practices, and artifacts. Insofar as it uses this second, more human-centric strand of animal-autobiographical discourse, the form of Dovey's text mirrors one of its key themes: namely, the way anthropocentric ontologies deny proper selfhood to nonhuman beings, configuring them as so much collateral damage when they are killed or harmed as a result of human doings. Yet the other way of engaging in acts of speaking-for across species lines, closer to chipping in than butting in, manifests itself when the elephant narrator describes her herd's response to discovering the dead body of the group's matriarch, with the group in their grief "moving backwards towards her body and gently touching her with our hind legs, then moving away to circle and hover around her, then forward to touch her again...keening and throwing sand over the body, then covering her with branches" ([10], loc. 2087). This same strand of discourse comes into view when the dolphin narrator reports how her species' echolocation abilities surpass those afforded by human-built radar systems ([10], loc. 2704). In such moments, Dovey's ventriloquizing acts both reflect and help constitute an alternative ontology; this other way of configuring creaturely life allocates to a whole range of animals possibilities for selfhood that more restrictive ontologies limit to humans—or even to only a subset of the larger human population.

5. Conclusion: Toward a Narratology beyond the Human

Exemplifying different kinds of transhuman speaking-for, the case studies I have discussed here invite inquiry into the limits as well as the possibilities of animal autobiography, and into how this narrative mode bears on author-principal relationships both across and within the species boundary. What is more, the complexity and variety of my example texts underscore the advantages of pursuing an integrative, cross-disciplinary framework for investigating self-narratives attributed to nonhuman tellers. Using a research framework that combines ideas from language theory and discourse analysis with work in autobiography studies, the present article has sought to outline new ways of studying the structure and functions of such self-narratives, arguing that these accounts at once reveal and help shape broader assumptions concerning the qualities and abilities of animals—and hence of humans as well.

¹⁶ For more on dolphins' sophisticated echolocation skills, see Casey ([66], loc. 729–34), and Moore [68].

In turn, this approach to animal autobiography forms part of the larger project of developing a narratology beyond the human (Herman [4,69]). The overall aim of that project is to consider how ideas proposed by scholars of narrative bear on questions about the nature and scope of human–animal relationships in the larger biosphere, and vice versa. As I hope the present analysis has already begun to suggest, study of fictional as well as nonfictional narratives that include but extend beyond the realm of the human can open up productive routes of exchange among the arts, sciences, and humanities, even as approaching these narratives from a cross-disciplinary perspective can foster new ways of imagining and responding to trans-species entanglements in wider biotic communities. Because so many encounters with animals are mediated through narratively organized discourse, there is a pressing need for a comprehensive model of what storytelling practices, in domains ranging from conservationist discourse and instructional literature to avant-garde fiction and life writing, reveal about (human attitudes toward) the nonhuman world and its inhabitants. A model that integrates structural and contextual analysis, one combining the technical methods of narratology and related fields with research on cultural understandings of animals and human–animal interactions, can achieve such comprehensiveness, allowing for a step change in this area of inquiry.

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Article

Toward the Eco-Narrative: Rethinking the Role of Conflict in Storytelling

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Abstract: Offered as a response to the increasingly popular call within the eco-humanities for stories that will help humankind adapt to catastrophic planetary conditions, this article proposes “the eco-narrative”—an approach to storytelling that strives to compose with, not for, its nonhuman characters. An extension of eco-critical projects that analyze stories for their depictions of nonhumanity, the theoretical research herein brings ecological analysis of narrative to the level of structure. In particular, it problematizes the dominant plot model of conflict/climax/resolution, suggesting that stories motivated by conflict reinforce dualistic and anthropocentric habits for approaching the animal other. Evaluating two narratives concerning the human practice of killing animals—the Pew Commission’s report on Industrial Farm Animal Production and Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington’s “They’re here—I can *feel* them”—the article observes how the former’s efforts at animal rights advocacy are undermined by its very storytelling framework. Celebrating the latter story’s more playful approach to narrative instead, the article ultimately suggests that a theory of “infinite play,” as developed by James P. Carse, can be used to re-envision the dominant plot model. A template for cooperation in the absence of known outcome, infinite play thus becomes the basis for the eco-narrative—a storytelling framework flexible enough to cocreate with nonhumanity, even during an environmental moment characterized by crisis.

Keywords: eco-humanities; eco-criticism; eco-philosophy; Industrial Farm Animal Production; narrative; plot; conflict; environmental crisis; catastrophe; play theory

1. Introduction

Scholarly appeals to the “universal” of storytelling easily split in two directions. Some focus on story as it arises developmentally across the human species (Boyd 2009; Paley 2004). These scholars have tended to emphasize the narrative quality of children’s fantasy play, highlighting the importance of story to the cultivation of social connectivity and to early experiences of agency (Paley 2004). Story, it has been argued, provides children with the capacity to exert influence upon their worlds and to feel themselves participating in the determination of outcomes. Within this developmental framework, some have also attempted the grander project of tracing the biocultural and evolutionary origins of story. Brian Boyd, in particular, has suggested that the survival of the human species has depended upon strong group cohesion, and as such, stories have served the evolutionary function of teaching groups the norms that will ensure cooperation (Paley 2004). Importantly, Boyd attempts to locate what is evolutionarily efficacious about storytelling within *any* species, and thus, his search for the biocultural basis of narrative reaches well beyond the realm of the human. For Boyd, as for developmental psychologists, the human drive to tell stories emerges out of an impulse common to almost all animals—that of play. Indeed, in animals and children alike, it is open-ended play that encourages the low-stakes practicing of skills that may later prove essential to survival.

Other scholars have attempted to make a structural argument about the *way* in which stories are told, suggesting that all stories contain the same essential ingredients and can be

codified into a basic, recurrent model. Emerging in the late 1960's out of structuralist theory, and premised as the "characterisation of the model underlying people's intuitive knowledge about stories" (Herman 2005b, p. 572), the field of narratology has itself been accused of a universalistic failure to consider "history and context" (Warhol 2012, p. 9). As the field has expanded, however, avenues of narratological investigation have moved evermore toward the inclusion of "contextualist narratologies" (James 2015, p. 14). Accordingly, underneath the larger umbrella of narratology can now be found sub-fields like feminist/queer narrative theory—dedicated to understanding texts via "the material circumstances of the history that produces and receives them" (Warhol 2012, p. 9)—and unnatural/antimimetic narratology, which situates its analysis on texts that "challenge rather than conform to" the conventions of realist narrative (Richardson 2012, p. 22). As with other movements into the postmodern, these expanded conceptions of narratology are largely focused on texts hitherto ignored by more traditional narrative theory. Yet, even as academic inquiries into narrative structure have enacted a shift away from essentialism, more popular explanations of narrative remain, on the whole, dedicated to the project of presenting a single, easily replicable account of how story happens.

In *The Storytelling Animal*, for instance, Jonathan Gottschall contends that stories display a "universal grammar." As he explains, "Almost all story makers work within the tight confines of problem structure...writing stories around a pattern of complication, crisis, and resolution" (Gottschall 2012, p. 54). In formulating this pattern, Gottschall cites other analysts of narrative—namely Janet Burroway and Charles Baxter—who have positioned "conflict" as the foundational element of fiction (Gottschall 2012, p. 52). Indeed, these thinkers follow in a long tradition of writers who, in various (and admittedly less scholarly) handbooks on the craft of fiction, attempt to reduce the act of storytelling into a repeatable formula. Although there are slight variations in how this formula gets described, the basic pattern recalls the "plot-stages" identified in 1959 by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren: "exposition, complication, climax, and denouement" (Herman 2005a, p. 83), and the general consensus, even today, is that "without conflict, plot hardly exists" (Harmon and Holman 2003, p. 387). A successful story therefore tracks a protagonist as he moves through an experience of conflict, and regardless of what the conflict entails, it must escalate until it reaches a moment of climax—"the point where something *has* to give—and does" (Kress 1993, p. 71). As these models would have it, "resolution" is only available on the other side of a crisis (Dibell 1988, p. 126).

In arguing for this "universal grammar," Gottschall is not merely making a case about what exists today as a practiced storytelling habit; he is suggesting that this storytelling structure can be detected "No matter how far we travel back into literary history, and no matter how deep we plunge into the jungles and badlands of world folklore" (Gottschall 2012, p. 55). In Gottschall's estimation, as long as humankind persists, so too will this narrative pattern (Gottschall 2012, p. 186). Especially when set against traditions of the literary avant-garde, any appeal to a storytelling model that is "universal" in both its geospatial and temporal dimensions seems overly simplistic at best. Nevertheless, Gottschall and his fellow fictionists are correct in highlighting, if nothing else, the prevalence of a storytelling method that has not heretofore undergone much scrutiny. While I concede, therefore, that this has become a popular—and potentially reified—formula for constructing stories, I prefer to resist Gottschall's appeals to the "universal." Instead, I conceive of this formula as the "dominant Western plot model," and I suggest, further, that the status of "dominant" need not excuse the model from critique. If anything, it signals a pressing need to investigate the model further—following in the footsteps of feminist narrative theorists and unearthing the links between popular narrative structure and other forms of domination.

It is also worth briefly observing that, despite the fact that these two accounts of storytelling "universals" are categorically distinct—that is, that one account pursues the evolutionary origins of story, while the other examines storytelling practices on a structural level—they need not be at odds with one another. Indeed, one would suspect that if a storytelling model were truly "universal" across the human species, a biocultural explanation would easily extend beyond the origins of story and into the format that stories have tended to assume. The above two accounts seem irreconcilably opposed,

however, with regard to the role of *conflict* vis-à-vis storytelling. Whereas adherents to the dominant Western plot model contend that story cannot exist in the absence of conflict, Boyd repeatedly stresses that storytelling has evolved for the purpose of teaching cooperation (Boyd 2009). He even suggests that, although people are often hesitant to apply evolutionary frameworks to human behavior precisely because they imagine evolution to be driven by conflict—“stressing selfishness and competition at the expense of altruism and cooperation”—“sociobiology’s central preoccupation has been cooperation” (Boyd 2009, p. 26). In Boyd’s terms, then, evolution has been more significantly facilitated by mutualism than by competition, and story is, in fact, a human evolutionary development to promote the former. Equally significant, Boyd also emphasizes the importance of narrative *novelty* to human learning. Because humans cease to respond to patterns that become predictable, there is considerable pressure on all art—including the art of storytelling—to “violate our categoric expectations” (Boyd 2009, p. 115). This would seem to suggest that a storytelling model that has become formulaic cannot fully engage its audiences or, at the least, no longer functions as a mechanism for the cognitive evolution of the human species. To the extent that the dominant plot model has become pervasive, then, it has simultaneously sacrificed its ability to stimulate learning. Thus, even on a biocultural level, it is a formula that deserves to be rethought.

What is more, considering the increasing prevalence of philosophical and ecological arguments that identify the present moment as exceptionally catastrophic and, concurrently, call for new ways of being human, any appeals to an inviolable formula need face heightened scrutiny. At this point, talk of crisis—emerging from discourses as diverse as those of global warming, species extinction, economic inequity, etc.—has infiltrated even the most mainstream of channels, and it is no longer uncommon to hear casual end-of-world forecasting. In fact, the apocalyptic narrative has become so popular—both in fictional media and in scientific discussions—that some, like eco-humanities scholar Frederick Buell, have suggested that crisis can no longer be considered a singular, temporal event; rather, it must be seen as a condition that humankind dwells *within* (Buell 2003). Similarly, as of 2012, a group of environmentalists and economists have coined the term “catastrophism” (Lilley et al. 2012). In the broadest sense, they use “catastrophism” to refer to a generalized belief that “society is headed for collapse, whether economic, ecological, social, or spiritual” (Lilley 2012, p. 1). In a more particular sense, however, they consider “catastrophism” a phenomenon whereby people celebrate catastrophe as a shortcut out of increasingly unlivable planetary conditions. As activist Sasha Lilley explains, “Catastrophists tend to believe that an ever-intensified rhetoric of disasters will awaken the masses from their long slumber” (Lilley 2012, p. 1). According to Lilley, despite its prevalence, the catastrophist mindset makes two crucial errors: In the first place, it presumes that fear is a motivating force, and second, it focuses on highly dramatic, future disasters, thereby rendering less significant the day-to-day ways that Earth is already suffering the impacts of environmental degradation.

As both Buell and Lilley indicate, then, a widespread disconnect exists between the popular catastrophist expectation that crises will force some sort of salvific or reformatory action and the reality that humankind, by all accounts, is already living within crisis conditions. Here it is worth remembering, however, that one of humanity’s foremost relationships to crisis is a narrative one. As the dominant plot model would have it, crisis is *the* necessary fulcrum of change; a narrative conflict cannot find its resolution until it has reached its “make-or-break” climax (Dibell 1988). As such, if part of the current ecological project is to reposition humanity with regard to environmental crises, then this must occur not only within the realm of environmentalism but also within that of popular storytelling. Indeed, if Boyd’s evolutionary argument is to be believed, stories play an important role in the development of the human species (Boyd 2009), and the way in which we humans tell our stories can directly impact our ability to adapt to shifting environmental conditions. Therefore, the question must become: What changes to the dominant plot model are demanded by the present-day reality of environmental crisis?

Here, it is appropriate to introduce some of the thinkers who, from more philosophical corners of the eco-humanities, have addressed the pervasiveness of crisis as necessitating a shift in how humans

approach both art-making and their nonhuman compatriots. At the forefront of such thinking is Timothy Morton, who has recently philosophized on “hyperobjects”—a term Morton uses to describe those phenomena that, although real, are too vast and too nonlocal to be fully perceptible to human beings (Morton 2013). As Morton explains them, exemplar hyperobjects like global warming and nuclear waste—entities with which humans have a reciprocal relationship, both acting upon and being acted upon *by*—challenge any human attempt to narrate from “above.” Precisely because hyperobjects are real, but are simultaneously of magnitudes not entirely visible or even comprehensible to the humans who have created them, they render laughable all hope of a “metalanguage that could account for things while remaining uncontaminated by them” (Morton 2013, p. 2). Of course, one hears here the echoes of feminist discourses like that of Donna Haraway, who long ago argued against “the god-trick” and instead advocated the “situatedness” of all perspective (Haraway 1999). Yet, in either case, the implications for narrative are the same. If one is to properly account for the present environmental reality—which is, of course, the reality of the hyperobject—then one must resist the narrative impulse to possess a story in its entirety. That is, in attempting to tell any story about a nonhuman other, one must dispense of the contrivance of the omniscient narrator, who professes both to be unimpacted by the story he is telling and to know the ending of the story before it has even begun.

Particularly relevant to “catastrophism,” Morton also contends that hyperobjects have already brought about the “end of the world” (Morton 2013). Morton nods to the environmentalist tendency toward apocalyptic talk, arguing that it has been ineffective for precisely the reason that “to all intents and purposes, the being that we are supposed to feel anxiety about and care for is gone” (Morton 2013, p. 6). As Morton reasons, “climate” existed heretofore as the background to human activity, yet in the era of climate change, it has become *the* focal point of human discourse. Now brought into the foreground, “climate” can no longer be said to constitute a “world” for humans. Rather, it must be addressed relationally, as an object in its own right. Indeed, if genuine ecological progress is to be made, the concept of “world” needs to be discarded altogether:

Three cheers for the so-called *end of the world*, then, since this moment is the beginning of history, the end of the human dream that reality is significant for them alone. We now have the prospect of forging new alliances between humans and non-humans alike, now that we have stepped out of the cocoon of *world* (Morton 2013, p. 108).

For Morton, the crucial advantage to embracing “the end of the world” is that it forces a reorientation of the human toward the nonhuman other. In the absence of an all-enveloping environment, no one species or object can be said to occupy the privileged position of “protagonist,” and all that remain instead are relationships. Morton views this relational reorientation as an “upgrade” in human ontology and, significantly, calls upon “philosophers and other humanities scholars” to help facilitate such an “upgrading” in their fellow human beings (Morton 2013, p. 101). Accordingly, he advocates an “object-oriented art,” arguing that the proper artistic response to the era of the hyperobject is an art that conceives of itself as a collaboration between humanity and nonhumanity. This does not mean that humans are in charge of creating work *about* nonhumanity—as if above their nonhuman compatriots—instead, it means that humans create *with* nonhumanity. Morton wants an art that prizes “coexist[ence] without an agenda” (Morton 2013, p. 189).

Occupying a similar position, philosopher Isabelle Stengers contends that it already “goes without saying” that, due to climate change, the Earth may become uninhabitable for the human species (Stengers 2015, p. 7). Like Morton, she highlights the strangeness of this environmental moment, wherein we humans now regularly hypothesize about a future beyond our own demise. Categorizing these times as “catastrophic,” Stengers’s stated project is to prevent humanity from defaulting into “barbarism.” Toward this end, she makes an appeal to new narrative strategies. Not only does she speak of the importance of “paying attention” to narratives other than the dominant ones (Stengers 2015, p. 77), she also voices a distrust in the habit of confronting others—even those economic actors who are driving the destruction of the planet—in terms that are “intelligible only on the basis of conflict” (Stengers 2015, p. 35). For Stengers, preparedness for the future depends on

moving past conflictual narratives; it means “learning to compose” in a way that “couple[s] together multiple, divergent struggles” (Stengers 2015, p. 50).

In more popular publishing circles, humanities scholar Roy Scranton has also argued that the only way the human species can ensure its own survival is by accepting that this civilization, in its current carbon-driven incarnation, is “already dead” (Scranton 2015, p. 23). For Scranton, releasing those habits of capitalism that are presently driving humanity toward its own demise will be the best way to ensure that we humans can “adapt” to our imminent catastrophic future. Like Stengers and Morton, Scranton sees human adaptability as dependent upon philosophic interventions that can supply humans with “new myths and new stories” (Scranton 2015, p. 19). Indeed, it is a new type of humanity that Scranton desires, and he calls upon storytelling to lead the way toward it.

All three of these thinkers suggest that, in the face of doom, humans must learn to inhabit their humanness in new and more selfless ways. Most significantly, however, all link this “upgraded” humanness to the cultivation of new narratives or new narrative habits. Agreeing that humanity—particularly Western capitalistic humanity—has become habituated to behaviors that are disproportionately self-interested and unnecessarily conflictual, I echo the sentiment that humans need new stories. I also suggest, however, that we need new templates for constructing our stories. As indicated above, the dominant narrative model holds that story cannot exist in the absence of conflict, yet this perspective seems exceptionally ill-suited to contend with environmental crises—existing and forthcoming—that call for human adaptability. Indeed, considering that evolution occurs in response to shifting environments and that it often depends more on cooperation than on competition (Boyd 2009), it seems prudent to embrace Morton’s advice and learn to create *with*, rather than *against*, our environments and our nonhuman compatriots (Morton 2013). This means seeking out those stories that promote a cross-species mutualism, even on the structural level—that is, no longer identifying a story as successful merely because it accompanies a single (human) protagonist as he engages in a conflict.

What is more, if the ongoing crises heralded by climate change and species extinction are to be taken seriously, then the narrative role of crisis must also be reconsidered. Storytelling’s reliance upon a crisis that is “bad enough” to force conclusion must be seen as incommensurate with the reality that environmental crises are not instantaneous, life-altering events; rather, they have become the protracted and overlapping landscapes with which humanity presently dwells (Buell 2003). Indeed, if the world has already ended, then no crisis—not even those belonging to the increasingly popular apocalyptic genre—can be said to bring about an ending to the human/Earth story. Resisting the impulse toward “metalanguage” (Morton 2013), then, we humans must learn to tell our stories from inside of them. Facing tremendous uncertainty—in the absence of the “world” we’ve long taken for granted—we would do well to rethink the habit of armoring ourselves for narrative battle and, instead, redirect our stories and our energies toward that which has consistently aided our adaptation: constructive relationships.

Conceived as a response to the popular call for both new narratives and new philosophical orientations toward nonhumanity, then, this article thinks toward more relational and ecosystemic ways of constructing stories. As far as lineage is concerned, it can be linked, most immediately, to Erin James’s “econarratology”—an analytical approach to story that unites the interests of both ecology and narratology, “studying the relationship between literature and the physical environment, but do[ing] so with sensitivity to the literary structures and devices that we use to communicate” (James 2015, p. 23). According to James, “econarratology” is a necessary extension of eco-criticism, which has tended to focus too heavily on content, thereby excluding from its analyses the formal dimensions through which stories communicate about their environments (James 2015, p. 4). Directing her own econarratological analyses at postcolonial texts, James suggests that the structure a text enacts is often already a site of resistance. Thus, by developing a narrative theory capable of reading and responding to literary structures that have emerged in direct reaction to Western hegemonies, eco-criticism

can simultaneously encourage new, more equitable models for how humans might relate to their environments (both on and off of the page).

I heartily endorse James's belief that narrative structures are often already modes of resistance. I am also deeply interested in the reciprocal relationship between texts and their environments—in how storytelling forms not only emerge *from* environments but also have the power to “reshape individual and collective environmental imaginations” (James 2015, p. 39). Insofar, however, as my interest ultimately lies more with the “reshaping” effort—that is, with the telling of stories rather than with their interpretations—my own project is perhaps better named as an ecompositional one. Like eco-criticism, ecomposition is premised upon the belief that environments both impact and are impacted by discourse (Dobrin and Weisser 2002, p. 9), and indeed, ecomposition theorists suggest that the environmental crisis places a heightened demand on humans to understand how their language systems participate in practices of domination (Dobrin and Weisser 2002, p. 20). Ecomposition distinguishes itself from eco-criticism, however, in that “Ecocriticism is a literary criticism that looks toward textual interpretation,” whereas “ecomposition works from the same place, but is concerned with textual production” (Dobrin and Weisser 2002, p. 24). Yet even while this is the case, ecompositionists also acknowledge that it is “nearly impossible” to make a clean separation between interpretation and production, for “studying textual representations of nature is critical to the understanding of how textual production occurs” (Dobrin and Weisser 2002, p. 41). Similarly, even though my goal in this article is to reposition the storyteller with regard to the story—considering how any person crafting a narrative can effectively resist the structuring temptations of the dominant plot model—I arrive at such considerations only after performing econarratological analyses of nonfiction texts. Throughout these analyses, my guiding interest concerns *how* narrative structure has been conceived and reproduced within Western storytelling practices at large. In other words, I care most about the effect that a continually reinscribed narrative pattern of conflict/climax/resolution has had on people's everyday efforts to make sense of their environments.

Indeed, at the heart of this project is a belief articulated by Peter Brooks, scholar of comparative literature, who has suggested that there is “a correspondence between literary and psychic dynamics, since to an important degree we define and construct our sense of self through our fictions” (Brooks 1984, p. 36). As Brooks makes clear, our stories and our perceptions comprise a feedback loop; the way we experience story necessarily becomes the template by which we understand our own existence.

This perspective, it is worth observing, is concordant with cognitive narratologists' concept of the “storyworld”—a concept that is itself foundational to James's econarratology (James 2015). As James explains the term, a storyworld refers to “the world-creating power of narratives that catalyzes an imaginative relocation of readers to a new, often unfamiliar world and experience” (James 2015, p. 11). Storyworlds are of particular interest to James, then, because they are environmental in nature; they not only ask readers to inhabit the storyworld of a text, but they necessarily serve as a point of comparison between the textual world and the everyday one that the reader inhabits. Within the difference between these two worlds emerges the narrative's power to reshape readers' thinking. As David Herman observes, “narrative affords methods—indeed, serves as a primary resource—for world-modeling and world-creation” (Herman 2012, p. 15). There is an explicit link, then, between how stories communicate their environments to their readers and how readers learn to communicate their environments to themselves. Narrative practices are educational.

It is in this spirit that I here propose “the eco-narrative”—a more ecologically responsible framework through which storytellers can enter into their storytelling practices. My foremost purpose in suggesting the eco-narrative is to provide storytellers with an alternative to the dominant plot model—that is, a way of enacting formal narrative choices that will constitute a resistance, in and of themselves, to storyworlds premised upon conflict. It is my contention that, whether or not we tell stories explicitly about our Earthly environments, we can consider it a significant environmental intervention to rethink *how* we are telling any story. Just by resisting the initial premise that a story

must always emerge from a conflict, we can simultaneously teach new, mutualistic models for approaching nonhumanity.

In invoking the eco-narrative, I am aware that the term has already been employed to name a category of narrative associated with “environmental storytelling” (Heise 2005). Indeed, within her entry on “eco-narratives” in the *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory*, Ursula K. Heise identifies the wide number of ways that stories about environments have already manifested. She includes in her entry, for instance, genres commonly associated with environmental narrative (e.g., “nature writing”), as well as those narrative “experiments” (e.g., the use of an animal narrator) meant to “relativiz[e] modern, human-centered viewpoints” (Heise 2005, p. 130). In attaching the term “eco-narrative” to my own project, I certainly do not mean to represent all of these manifestations. More accurately, I am proposing a specific, formal avenue through which stories can earn their entry into the broader category that Heise has outlined. Above all, I intend my use of the term “eco-narrative” to signal a kinship with James’s econarratological efforts, which share my interest in the communicative properties of a story’s structure. That said, I am invested in the experimental narrative strategies through which Heise recognizes some eco-narratives, and I take inspiration (in particular) from work that has explored animal narrators and their particular capacities to “destabilize anthropocentric ideologies” (Bernaerts et al. 2014, p. 74). What is more, my own endeavor is explicitly motivated by the storytelling “challenge” with which Heise ends her entry—that of “developing modes of narration that convey a sense of ecosystems not only in their local and regional manifestations, but also in their global reach” (Heise 2005, p. 130). The eco-narrative I advocate here is precisely an attempt to “convey a sense of ecosystem” via narration.

In its broadest incarnation, this eco-narrative project would outline all of the (potentially infinite) avenues through which a storyteller might use form to convey ecosystem. To reiterate, however: My specific purpose within this article is to rethink the function of “conflict” as it has been presented within the dominant plot model. Because I share Morton’s belief that the art most likely to guide humanity through and beyond “the end of the world” is one that prizes relationships—attempting to compose *with*, not *for*, the nonhuman other (Morton 2013)—I focus herein only on stories that concern nonhumanity. In particular, I consider examples of how animals appear within human narratives. Even though Morton’s object-oriented art sees an elephant and a plastic bag as equally viable compositional partners, I prefer to limit myself to addressing the nonhuman animal, not only because the leap to another sentient being may be easier for the anthropocentrically entrenched, but also because animals figure prominently in the tales told by young children when they are first learning to construct their worlds through story. As such, even though this article responds to narrative in its widest manifestations—from children’s fantasy stories to the more disguised narratives of science—it seeks to exert influence on only the smallest and most private of levels: the way in which we humans position ourselves with regard to the stories we tell.

To this end, the article invokes three shifts. The first aims to expose the structural limitations of the dominant plot model, particularly when it is applied to nonfiction accounts of the animal other. In this section, I analyze the Pew Commission’s 2008 report on Industrial Farm Animal Production (Carlin et al. 2008), pointing to evidence of how a conflictual and anthropocentric framework imposes itself, even within the realm of scientific reportage. Against the dominant narrative reinforced by the Pew report, then, the second shift proposes new directives by which the storyteller can craft narratives that are less driven by conflict. Returning to that which evolutionary theorists and developmental psychologists have commonly identified as the basis for story, I root these directives in play theory—that is, I identify those values of play that might easily transpose themselves into storytelling practices. In this way, play becomes the guiding principle of the eco-narrative that I propose within the third and final shift. Here, I not only discuss the precepts of the eco-narrative in theoretical terms, I also analyze an example of an eco-narrative in practice. Using Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington’s “They’re *here*—I can *feel* them: the epistemic spaces of Indigenous and Western Knowledges” as a model text (Huntington and Watson 2008), I explore a narrative that more

successfully includes the animal other—exhibiting values of play both within its narrative practices and within its depiction of human/animal interactions.

2. The Animal as Antagonist: Conflictual Storytelling in Practice

In 2006, the Pew Commission on Industrial Farm Animal Production—consisting of fifteen experts in diverse fields connected with the U.S. agricultural industry—convened to investigate the practice of Industrial Farm Animal Production (IFAP) and its implications for human and animal welfare (Carlin et al. 2008). Two years later, the Commission published its findings in a report, *Putting Meat on the Table: Industrial Farm Animal Production in America*. The report is ultimately critical of IFAP, noting that it “presents an unacceptable level of risk to public health and damage to the environment, as well as unnecessary harm to the animals we raise for food” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 8), and it concludes by proposing recommendations to enhance IFAP’s sustainability. Importantly, these recommendations are not only aimed at improving the health of the humans who regularly consume animal protein, but they also suggest some ethical standards whereby animals raised for consumption can enjoy more humane living conditions. However, even in their attempts to critique Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs)—and to act justly on behalf of the pigs, cows, and chickens who inhabit them—the authors of the Pew Report enlist (either intentionally or unintentionally) the conflictual patterning of the dominant plot model. In the preface to the report, the Executive Director of the Commission, Robert P. Martin, even states, “The story that follows is the Commission’s overview” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 9). Referring to the report itself as a “story,” he alludes to its narrative underpinnings, perhaps suggesting that the report represents the Commission’s attempt to “emplot” various pieces of data into a recognizable narrative format (White 2002). Moreover, although Martin does not specify *how* that data has been arranged—that is, what kind of tale is being told—it is clear, even from the title, that it will necessarily be a story about animals, as told by humans.

The most revealing aspect of the Pew Report’s “story” is, in fact, the history it gives for IFAP. As told by the report, the origins of the CAFO belong to the timely confluence of the Green Revolution with the development of the mechanized slaughterhouse in the United States. Emerging out of a post-World War II period of affluence, the Green Revolution was a “worldwide transformation of agriculture that led to significant increases in agricultural production from 1940 through the 1960s” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 3). This “revolution” brought the first uses of pesticides, chemical fertilizers, and genetic selection within agriculture, and it was evaluated as successful insofar as it resulted in crop yields that met and “even outpac[ed] the demands of the rapidly growing world population” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 3). Such agricultural productivity made corn and grains abundant enough to become staples in the diets of both humans and animals, and it therefore became profitable to use surpluses toward large-scale animal agriculture. In the report’s own language:

...the ready availability of inexpensive grain and the rapid growth of an efficient transportation system made the United States the birthplace for intensive animal agriculture. Paralleling the crop yield increases of the Green Revolution, new technologies in farm animal management emerged that made it feasible to raise livestock in higher concentrations than were possible before. As with corn and cereal grains, modern industrial food animal production systems resulted in significant gains in production efficiency (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 5).

As is evident above, from the very outset, the history of IFAP is one explained in terms of “efficiency.” The report cites increased production capabilities as important to providing food for a growing human population, and indeed, the benefits of “efficiency” continue to be celebrated, even as the report moves into the present-day. For example, the report notes that the “widespread adoption of IFAP facilities [has] led to widely affordable meat, poultry, dairy, and eggs” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 7). This has had the effect that “animal-derived food products are now inexpensive relative to disposable

income” (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 7). The report even adds that, at present, U.S. citizens consume more animal products per person than the citizens of any other country (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 7).

Summarizing the total trajectory of animal agriculture—from early animal husbandry to the present-day practices of IFAP—the report eventually explains:

Industrial farm animal production (IFAP) stands in stark contrast to previous animal farming methods because of its emphasis on production efficiency and cost minimization. For most of the past 10,000 years, agricultural practice and animal husbandry were more or less sustainable, as measured by the balance between agricultural inputs and outputs and ecosystem health, given the human population and rate of consumption. IFAP systems, on the other hand, have shifted to a focus on growing animals as units of protein production (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 23).

Importantly, the report goes on to suggest that this shift of focus—from “balance[d] agricultural inputs and outputs” to “animals as units of protein production”—is precisely what has driven IFAP to unsustainability. As CAFOs have turned their attention toward increased production—that is, toward raising more and more animals in less time and less space—they have had to resort to practices like feeding antibiotics to animals and disposing of animal waste in amounts exceeding what the land is able to absorb. These practices, as the report notes, are unquestionably detrimental to the environment and to the health of both humans and animals, alike.

To be sure, then, the Commission sees IFAP as presenting a grave problem, yet by the time it arrives at its critique, the narrative damage has already been done. Because the history of IFAP has been presented as one of efficiency, its trajectory toward these unsustainable and unhealthful practices emerges as inevitable. Repeatedly emphasizing the benefits of cheap meat—that is, stressing the economic advantages for the U.S. consumer (while remaining silent about the fiscal incentives of the producers)—the report positions even the most distasteful of IFAP practices as the consequence of efficiency measures. As such, the practices can be conceived of in relatively innocent terms—as necessary to continuing to supply affordable animal products to a population that also continues to grow. In this way, the report thinks from an overtly human position, evaluating IFAP with regard to how it either benefits or harms U.S. consumers.

Considering that the report has an entire section dedicated to “Animal Welfare”—wherein it endorses the “five freedoms” adopted by the Farm Animal Welfare Council (Carlin et al. 2008, p. 35)—the authors of the Pew Report would probably contend that they have done a more than adequate job of representing animals. While their stated consideration of animal welfare is important, however, it is simultaneously undermined by the narrative practices of the report. Precisely because the efficiency narrative has situated the economic advantages to human consumers at the direct expense of animals’ ethical living conditions, the history of IFAP is a story with only two main characters: the humans who rely on affordable animal protein and the animals who become that protein. Even the companies that have “vertically integrated” toward increased efficiency—arguably, the main actors in the real-world events of the story—are allowed to assume a certain narrative anonymity. As the report would have it, these companies did not create and implement practices founded on questionable ethics; rather “new technologies . . . emerged” that made meat affordable for consumers. In this way, the report places the focus of the history not on corporations that deserve scrutiny, nor on animals who deserve advocacy, but on humans who had (and continue to have) a basic need for affordable meat. The report asks, in other words, that readers empathize with U.S. consumers, placing their goals above all others’.

Toward this end, Boyd observes that narrative has been evolutionarily useful in cultivating empathy, precisely because it has taught listeners to “recognize others’ goals and desires” (Boyd 2009, p. 138). Complicating this perspective, Suzanne Keen, in her book *Empathy and the Novel*, casts doubt upon the assumption that stories always generate empathy, suggesting that even when they do, there is no guarantee that such empathy will translate into “altruistic” behavior (Keen 2007). Keen also suggests, however, that the ability of story to engender empathy may not always be a virtue, as empathy can be

felt toward undeserving parties. By asking readers to view the development of IFAP through the lens of the consumer—identifying with what might rightly be described as a false (privileged, Western) “need” to eat high quantities of meat—the Pew report attempts to offer the U.S. consumer the empathic privileges of a protagonist. Observing Keen’s warning, however, readers of the Pew Report should be suspicious of whether or not their empathy is being justly directed.

Of course, as U.S. consumers step into their role of the protagonist in the Pew report, the animal inhabitants of the CAFO necessarily become the antagonist. This does not happen, however, through an explicit denouncement of the animals—for whom the report finally hopes to advocate—but through far subtler literary practices. Because the history has been presented in a predictably narrative way—with the wellbeing of farm animals placed directly at odds with the needs of a growing human population—a conflict is established at the very origin of IFAP’s history. It cannot be seen as harmless that the report celebrates the advantages of consumer access to “widely affordable meat,” as even this celebration pushes the humans and animals into prefigured, oppositional roles of protagonist-consumer and antagonist-consumed. What is more, because of the inverse nature of the conflict—with increased efficiency directly resulting in a decreased quality of animal life—it is a conflict positioned, like all conflicts within the dominant plot model, to escalate until it constitutes a crisis. The very fact that the Pew report finally labels contemporary IFAP practices as unsustainable, then, should come as no surprise; its history was written to build to this point. The ultimate danger, however, is that because the history pits human welfare against animal welfare—and because it encourages identification with a human protagonist—the story cannot ever escape its anthropocentric bias. Despite its best intentions, it will always be an account that views animals through a human lens—pitying them, perhaps, but nevertheless denying them of any narrative autonomy.

With this in mind, it is useful to introduce eco-feminist Val Plumwood’s understanding of dualism, which she describes as “the construction of a devalued and sharply demarcated sphere of otherness” (Plumwood 1993, p. 41). Differentiating dualisms from distinctions or dichotomies, Plumwood points to the reliance of dualism on hierarchical systemizations, whereby dominant perspectives naturalize the radical exclusion of any others (Plumwood 1993, p. 47). The field of ecocomposition, it is worth noting, has explicitly built off of Plumwood’s work, addressing the “discursive maneuvers that create dualistic splits” (Dobrin and Weisser 2002, p. 10). As the ecocompositionists make clear, “demarcated sphere[s] of otherness” are frequently inscribed and reproduced via rhetorical practices. In its explicit prioritization of human interests over animal interests, then, the history of IFAP would seem a textbook example of a discursive dualism at work. Within this history, animals are not considered as sentient beings capable of agency; rather, they are viewed only in terms of what they can provide for their human counterparts. Plumwood labels this tendency of the dominant to regard the other in terms of its usefulness as “instrumentalism.” She explains, “The dualising master self does not empathically recognise others as moral kin, and does not recognise them as a centre of desires or needs on their account” (Plumwood 1993, p. 53). Within the story of IFAP, animals are not the main characters—and, indeed, never can be—precisely because they are not granted any storytelling agency.

Incidentally, this emphasis on the dominant failure to regard the other as “moral kin” recalls an argument by utilitarian scholar Gaverick Matheny, who suggests that any truly ethical perspective must give equal weight to the interests of everyone involved in a story, including (in this case) industrial farm animals (Matheny 2006, p. 13). According to Plumwood, however, instrumentalism reflects an inability of the dominant to even conceive of the other as having separate interests (Plumwood 1993). Instead, the other is a tool by which the dominant realizes personal desires. In this sense, IFAP, as a practice, is not susceptible to the utilitarian arguments popular with animal rights’ advocates, precisely because it does not conceptualize of animals as anything other than objects for human use. For this reason, the attempt of the Pew report to inject an ethical standard into IFAP by way of the “five freedoms” is incommensurate with the dualising narrative practices whereby the report has already constructed animals as instruments of humanity.

Evidence of this failure to view animals as “centres of desire” is perhaps most apparent in the Pew report’s treatment of farm animals as symbols. Defined in literary usage as “a specially evocative kind of image; that is, a word or phrase referring to a concrete object, scene, or action which also has some further significance associated with it” (Baldick 2004, pp. 251–52), the symbol is the literary counterpart to the “object.” To make something symbolic is to involve it in a narrative apart from its own—to suggest that its relevance is contextual to its interpreter. In his *Theory of Religion*, Georges Bataille writes, “to kill the animal and alter it as one pleases is not merely to change that which doubtless was not a thing from the start; it is to define the animal as a thing beforehand” (Bataille 2011, p. 168). Indeed, as noted above, IFAP seems reliant on a conception of the animal as a thing (specifically a tool) for human use. As an extension of Bataille’s idea, however, narrative theorists have also observed that “a lot of non-human narratives point to the fact that people may conceive the other (person, animal) as an object in order to cope with reality” (Bernaerts et al. 2014, p. 70). Taken from this perspective, the narrative thing-making of animals, within any story, might reflect a psychological tactic whereby meat-eaters distance themselves from the “reality” of their actions. The Pew report seemingly capitalizes off of this psychological distancing, asking its audience to regard animals not as living and breathing creatures, but as the *means* by which man is able to provide for himself—that is, as food.

More to the point: The way that the CAFO turns the animal into a symbol is, of course, a rhetorical practice; it happens by way of language. In the above excerpts, the Pew report notably refers to animals as “units of protein,” and indeed, the entire practice, insofar as it is labeled “Industrial Farm Animal Production,” erroneously suggests that humans are responsible for the manufacture of animal life. This deliberate renaming not only encourages a denial of animal sentience but also positively revalues the killing of an animal as a creative act that generates “product.” Insofar as it “define(s) the animal as a thing”—as a “unit”—before that animal even exists, IFAP does not entertain the possibility of the animals it exploits ever existing independently of one another or in non-symbolic incarnation. CAFO animals never cease to be viewed as the profit-generating objects that they will finally become.

All of this results in a story wherein the antagonists—that is, the animals whose welfare, were it to be improved, would necessarily be at the expense of human consumers—are robbed of their literal as well as their narrative agency; they are not treated as living beings, and as such, they do not merit the reader’s identification. Converted into economic terminology from the outset, the animals lose even their status as animals. It is significant, therefore, that the Pew report is explicit in its goals of granting CAFO animals those “freedoms” that will ensure their welfare, for such goals are contradicted by the very rhetorical practices that the report enacts. By invoking the precepts of the dominant plot model—appealing to a history that is defined by an exclusively human struggle for sufficient and affordable food—the report asks readers to see their needs as being in conflict with those of the animals they eat. Further, by portraying the human protagonist against a backdrop of scarcity—that is, an environment that cannot meet the demands of a growing population *without* the interventions of IFAP—the report reinforces an idea that is often relied upon, according to Stengers, by those who wish to maintain control of a narrative: The idea that the status quo, unsavory as it may be, cannot risk intervention (Stengers 2015, p. 77). In this way, the dominant plot model reveals itself as an effective tool for an already dominant narrator—that is, for a narrator who has an interest in conditions remaining as they are. For the storyteller who seeks to use story as a tool for change, however, there are other narrative frameworks to be discovered.

Before moving into an exploration of such frameworks, however, I’d like to pause and briefly note: In offering the above critique, my goal is not to indict the Pew Commission as intentionally protecting an unacceptable status quo. On the contrary, the Pew report has done important work in exposing the harmful practices of IFAP. My critique *is* meant to suggest, however, that the narrative strategies invoked by the Pew report directly contradict its efforts at reform. The report therefore invites the question: What sort of narrative interventions would successfully reroute the history of IFAP away from its sole identification with human actors and toward a more equitable accounting for the animal

other? Or more broadly speaking: How can authors who seek the fair treatment of animals enact this treatment, even within the stories they tell?

3. Rethinking Narrative by Returning to Play

In seeking new ways to approach storytelling, it is worthwhile to look toward that which precedes the development of story in humans: play. Not only has Boyd identified “cognitive play with pattern” as the impulse from which story emerges within the human species (Boyd 2009, p. 130), but education researcher Vivian Gussin Paley spent her career advocating for the importance of fantasy play in the psychosocial development of young children (Paley 2004). A lifelong teacher of preschool and kindergarten, Paley constructed her theories about child development by transcribing and analyzing conversations that her own students had as they played with one another. Within her book *A Child's Work: The Importance of Fantasy Play*, Paley identifies play as important to the cultivation of social skills like inclusivity and “niceness,” and she also suggests that play empowers children to test out ideas in open-minded ways.

In constructing his case for the “universal story grammar,” Gottschall also engages with Paley’s work, arguing that it demonstrates how, even in the youngest of children, play is observably always about confronting “trouble” (i.e., conflict) (Gottschall 2012). This is a large part of Gottschall’s argument that conflict is universally foundational to story, and as an example of this, Gottschall records and analyzes a story told by a five-year old: “‘This is a story about a jungle. Once upon a time there was a jungle. There were lots of animals, but they weren’t very nice. A little girl came into the story. She was scared. Then a crocodile came in. The end.’” (Gottschall 2012, p. 33). In his analysis of this story, Gottschall remarks that “trouble” is observable insofar as “a girl is menaced by a crocodile” (Gottschall 2012, p. 34). If one attends closely to the child’s story, however, it is apparent that the little girl feels scared *before* the crocodile enters. In fact, there is no indication from the child storyteller as to how the crocodile behaves or whether it represents a sinister or benevolent presence. The decision to read the crocodile as “menacing,” then, is the interpretive imposition of Gottschall’s mind—a mind intent on reading the story through a framework of conflict. What is more, to the extent that children’s stories *do* demonstrably engage with “trouble” or with real-world threats, the trouble rarely functions in a traditionally narrative way (Paley 2004); it does not escalate into a moment of crisis. Rather, trouble drifts in and out of the children’s narratives—sometimes prompting a story to move in a new direction but rarely, if ever, creating the conditions for conclusion.

Corroborating this observation, sociolinguists Jenny Cook-Gumperz and Amy Kyratzis note that, although young children’s stories often “report routine events,” these narratives “lack a high point, either omitting an instigating problem event or omitting how the story is resolved” (Cook-Gumperz and Kyratzis 2005, p. 60). By addressing children’s failures to include “instigating problem[s]” and “high point[s]” in their narratives, Cook-Gumperz and Kyratzis specifically indicate that children’s stories lack conflictual premises and climactic apices. What is more, they argue that even though these plot elements may eventually influence the narratives of older children, “the idealised story structure [i.e., the dominant plot model] is itself subject to cultural variation” (Cook-Gumperz and Kyratzis 2005, p. 60). Differentiating the “single experience” stories told by European-American children from the more collaborative storytelling practices of children in Japan, Cook-Gumperz and Kyratzis demonstrate that narrative formats are contextually bound. In direct contradiction to Gottschall, then, they highlight the idea that no sole story “grammar” innately emerges from human beings.

Moving away from Gottschall’s emphasis on “trouble,” Paley prefers to celebrate children’s fantasy play for being both collaborative and open-ended (Paley 2004). Beyond aspiring to control a story in its entirety, children seem more concerned with ensuring that everyone has a chance to participate, and when this means that their stories must change course or that roles must be swapped, children are usually all too happy to accommodate. Rather than being locked into a conflictual storytelling model, then, these young storytellers are flexible both in their methods of creating—with

multiple storytellers simultaneously “writing” a single story—as well as in their content. As an example of this flexibility, Paley tells of one student, Erik, who does not want to play the “bad guy” role initially assigned to him by his peers, so instead, the children invent for him the character of “a dad hunter who is bitten by a wolf and becomes wolf-like in strength” (Paley 2004, p. 23). This brief anecdote is significant, not only because the children prove that their story can be altered in the name of greater inclusion, but also because the story enacts a shift away from “bad guys” and “good guys”—that is, away from dualised conflict. A similar shift is echoed by Anthony, who—even as the sole author of his story—resists resorting to conflict as a narrative device: ““This is Dracula and there is a dinosaur and they don’t bite each other because they’re friends”” (Paley 2004, p. 68). As Anthony demonstrates, a fictional story *can* exist in the absence of disharmony. Especially considering, then, that children’s fantasy stories appear before children have been introduced to formulized plot models, they serve as early evidence that a story need not be based on conflict in order to maintain its designation as narrative.

If conflict, or “trouble,” is not what draws children toward storytelling, what *does* seem to compel them is the possibility of limitless play. Part of the flexibility that children demonstrate is directly in service of being able to continue playing—that is, children will shift any aspects of their narratives precisely so that the narratives need not end. Paley explains that, “for children in their own stories, closure is not the goal” (Paley 2004, p. 80); rather, they want to be engaged in a process of ongoing discovery. To guide stories toward an ending would be to foreclose that discovery. Indeed, as Paley argues, children enjoy fantasy play because it allows them “to escape the limitations of established rituals” (Paley 2004, p. 92); they can rework those restrictive real-world patterns that have been presented to them as given. Their storyworlds, in other words, become the very avenues through which they feel themselves exhibiting agency.

Finally, although this aspect is less discussed by Paley, it is also arguable that fantasy play encourages children to empathize with nonhuman others. As has already been noted, Keen casts doubt upon the premise that narratives, in and of themselves, teach empathy (Keen 2007). James responds to Keen’s suspicions, however, by appealing to the concept of the storyworld. Because anyone engaging with a storyworld must “model and imaginatively transport themselves” into an alternative landscape, narrative “makes possible the greater understanding of environmental representations...that empathic connections and behaviors rely upon” (James 2015, p. 213). Echoing this position—and expanding it into a more specific discussion of narratives that foreground animal consciousness—Herman contends that “narrative affords a bridge between the human and the nonhuman; stories provide this link not merely by allegorizing human concerns via nonhuman animals...but also by figuring the lived phenomenal worlds” of their animal characters (Herman 2011, p. 159). For both Keen and Herman alike, then, the real power of story does not necessarily exist in its capacity to generate empathy. Rather, what is more important is that stories require their audiences to engage with “phenomenal worlds” that differ from their own. As such, they encourage audiences to think from new—and sometimes nonhuman—perspectives.

With this in mind, it is especially significant that children frequently enact their stories as they are narrating them, for such an enactment requires an embodied engagement with a storyworld. Thus, children not only talk *about* rabbits and trees, they experience *becoming* those rabbits and trees. In this way, they use story to see and feel from the perspective of nonhumanity. Keta, for instance, describes a river who is crying because ““It was so sad from having too much water so it couldn’t get anyone to play there and it got lonely”” (Paley 2004, p. 82). Here, Keta demonstrates her capacity to think as a river: When the river floods, it is no longer safe for people to play within it, which causes the river to feel lonely. Fantasy play has thus enabled Keta to investigate the implications of a real-world phenomenon, but she is not merely considering how she, as a human, might experience a flood; rather, she considers what it means to a river itself to flood.

Even in the brief transcripts supplied by Paley’s book, then, many of the storytelling approaches advocated by Morton and other eco-humanities theorists have been enacted. When children tell stories,

they do not exist outside of or above their narratives. Because they do not know how a story will end—and, indeed, because they typically do not desire an ending—there is nothing that they are building toward. Indeed, Peter Brooks says of endings that they supply “the order and significance of plot” (Brooks 1984, p. 94). It is the ending, in other words, that allows a storyteller to retroactively shape various events into the dominant plot model. In order to craft a successful narrative “arc”—one that mounts in tension as it climbs toward a climax—the narrator must have already identified the moment when things were at their very worst. To tell a story without knowing the ending, however, is to necessarily redirect one’s attention toward the relational exchange of the story’s characters. When children engage in the collaborative storytelling of playacting, they must rely purely on the causal experience of *what happens* in a moment-to-moment way. The story cannot know where it is going.

Equally important, children’s storytelling practices are based on cooperation rather than competition. They are able to evolve—to continue without ending—precisely because they shift in accordance with the needs of all involved. Truly, the ethos of children’s fantasy play—in all of its imaginary embodiments of flora and fauna—is one of *with*, not *for*. Children do not seek to pre-determine what will happen to a “nonswimming aardvark” lost on the other side of a poison river; they seek to become the aardvark and find out for themselves (Paley 2004, p. 74). This is why Paley recommends using story as a tool for classroom management. Children’s storytelling practices are so adaptable that, rather than simply telling children to stop playing when, for instance, their play becomes too noisy, a teacher might just as easily introduce a constraint into the fantasy scenario—an imaginary reason why the characters themselves need to be quieter. The children will respond to the constraint by directing their narrative in a new way.

For reasons demonstrated by preschoolers, then, theories of play are the perfect basis from which to rethink the dominant plot model. To be sure, narrative and play already have a rich history of interacting via literary experiments with form: “We think of the spirit of play,” suggests Marie-Laure Ryan, “as typical of postmodern narratives” (Ryan 2005, p. 355). And indeed, the entire field of “unnatural” narratology is devoted to texts that “play with, ignore, or transgress” mimetic conventions (Richardson 2012, p. 22). Not only is play intimately linked to story, however, but it has also long been endorsed by various ecological movements. One of the tenets of the Deep Ecology movement, for example, advocates “return[ing] play to its place as the nursery of individual fulfillment and cultural achievement” (Devall 2008, p. 158). Environmental educators have also recognized the developmental importance of humans’ playful relationships with nonhumanity—their “loving and joyful immersion[s] in the local web of life” (Vickers 2003). Perhaps most importantly, play has been identified as representing a non-hierarchical, interactional sphere that humans and nonhumans already share: Not only do animals and humans instinctually know how to play, they also often know how to play with one another (Huizinga 1949). At its root, then, play comes before any divisions of nature and culture. As such, it inherently works toward one of the stated goals of the environmental humanities: to “unsettle” exclusively human narratives (Rose et al. 2012, p. 3).

One of the first important figures to write about play was Johan Huizinga, whose *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* makes two crucial arguments about play: (a) that play can only happen in full freedom (Huizinga 1949, p. 8); and (b) that play is done only for play’s sake, which makes it both non-materialistic and meaningful (Huizinga 1949, p. 6). Thus, because animals and humans are capable of playing with one another, they already have systems in place for exchanging meaning. What is more, since play cannot possibly exist if it is forced to any degree, it is synonymous with choice. Accordingly, a playful interaction is inherently meaningful insofar as it involves at least two parties—human or nonhuman—*choosing* to be with one another.

Since the appearance of Huizinga’s foundational text, many theorists have built upon his ideas, revising and expanding them in new directions. Roger Caillois, for instance, corrects Huizinga by suggesting that some play, like gambling, *is* expressly materialistic (Caillois 2001, p. 5). Insofar as this project is concerned, however, Caillois’s theories are most relevant in that he sees games as divisible

into those that are “ruled” and those that are “make-believe” (Caillois 2001, p. 9). Identifying the latter category as being based upon mimicry—the same category into which Paley’s children’s fantasy play fits—Caillois makes note of insects, birds, and even crabs, who all exhibit an impulse toward imitation. Interestingly, he defines mimicry as “incessant invention” (Caillois 2001, p. 23), pointing out that, in the case of humans, it is mimicry that leads to the role-playing innovations of story. What is more, Caillois suggests that narrative is, in fact, premised upon the idea of fictional worlds, and as such, it cannot emerge from rule-bound games that result in winners and losers. Although this perspective has been disproved since the development of “quest-type” video games (Ryan 2005), Caillois’s early connection between narrativity and fictional worlds seems an interesting predecessor to the concept of the storyworld.

More recently, Miguel Sicart has advocated treating play as a “portable tool for being” (Sicart 2014, p. 2)—a way of interpreting and engaging the complex of relationships that constitute one’s world. Sicart identifies his theory as a “playful call to arms...against efficiency, seriousness, and technical determinism” (Sicart 2014, p. 5). He sees play as a force of resistance to values, like efficiency, that often go unquestioned but—as evidenced by the Pew report (Carlin et al. 2008)—can become justifications for barbarism (to invoke Stengers’s term) (Stengers 2015). For Sicart, play’s capacity for resistance is expressly linked to its “appropriative” quality—its ability to overtake “events, structures, and institutions to mock them and trivialize them” (Sicart 2014, p. 3). This appropriation has value insofar as it “reambiguous” the world—defying set codes and allowing players to return to a state of wonder (Sicart 2014, p. 3). Much like Paley identifies fantasy play as helping children to exercise control over rules presented to them as inviolable (Paley 2004), then, Sicart sees play as encouraging an agency that simultaneously invites a new way of seeing; what was taken as serious and unchanging, once interpreted in a playful context, becomes infinitely more open to influence.

Echoing the capacity of play to reinvigorate wonder—and in a decided turn away from dualism—poet Diane Ackerman contends that “In all forms of deep play, one becomes fascinated by an ‘other,’ in whose presence one feels exaltation” (Ackerman 1999, p. 87). Broadening the description of the “other” in an object-oriented way, Ackerman adds that the “other” might very well be “a war, a mountain, or a bicycle” (Ackerman 1999, p. 87). Regardless of who or what the “other” is, however, playful interactions stem from a place of respectful curiosity. A player who “exalts” in the presence of another cannot also instrumentalize or devalue that other. Hypothetically, then, play can become a “tool for being,” as Sicart has advocated, whenever one approaches one’s relationships from a place of reverence.

All of these theories find a certain synthesis—as well as a relevance to narrative—within James P. Carse’s *Finite and Infinite Games* (Carse 1986). Similar to Caillois’s distinction between ruled and make-believe games, Carse suggests that there are only two types of games in existence: finite games, which are played to be won, and infinite games, which are played for the purpose of keeping play going. Because a finite game is building towards an ending in which one party wins, the game is bound by spatial and temporal rules that cannot change. Because infinite games, by contrast, strive to keep play going, they must overcome any spatial or temporal limits that threaten an end to play. In this way, “Finite players play within boundaries; infinite players play with boundaries” (Carse 1986, p. 12). The finite game, then, is like the dominant narrative structure, which derives its meaning through conclusion—through an announcement, as it were, of a victor. An infinite game, on the other hand, is much more representative of evolution, which confronts boundaries through adaptation, striving always for continued life (Boyd 2009).

Elaborating upon the infinite game, Carse suggests that “the only purpose of the game...is to keep everyone in play” (Carse 1986, p. 9). Whereas a finite player seeks to remove other players from a game, an infinite player sets up the conditions most likely to facilitate another’s flourishing, such that play has the best chance of continuing. This is, of course, a vision that thinks toward cooperation rather than conflict—privileging ecosystemic interests over personal ones, even when stakes are at their highest:

Infinite players die. Since the boundaries of death are always part of the play, the infinite player does not die at the end of play, but in the course of play...It does not mean that the game comes to an end with death; on the contrary; infinite players offer their death as a way of continuing play. For that reason they do not play for their own life; they live for their own play. But since that play is always with others, it is evident that infinite players both live and die for the continuing life of others (Carse 1986, p. 31).

Playful even in his descriptions of dying to keep infinite play going, Carse points to the very serious spirit with which infinite play is undertaken. Dedicated to keeping the game going at all costs, the infinite player recognizes that even one's personal death can be offered in service of others' access to continued play.

Through Carse's framework of the infinite game, Morton's proposals for art after "the end of the world" appear instantly more concrete. Morton repeatedly stresses that in the absence of a world, all that persists is "intimacy"—"a number of unique beings...to whom I owe an obligation through the simple fact that existence is coexistence" (Morton 2013, p. 125). Emphasizing that the experience of being alive is defined only through relationships, Morton argues that we are each "obligated" to treat the other well—to use our "turns" as infinite players to ensure that other beings stay in play. Morton even explicitly speaks about "care," suggesting that the particular challenge for humans at this moment in time is to learn to care for "fatal" objects like nuclear waste, which will surely outlast our descendants and will perhaps also outlast humankind as a totality (Morton 2013, p. 124). To exercise care even for the fatal—until and beyond a personal death—is precisely what Carse is referencing when he speaks of infinite players dying for the continued life of others. Indeed, the incredible suggestion that Carse is making is that one must conceive even of one's own life in the absence of a telos, with the only directive guiding one's behaviors being the desire that others—human and nonhuman, alike—are set up to thrive (Carse 1986). Morton wants an "ethics of the other" (Morton 2013, p. 121), and Carse supplies it.

If the infinite game has anything especially important to teach, then, it is an openness toward the future and a fearlessness toward limitations. Carse makes it clear that "we do not play *against reality*; we play *according to reality*" (Carse 1986, p. 38). The given conditions of the planet, in other words, are the very boundaries that may threaten to end play and that must, consequently, be played *with*. In this sense, even though environmental crisis legitimately imperils the human's ability to stay in a playful relationship with the nonhuman world, there is a way of playfully engaging even the notion of crisis. To play with crisis, we humans must learn to compose with it—as it exists both in our external environments and in our stories. If we can abandon the finite idea that crisis always brings conclusion, then we can embrace crisis's invitation to become infinite and adaptive players. Part of becoming infinite players, of course, will mean disengaging from conflictual frameworks and appealing, instead, to a vision that prizes the wellbeing of the whole over the seductions of personal success. Indeed, within the infinite game, there is no narrative space for competition; there are only boundaries, which—failing to supply a lasting ending to the story—demand adaptation instead.

To be sure, this is a dramatic vision of play, but Carse even indicates that whereas finite play is akin to theatre—with its script composed according to set rules—infinite play is inherently "dramatic" (Carse 1986, pp. 20–21). Precisely because it operates in the absence of outcome, its trajectory is significant not in its totality, but in the moment-to-moment direction it takes. Finite players win games by surprising their opponents, but infinite players learn to expect the unexpected—that is, they prepare themselves to meet surprise with personal, often dramatic, transformation (Carse 1986, p. 23). It is here, in this discussion of surprise that is met by transformation, that Carse follows in the footsteps of Paley—observing those qualities of (infinite) play that enable an open-ended narrative. Indeed, for the child whose foremost desire is to continue playing, surprise—or "trouble"—is unable to deliver a blow strong or lasting enough to end a story; surprise simply interjects an unexpected parameter, which then sends the story in a new direction.

In this spirit, apart from promoting play as a helpful framework through which to live one's life, I am also specifically advocating that play become the motivating logic of the eco-narrative. Indeed, Sicart's celebration of play's capacity to appropriate "known structures" seems an overt invitation to play to overtake and appropriate the structure of the dominant plot model (Sicart 2014). To teach people to perceive story differently—with a renewed sense of wonder inspired by an exaltation in the other (Ackerman 1999)—will be to disrupt the logic of concepts like economic efficiency, which unabashedly position the economic interests of some at the expense of others. Because stories supply interpretive frameworks (Brooks 1984), they are the means through which new perceptions and new ways of relating can be taught. For the same reason, they remain—even in "catastrophic times" (Stengers 2015)—a palpable mechanism for guiding the adaptations of our species. The human evolution toward an ethos of the other, then, can (and should) be led by a storytelling practice appropriated by infinite play—the only real tenet of which is to move toward an open-ended future by acting, moment-to-moment, with cooperative rather than conflictual motives.

4. The Eco-Narrative in Practice

In his preface to *Catastrophism*, after lamenting the defeatism that often accompanies discussions of environmental crisis, economist Doug Henwood muses: "Wouldn't it be better to spin narratives of how humans are marvelously resourceful creatures who could do a lot better with the intellectual, social, and material resources we have?" (Henwood 2012, p. 15). Agreeing with Henwood that it *would* be better—and inspired by the same basic belief that narrative can empower humanity toward increased resourcefulness—I here arrive at the eco-narrative.

Premised upon a belief articulated by feminist narrative theorist Robyn Warhol that "Deviations from formal norms make deviations from dominant ideology visible" (Warhol 2012, p. 12), the eco-narrative uses the concept of infinite play to rethink the dominant plot model, thereby exposing the fundamental environmental irresponsibility of a storytelling practice motivated by conflict. Indeed, by infusing narrative with the philosophy of infinite play—namely, the desire to keep a story going for as many of its characters for as long as possible—the eco-narrative explicitly foregrounds ecosystemic goals over individual ones. Insofar as it plays with form in order to communicate ideology, it can rightly be conceived as participating in the antimimetic tradition (Herman 2012), and indeed, many "unnatural" works of fiction might retrospectively (and with some irony) be classified as eco-narratives. Since the interest of this article, however, is in narrative production—that is, in thinking toward how the storyteller can narrativize her own environments and experiences without retrofitting them into the dominant plot model—I think that it will be useful here to address the eco-narrative through the lens of the "self-narrative" (Herman 2014).

Even though his article performs an analysis of a fictional short story, Herman's "Narratology Beyond the Human" is rooted in the concept of the "self-narrative"—a term psychologists Kenneth J. Gergen and Mary M. Gergen use to describe the human practice of taking events from one's life and organizing them into coherent narratives (Herman 2014). Reading Lauren Groff's "Above and Below" as an example of self-narrative, Herman argues that the protagonist of Groff's story must "reconstruct" her own self-narrative as she increasingly recognizes "her place within a world that extends beyond the human" (Herman 2014, p. 133). Herman is ultimately interested in Groff's story as an example of how self-narratives can become more inclusive of nonhumanity—"locat[ing] the human agent in a transspecies constellation of selves" (Herman 2014, p. 133). I see this interest as very much in line with the interests of the eco-narrative. Because we humans are in a constant production of self-narrative(s)—translating relationships and events from our lives into stories that we can retell to ourselves and to others—it is important to consider how these self-narratives either resist or reaffirm the dominant plot model. As Herman makes clear, self-narratives can become eco-narratives simply by giving greater consideration to how they situate the self vis-à-vis the story's other (nonhuman) characters.

Keeping in mind Herman's interest in stories that locate the self within a larger "transpecies constellation of selves," I think it is worthwhile, at this point, to look closely at a story that rightfully earns the title of eco-narrative. Another story about human/animal relations, this one comes from a scholarly essay co-written by Annette Watson and Orville H. Huntington called "They're here—I can feel them: the epistemic spaces of Indigenous and Western Knowledges" (Huntington and Watson 2008). In this piece, Watson, who is a doctoral student and an academic geographer, and Huntington, who is an Athabaskan hunter and gatherer, share the narrative task of describing a moose hunt. Here is an excerpt:

We had been traveling for about an hour, and as the boat made a left around the bend, suddenly there appeared a big bull looming on the bank, its antlers spread wide across its body. It saw us—but didn't move...For a moment no one spoke, and then Orville said, 'Wow—he was really trying hard to give himself to us.' Non-natives often employ the verb 'to take' to describe hunting...But the Koyukon believe that hunters do not 'take' anything; instead animals choose to give themselves to the hunter. The 'gift' is made as a result of the 'luck' of the hunter, and a hunter has luck when he has been respectful. Respect is the act of following strict rules that guide one's behavior and actions toward or away from the animal and all other living and non-living things. In the Koyukon language, such taboos are referred to as 'hutlanee'...Most significantly, it is *hutlanee* to talk about animals, especially make fun of them, such as calling them 'stupid.' There are very few things people should *do*, and many things that are *hutlanee*. About the only thing a person *does* is to accept them, accept the animal's life and spirit and body when it chooses to give itself. I told Annette that you also accept a moose's past; 'they're like us, they have a story behind them' (Huntington and Watson 2008, pp. 260–61).

Ostensibly another narrative concerning the human practice of killing animals, this story appears as wholly different than that of IFAP. In the foremost, the human actors in the story are not in conflict with the nonhuman ones. Even though the humans are on a hunting trip, they have no intention of "taking" an animal's life against the animal's will; rather, they wait until an animal "gives" himself to them. Thus, all characters are in cooperation from the beginning. What is more, whereas the CAFO animal is a symbolic "production unit," incapable of autonomy but acted upon by humans, the moose in this story is fully agential. As part of his agency, he is in possession of his own life as well as his own story; he does not represent an instrumentalized figure through whom a human protagonist realizes his own narrow needs. Just as an infinite player "offers" his own death in the service of others' continued play, the moose decides to die as a "gift" toward the continued life of the hunters.

Perhaps even more radical in this story is its use of two narrators. The shift is subtle, but the passage moves from first-person narration by Watson into first-person narration by Huntington, with the move becoming evident only when one narrator refers to the other by name. The largest implication of this shared narration system is the degree to which it resists a singularity of perspective. It is impossible to locate a protagonist in this story, precisely because no one voice is being amplified above the others. Indeed, not only are the voices of Watson and Huntington both represented as narrators, but the moose's voice is represented through the narrators' careful attention to his actions. Noting both his stillness and the direction of his gaze, Huntington reads the moose's movements as the communications through which he signals his offering. Ultimately, then, Watson and Huntington not only speak about the respect that the hunter must have for the nonhuman, they also use their shared literary space to model this respect, both toward the moose and toward each other. By never using the narrator's voice to speak *for* one another, they remain in constant dialogue—continually receiving and responding to the perspectives offered by all three of the characters.

Importantly, Watson and Huntington's story also provides concrete guidelines for how humans *should* enact their respect toward nonhumans. Echoing Morton's calls for an object-oriented art that is always already a collaboration *with* nonhumanity, Watson and Huntington explain that it is disrespectful even "to talk about animals." This can be taken to apply not only to in-person

conversations “about animals,” but to written words as well: In representing an animal on the page, the narrator must not manipulate the animal to serve his own narrative ends. Instead, he should approach the animal respectfully, by acknowledging its autonomous ability to influence the story.

Of course, here, some might argue that it is fundamentally impossible to tell a story “with” another being if one is the sole storyteller. That is, any attempt at storytelling—unless it is a cocreation akin to Watson and Huntington’s or to children’s collaborative fantasy play—will result in some narrative talking *about* the other. Indeed, my earlier claim that the moose in this story exhibits agency insofar as he “gives” himself to the hunters might itself come off as highly suspect. After all, how can an animal be said to exert influence within a written medium—that is, within a language system that is not its own? Acknowledging the wide debate that surrounds this question, Heise explains that “Some eco-critics have asked whether a medium such as literature, which relies entirely on human language, can possibly reflect anything other than a deeply anthropocentric view of nature.” (Heise 2005, p. 130). In response, James has suggested that there is nothing wrong with embracing the anthropocentric (James 2015); why shouldn’t we be transparent about the “role of the human imagination in the perception of the environment” (James 2015, p. 30)? Others have extended this line of argument to suggest that the benefits of (the attempt at) representing nonhuman consciousness on the page far outweigh the drawbacks. Herman, for example, contends that “By modeling the richness and complexity of ‘what it is like’ for nonhuman others, stories can underscore what is at stake in the trivialization—or outright destruction—of their experiences” (Herman 2011, p. 159). In his estimation, what is of greatest importance is that people are engaging in the imaginative exercise of thinking from a nonhuman perspective. Whether or not the animal’s consciousness is faithfully recreated is of less consequence.

Although I am generally sympathetic to Herman’s argument, I also maintain that, in the above story, Huntington and Watson manage to accurately depict the moose, and the moose *does* exert agency within the text. To my mind, this is because Huntington’s philosophy is, at root, a phenomenological one. He is able to translate the moose’s movements into human language because his translation comes from a place of embodied, respectful witnessing. For Morton, as for early phenomenologists like Husserl, no object can ever be known its entirety, thus: “Objects withdraw, such that other objects never adequately capture but only (inadequately) ‘translate’ them” (Morton 2011, p. 166). By appealing to the ultimate inaccessibility of all entities—be they animals, objects, or hyperobjects—Morton simultaneously acknowledges that any attempt to understand the other requires a “translation” of it; it means perceiving the object without being able to fully know or possess it. Yet if this premise is taken to be true, then all acts of self-narration—not just the human effort to speak about an animal—should theoretically be subject to the same line of questioning aimed at Huntington and Watson’s text: Is the attempt to represent an object on the page, by its very nature, an anthropomorphizing act?

In her book *Vibrant Matter*, Jane Bennett occupies a similar position to Morton but intersperses her theoretical discussions with moments of phenomenological exaltation in the object other. Discovering a glove, a dead rat, a bottle cap (and more) in a grate above a storm drain in Baltimore, Bennett watches as these objects begin to “shimmer and spark” in her perception (Bennett 2010, p. 5). Part of what makes these objects shimmer, Bennett explains, is “a certain anticipatory readiness on [her] in-side”—“a perceptual style open to the appearance of thing-power” (Bennett 2010, p. 5). Bennett approaches the objects she encounters with an attitude that is “open” and ready to receive them, and as such, she is predisposed for appreciation. In this way, when she uses the term “thing,” she does not do so in an attempt to devalue that which she sees. Rather, she recognizes herself as comprising a network *with* the objects she encounters. She too is a thing to them, and no one thing gets to have a privileged position above the others. As she thinks through the logic of it: “to begin to experience the relationship between persons and other materialities more horizontally, is to take a step toward a more ecological sensibility” (Bennett 2010, p. 10). For Bennett, then, true ecological thinking begins with horizontal relationships—with radically repositioning one’s self as the equal to animals, plants, rocks, and all else that is material.

It is significant to me (and to the project of the eco-narrative) that Bennett speaks of objects without defaulting into objectification. She does not do as the Pew report does, for instance—using symbolism to exercise narrative domination over another. Rather, Bennett’s ontological framework reveals itself as most akin to that proposed within Ackerman’s theory of “deep play” (Ackerman 1999). Both Ackerman and Bennett practice a mode of being in the world that marvels at intercorporeality and that defaults into a state of awe toward the other.

Following in their philosophical footsteps, I am suggesting that, as it shows up in self-narrative, the storytelling equivalent of “deep play” is a documentation of the nonhuman other that does not seek to possess or manipulate the other—never professing to have access to the other’s interiority, but beginning, instead, from a place of respectful witnessing. Insofar, then, as Watson and Huntington’s narrative relationship to the moose is guided by reverent attention to its behaviors—and insofar as the moose determines its own entrance and exit from the story (Huntington and Watson 2008)—I argue that it enacts as much agency as it possibly can within a human documentary mode.

Finally, it is significant to the eco-narrative project that Huntington and Watson tell a story that is not ultimately framed as a tale about “the moose that got away”—with the climatic moment appearing, for instance, as the moose narrowly escapes. To tell such a story would, indeed, be robbing the moose of its agency by making it subservient to a pre-determined plot model. Instead, however, the story finds its structure through the conversational narration of all of the story’s characters. Respectful dialogue drives the plot forward.

This dialogic structure is, of course, intentional on the part of the authors, who outline their own project within the terms of posthumanism: “The ‘posthuman’ does not imply a historical era, but an interrogation of humanists’ static boundaries between humans and nonhumans, culture and nature” (Huntington and Watson 2008, p. 258). It is perhaps the posthuman framework, then, that makes the story so identifiably an eco-narrative. Indeed, even Huizinga’s earliest conceptions of play define it as an activity that equally belongs to nature and culture (Huizinga 1949). Inspired by playful attempts to play *with* boundaries, both the eco-narrative and the posthuman narrative advocate stylistic explorations that upset the dominant narrative’s long unquestioned practice of privileging the interests of a single protagonist.

Inspired by Huntington and Watson’s storytelling practices—and in the spirit of empowering humans toward playful cooperation in the face of ongoing crisis—the eco-narrative’s only real directive is finally quite simple: to apply concepts from play theory to the act of storytelling and then to *play with* those concepts. Rather than outlining set rules, infinite play merely presents narrative (whether rooted in self-narrative or in fiction) with an invitation to move in unforeseen directions—shifting narrators, blurring the distinctions between humans and nonhumans, and transitioning freely between tenses, languages, locations, and time periods (to name just a few ideas). What is more, in seeking to remove the narrator from any omniscience that would allow her distance from the story she is telling, the eco-narrative also desires to relate its stories from within. The eco-narrator embarks on a storytelling project without knowing the end of the story and, indeed, without even desiring an ending. In the absence of a foreknown trajectory, eco-narrators instead advance their narratives through the relationships of their characters. Treating humans and nonhumans with equal reverence, the eco-narrative is therefore guided by an exaltation in the other. In fact, knowing that competition between its characters would dualise the story into one of winners and losers—that is, into finitude—the eco-narrative dispenses altogether with conflict as a dramatizing device. It remains dramatic, however, both because its characters are willing to undergo large transformations in service of another and because the eco-narrator is personally invested in the well-being of each of her characters. Ultimately following the very example set by evolution, then, the eco-narrative approaches every narrative boundary—be it one of time, place, or resource—as an invitation for creative adaptation.

Children tell eco-narratives when they invent magic pillows that allow armadillos to float across poison rivers (Paley 2004, p. 74). Timothy Morton tells an eco-narrative when he demands that weather be treated not as a backdrop, but as a legitimate character in the human/Earth story (Morton 2013).

Facing increasing catastrophe and the very real possibility of our species-wide demise, we humans can tell eco-narratives by choosing to recognize that, even when we die, other beings will remain to continue the story. We will be telling an eco-narrative, in other words, by including those future beings in our stories *now*. Indeed, if we are to transform our self-narratives into eco-narratives, all we really need to do is remember: Stories are avenues for communion. Yes, we tell stories *to* each other, but we also tell them *to be with* each other.

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Article

More than Stories, More than Myths: Animal/Human/Nature(s) in Traditional Ecological Worldviews

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Abstract: Reason and rationality, upon which modern, westernized, societies have been founded, have powerfully characterized the nature of human relations with other species and with the natural world. However, countless indigenous and traditional worldviews tell of a very different reality in which humans, conceived of as instinctual and intuitive, are a part of a complex web of ecological relationships. Other species, elements of the natural world, and people are active participants in relations overflowing with communications, interactions sometimes recorded in ethnographies, or as ‘myths’ and ‘stories’. The present article draws upon a range of traditions to explore the biases which shape how indigenous and traditional life-ways are represented in westernized contexts; the phenomenon of receiving direct insight or intuitive knowing from more-than-human worlds; and the numerous valuable understandings regarding the nature of the human being, other species, and how to live well, that are offered by a deeper comprehension of different worldviews. I also argue that the various capacities for instinctual and intuitive knowledge which accompanies these life-ways are endemic to the human species yet overlooked, the correction of which might work to usefully recalibrate our ethical relations with each other, and with other life on earth.

Keywords: earth; worldviews; indigenous wisdom traditions; relationality; ecology; language; human-animal studies; more-than-human geography; multispecies ethnography; ecopsychology; anthropology; environmental philosophy; decolonization; intuition; instinct; myth; non-verbal communication; IK; TEK

1. Introduction

The Yolŋu peoples, in Bawaka Country, Australia, are oriented to patterns, place, relationships with other beings, and the language of those beings (or *dhärük*), which holds its own messages and contains what they term its own ‘Law’ (Bawaka Country et al. 2013, 2015, 2016). The Yolŋu way of being in the world is about paying attention to, speaking with, and understanding animals as a part of regular life; and, as with all traditional and indigenous peoples who hold such an ethic, this is more regular for some members of a community than it is for others. The experience of language as something that is shared with all beings, not solely amongst humans, is a near universal assertion across communities, historical and contemporary, who recognize ecological sentience and live with/in more-than-human worlds. Consider the following account from Laklak Burarrwanga:

The sea there, it has its own *wänga*, its own system and patterns of behaviour. The *guya* (fish), the *maranydjalk* (stingray), and the *miyapunu* (turtle), have each got their own language. That’s why male and female turtles, when they meet, they know each other, they can talk [. . .] All the different animals, they have their own groups. Seagulls, crows, they live by themselves, they have their own rules, style of talking and living with one another,

their own language. The birds and animals know where to sleep, where to put their babies, where to build their nests. The same for trees, bushes. The land knows what their language is (Bawaka Country et al. 2013, para. 11.35).

In this paper I engage with the topic of animal narratology through examining such accounts of human-animal relations as factual or 'real' exchanges between humans and animals. This is about taking seriously, as *true*, the accounts of interspecies communication that have been documented for at least the last hundred years, by ethnographers, and by indigenous and traditionally living peoples themselves, both inside and outside of the academies. The continued repression of indigenous voices with respect to these issues is an extension of the global colonial project.

The examples are drawn primarily from ethnographic accounts of human-animal relations within indigenous and traditional contexts, with a specific focus on how the received wisdom from animals (and other more-than-human entities) is understood or explained. These accounts break with a number of conventions that are well established to the point of appearing normative within a westernized worldview: conventions to which the first half of this paper is specifically attentive. In the latter sections, using examples such as the one above, I interrogate particular biases which can act to obscure the comprehension of radically non-Western worldviews and I question the idea that accounts of life such as are found in Bawaka Country (among others), and the practices therein, are 'impossible' or superstitious 'relics' of mythic or religious behaviors among so-called 'primitive' peoples.¹

At the centre of this project is the necessity of querying the scholarly norms, simplistic divides and cosmological assumptions that have provided impetus for the establishment, and continuance, of westernization over several thousand years.² The purpose of this inquiry is to contribute constructively to the re-ignition, or recovery, of our *awareness* of the fundamental human relationships that we have with the broader ecologies within which we are embedded.³ I argue that indigenous and traditional life-ways around the world present numerous valuable understandings regarding the nature of the human being, other species, the planet we share, and how to live together; all of which appear vastly superior to westernized interpretations of responsibility for socio-ecological wellbeing across species, most especially in a time of planetary-level, cascading socio-ecological crises. This is not suggested as some romantic or utopian ideal, but as a direct response to the indigenous and ecological thinkers (and their allies) who have called for the decolonization of *all* people as a response to earth crises. Their call is based on the wholesale rejection of ways of thinking and being that lead to destruction and domination, and the socialization practices which continue to perpetuate these elements within westernized societies.

¹ A number of historical accounts of traditional, indigenous, and non-European collectives have hinged on the idea of that these peoples are 'living fossils', or examples of how western 'civilized' people were in prehistory. Tropes such as the 'noble savage', the romanticized or exotic 'other', the idea of a primitive society entirely 'cut off' from the modern world, were the products of imperialistic 20th century anthropology. These notions were rightly rejected in the 1970s and 1980s, however, this rejection also halted any substantive cross-cultural indigenous comparison (used by indigenous scholars, but rejected by social scientists as 'pan-indigenous'), and the related interest in identifying any somewhat unified set of precepts across worldviews which was based in a concept of common humanity. Scholarly focus subsequently became very specialized, concentrating upon indigenous livelihoods within western-dominant contexts, and post-colonial social and political movements. Whilst these foci are critically important for undoing colonial damages and establishing recognition of indigenous sovereignty and rights, any equivalencies between traditional life-ways and pre-westernized human wisdom are still only tentatively made by western scholars (see Abram 2010, p. 267). In the rush for scholars to revere 'differences', indigenous voices and opinions on these very issues have been muted.

² For an extension of this argument see Harvard economist and philosopher Rajani Kanth (2017), in particular, the observation that there is a near-absence of any real anthropological inquiry (that takes evidence into full account), official, or social discourse around these issues.

³ Many scholars cited in this paper (including myself as author) use 'us', 'our', and 'we' to express a sense of collective human kinship, parallel perhaps with the *planetary* of post-colonial scholar Gayatri Spivak (2003, pp. 71–102). This terminology also signals that the critical shift from an 'I-hermeneutic' to a 'We-hermeneutic'—over and above the separatist identity and diversity claims that are expressed in 'I' language—is a necessary and core expression of indigenous sovereignty and a key foundation for expressing the cohesiveness of community, as forwarded by Jace Weaver (1998, pp. 1–25). Where there is a specially situated use of these terms 'us', 'our', or 'we', the appropriate context has been included.

The templates for how to live well together on the planet, based on reverence, responsibility, reciprocity, respect, and relationship, are very evident in traditional and indigenous life ways, and deference to these values and practices has been sought by indigenous elders, across the globe, for over forty years.⁴ Canim Lake Band Tsq'escen scholar Julian Brave NoiseCat (2017) asks that we “heed the diverse indigenous voices displaced and drowned out by imperialism [. . .] indigenous people today stand on the frontlines of global movements fighting for a more just relationship between humanity and the land”.

In addition, I argue with indigenous and traditional peoples, for the recognition of an enduring continuity of human experience across time, geographies, cultures, and traditions. As put forward by Irish-Cherokee scholar Four Arrows (who also carries the name Don Trent Jacobs), despite the vast geographical differences between peoples through time and history, worldviews across diverse cultures share common features (just as landscapes may be recognized as “landscapes” through common features such as trees, rivers, mountains, or grassy fields).

Indigenous Australian (Arabana) scholar Veronica Arbon (2008, p. 19) also writes on pan-indigenous thinking, stating that as opposed to suggesting a new hegemony, in which the diversity of indigenous cultures are collapsed into a new universal, there is the need to acknowledge the similarities between different indigenous groups of the world. She goes beyond the level of political solidarity across indigenous communities (or, interests in common), to demonstrate cosmo-ontological continuity between many indigenous communities in her work (as did the late Deloria Jr. 1973, 1978, 2004, 2006; Deloria Jr. et al. 1999). This shift to indigeneity as a set of core concepts that are set against ‘westernized’ metaphysics has the effect of altering its function to include indigenous-human solidarity. This is significant.

If cultural diversity is honored, recognizing a common worldview can bring solidarity and support it. The fact that common features of many Indigenous nations contrast with those among diverse ‘non-Indian’ cultures is potentially useful for everyone’s decolonizing efforts (Arrows 2016, p. 3).

2. Truth and Primitivism

The idea of cultural evolution has rendered the folk story, or myth, as a quaintly accepted pre-modern error made by early or ‘primitive’ humans. As such, the art of listening to (or hearing) the speech of the animals has been kept alive (if barely) in folklore. In the mythologies of the world, comprehension of the language of the birds was revered as a divine boon: the Norse god, Odin, presided over the world with the help of two wise ravens; in tales from Wales, Greece, India, and

⁴ This is critical for creating the conditions whereby non-indigenous people can move beyond the ‘charity model’ of allyship and engage a personal, conscious, educated, and emplaced sense of responsibility for socio-ecological partnership, thus, creating an *effective*, decolonized perspective for collective global change. This does not mean that the non-indigenous are to ‘become indigenous’ in political terms (which is a simplistic reading of the call for change), nor that the idea of ‘we are all indigenous’ be substituted for strong on-going support for, and responsibility towards, securing post-colonial indigenous rights. This shift requires the interrogation of unconscious, westernized dependencies so that *all colonized people* might become more consciously human, as defined *through* comprehension and participation in ways of being that are directed by fundamentally different values. Some of the more recent proponents of this view include John Mohawk, Gregory Cajete, Four Arrows, Robin Kimmerer, Jeannette Armstrong, Winona LaDuke, Jon Young, George Price, Bayo Akomolafe, Lisa Minno Bloom, Berkley Carnine, Rajani Kanth, Syed Hussan, Zainab Amadahy, George Sefa Dei, Dylan Miner, Chris and Jaki Daniels, Darcia Narvaez, Walter Mignolo, Paul Shepard, Derrick Jensen, Joanna Macy, Bill Plotkin, Paul Hawken, Daniel Christian Wahl, David Abram, and the collective *Bioneers* as represented as their yearly conferences, among many others. Part of the redefinition of the term indigenous, in this view, is to dislocate it from ethnic and racial afflictions by returning to its root definition of ‘people springing from/in the land as mother’, and to establish it as a foundational paradigm for living according to particular values. Peace scholar Rick Wallace (2013) has called this conception of trust-based allyship “a mutual reworking of colonial relations of power” (p. 172). Based on fieldwork and case-studies, Wallace identifies constructive non-indigenous ally practices as follows: material and strategic support for indigenous communities, respect for indigenous leadership and processes of decision making, and establishing trust as dependent upon shared sincerity, commitment, values and beliefs, truth-speaking, and respect for the mutual obligations of honoring the land and each other as key for rebuilding right relations (ibid, pp. 176–77).

greater Russia, an unlikely hero is granted the gift of hearing the prophesy of birds by magic; in Sweden, by the taste of dragons blood. King Solomon's wisdom, like that of Odin, was attributed to the birds, as were the stories of Aesop. For modern urban humans, these are generally thought of as folk tales and stories for children. Conversely, as cultural ecologist David Abram (2010) writes:

[The] sacred language regularly attributed by tribal peoples to their most powerful shamans is often referred to as 'the language of the birds.' A keen attunement to the vocal discourse of the feathered folk has been a necessary survival skill for almost every indigenous community—especially for the active hunters within the group, and for the intermediaries (the magicians or medicine persons) who tend the porous boundary between the human and more-than-human worlds (p. 196).

The value complex that underpins this division into truth and fiction has a long and convoluted history, and is based upon a combination of religious, philosophical, and scientific thought that has been incubated over at least two thousand years. Such questions, and the legitimacy of narrative as 'fact' or as 'useful knowledge', can be rendered very differently within indigenous, as compared with secular westernized contexts. As noted by the late Vine Deloria Jr. et al. (1999):

In most tribal traditions, no data are discarded as unimportant or irrelevant. Indians consider their own individual experiences, the accumulated wisdom of the community that has been gathered by previous generations, their dreams, visions, and prophecies, and any information received from birds, animals and plants as data that must be arranged, evaluated, and understood as a unified body of knowledge. This mixture of data from sources that the Western scientific world regards as highly unreliable and suspect produces a consistent perspective on the natural world (pp. 66–67).

Conversely, westernized frameworks categorize much of this content as religion or culture, myth, folktale or epic, and fable, or as genres that are studied within the areas of literature, folklore, religious studies, and anthropology. The study of narratology within the field of folklore, for instance, was initially focused upon forms, functions, and stylistic analysis (see Levi-Strauss 1963, 1966, 1968; Propp 1968; Propp and Liberman 1984). Early narratologists (such as Vladimir Propp) attempted to isolate aspects of narrative and develop typologies which were, in turn, used to extrapolate meanings or, in the case of Levi-Strauss, symbolic structures. In more contemporary times, narrative has come to be reimagined more broadly, as an active cultural force that "enables us to make meaning out of a chaotic world" (Bal 2002, p. 10).

Traditional and indigenous ways of making 'story' can, however, be thought to challenge certain received wisdoms regarding the structure or form of narrative, especially regarding authorship, character, coherence, sequence and spatiality. In the specific area of *animal* narratology, indigenous narratives involve shifting concepts of personhood and identity as applicable to the 'characters' (who are often non-human), and a markedly different distinction between the fictional and non-fictional. This is not to suggest indigenous stories or literatures do not employ or recognize fiction, but that it is not set aside in quite the same manner as within 'westernized' categories of writing and thought. In traditional Native American contexts, for example, a distinction between ceremonial and popular genres makes more sense, or the sacred as juxtaposed with the pedagogical or humorous, soothing or entertaining (see Allen 1986).

Myth, in particular, has attracted a range of different uses across the disciplines. In folklore and religious studies, myth is used only to refer to a certain kind of narrative, or to quote Wendy Doniger (2011): "a story that [is] good to believe in but unverifiable in the real world [. . . or] a story that a group of people believe for a long time despite massive evidence that it is not actually true" (p. ix). This meaning derives directly from the shift, in ancient Greece, from *mythos* (truth) to *logos* (lies and dissimulation), and eventually morphed into *fabula* in the Latin, or 'a persistent lie' (Kane 1998, p. 34). Bruce Lincoln (1996), a religious historian, speculates that the original shift in

meaning (as concretized by the Romans) arose in ancient Greece with the rise of Platonic reason and the resultant unstable power relations between various 'regimes of truth'. This moment, preserved in etymological history, reveals a kind of colonization of thought and word in action; specifically, the overturning of traditional beliefs within an urban and 'progressive' political and economic context, in which a belief complex was eradicated and ultimately overthrown by a newer philosophy. The origin point for what now counts as 'true' and 'false' knowledge has to be set somewhere around the time of this transfer. One consequence of this was the creation of a distinct fictitious genre (myth and fable) into which non-Christian, pre-Christian, and other beliefs could be relocated.

Semiotician Roland Barthes (1984) defined myth as a type of speech, or a system of communication in which "everything can be a myth provided it is conveyed by a discourse" (p. 109). These ways of thinking about myth—suggesting a radical divorce from historicity and how myths might be viewed within diverse cultural contexts—have significantly impacted upon the use of the term within the social sciences. Myth and discourse are often conflated whenever there is an emphasis on the 'truth' value of a claim, or a lack thereof. Myth can be broadly used to refer to anything that has persisted as 'true' and yet, can be shown to be only 'popularly true', for example, the 'myth of biological race' or the 'myth of the Communist threat'. In short, it is a term that often stands in for 'error' or 'fallacy', and it is *this* designation, when transposed onto the understanding of narratives of indigenous origin, that indigenous scholars have taken issue with.

Native American Laguna scholar, Paula Gunn Allen (1986, pp. 102–3), writes that myth has been polluted by popular misuse to the point of being synonymous with 'lie'. Allen aligns the scholarly employment of 'myth' with other derogatory terms that imply backwardness, foolishness, and the general derision of native life-ways, arguing that the manner in which it has been used always points towards 'questionable accuracy'. As such, myth stands opposed to truth whenever it is considered as a part of a fiction-fact binary, and this is a problem which many social scientists (anthropologists, in particular) tend to recoil from resolving in concrete terms. Learning from animals, for example, or affording personhood and wisdom to non-humans beings in general, can present enormous cosmological instability for those trained in westernized traditions. Modern humans are encouraged to speak *about* animals as part of a category called 'nature', or in the words of Abram (2010): "Language is a human property, suitable for communication with other persons. We talk to people; we do not talk to the ground underfoot" (p. 174). Reading Abram, it's clear he is referring (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) to the conservative social norm which upholds the division between sentience and non-sentience, however the norm has a powerful hold on ethnographic scholarship. This is precisely how ethnographies of indigenous and traditional peoples become 'stories' and 'accounts' that are not assessed as 'true' or 'false', but truth claims that are 'true for them' or 'true enough'. As I have argued elsewhere, many ethnographers have gone to great lengths to suggest that it does not matter whether these stories are 'true' or not, but only that they are accurate representations of 'what people believe' (Sepie 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Anthropologist Paul Nadasdy (2007) describes the contradiction as follows:

What to the Athapaskan or Cree hunter is a perfectly explainable—if not quite everyday—event becomes for the biologist (or anthropologist) an anomaly. Faced with stories of this sort, those of us wedded to a Euro-American view of human-animal relations have one of two choices: we can choose to disbelieve the account, or we can shrug it off as a bizarre coincidence. Either way, we avoid any attempt at explanation (p. 36).

This avoidance presents serious problems for recognition of indigenous and traditional life-ways. Truth must matter if the dominant worldview is to be properly queried in areas where it is hegemonic: in areas where ascriptions of cultural relativism simply cannot compete with the abiding authority of the dominant worldview. Paul Rabinow [1983] (2011) writes that inscribed relations between truth and power are concealed by devices which 'bracket truth', thus taking no culture at its word: "The anthropologist thus succeeds in studying what is serious and truthful to Others without it being serious and truthful to him" (p. 31). Claims as to the subjectivity of truth have served academics well, as these can be extended from religion and culture into the designated supernatural realm, to reduce

and marginalize, as 'false', any realities which directly oppose the dominant norms. Truth *matters* in westernized contexts, especially academic realms, and to suggest it does not matter, or that truth is 'relative' within an indigenous context appears structurally racist. Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen (2007) argues that these (and other) 'silences' which do not take metaphysical differences in worldview into account simply reproduce imperialism.

Numerous other issues relating to literary conventions also obtain here, for instance, re-telling, or allowing stories to be remade across individuals, time, and traditions. Re-telling is common practice within a range of indigenous storytelling traditions, and does not yield to the notion that stories have a 'fixed' or static form. This is a practice considered as antagonistic to the goal of early ethnographers and folklorists who have sought to 'collect' these stories or codify them in textual form. As folklorist Alan Dundes notes, the type of framing usually employed to comment on this is pejorative:

Just as ethnographers carefully sifted through unavoidable details obviously only recently added through acculturative contact in an attempt to discover the pure unadulterated original native culture, so practitioners of the Finnish historic-geographic method sought to work backwards through the unfortunate changes (or, in Thompson's terms, the mistakes and errors) in order to find the pure unadulterated original ur-form. The difficulties of searching for the ur-form, too often presumed to be hopelessly hidden by the destructive, deteriorative effects of oral transmission were considerable, but not always insurmountable (in Dundes and Bronner 2007, p. 169).

Translation into English has also had its difficulties, given that many languages do not possess the subject-object rules necessary for a direct transfer of meaning and, further, there many are concepts implied within traditional worldviews that do not have any equivalents in a 'western' conceptual lexicon. Determining what is 'nature' and what is 'culture', for example, cannot be ascertained when people do not subscribe to these categories. The ideas involved are hard to think, and hard to write, especially other languages. In ethnography and folklore, you can almost feel the struggle of generations of scholars trying to relay, in comprehensive terms, concepts that simply no longer appear in the repertoire that has been constructed in two or more thousand years of instituting the modern way of life. Worldview content that cannot be easily classified presents another level of difficulty.

Consider the adoption, within western medical establishments, of acupuncture from China. The use of acupuncture in westernized contexts occurs alongside the absolute denial of the existence of *qi* (air-breath, life-being, energy-force), upon which the entire practice is based. To suggest that *qi* exists is to 'break' with the cosmological consensus of the dominant culture, fostered (as it has been) through the complexities of Judeo-Christian religious changes and Greco-Roman cultural matrices, up to the Enlightenment, and into the present day. The mandate, even if it may only be tacit, is that rational thinking must preside in westernized societies, and any claim on the contrary is a private, cultural, or religious belief and, thus, *a priori* illegitimate in any scientifically valid sense. This mandate orients our institutions and power structures, our concepts of health and education, and influences significantly the degree of seriousness afforded to collectives who publically uphold an 'illegitimate' worldview, especially one that has been historically viewed as pagan or primitive. Whilst any discernible scientific elements of cultural practices might be extracted under the headings of IK and TK (Indigenous Knowledge and/or Traditional Knowledge) and integrated into environmental studies and related disciplinary fields, cultural practices that co-opt what might be called supernatural elements are routinely disregarded or relegated to religious studies as matters of belief.

The bias against anything that might be deemed as supernatural has been strengthened through the rise of scientific modes of explanation. The idea of speaking with animals, or seeing spiritual aspects within nature, breaks a number of 'rules'; however, the supernatural aspect is far more difficult to accept, study, articulate, and theorize, than issues that may arise from worldview content that is rendered as 'cultural difference'. The natural sciences have no room for concepts of spirit in the world, and Christianity does not have a cosmological precedent for allowing spirits (or souls) in 'nature',

limiting the ownership of 'souls' to human beings.⁵ Consider the way that early Christianity was moved through the world: step one, exorcise local gods and spirits by insisting that demons and angels are the only possible supernatural beings. Step two, replace local systems of belief with the fear of, and obedience toward, an Old Testament God, and the attached cosmology (three-tiered universe), which finishes the process of exorcism. Step two may, or may not, be attached to violent punishment for causing trouble regarding step one. This process not only creates profound disconnection from place and tradition, but also considerable fear attached to breaking with the newly established norms, at least publicly. Animate or sentient aspects of nature, including weather, features of the landscape, and the concept of other creatures as speaking, acting, or as spiritually endowed beings, remained possible only in the provinces of myth and fiction. As argued by Sean Kane (1998), in his extraordinary book, *Wisdom of the Mythtellers*:

Myth is felt by history to be untrue because it articulates a reality that exists outside [. . .] more provable worlds [. . . it] implies a shift from the authority of plants and animals, each the spirit-children of supernatural progenitors, to the authority of man (p. 34).

Sorting processes such as these violate the holism of traditional and indigenous worldviews by requiring that they conform to westernized categories in order to be useful and comprehensible. Traditional and indigenous ways of being in the world, wedded as they are to radically different cosmological ideas, can be therefore be thought of as incurring the effects of significant biases at the most fundamental levels of scholarly comprehension.

3. Colonization and the Rise of 'Western Culture'

In his preface to *The New Ecological Order* (1995), the French philosopher, Luc Ferry, narrates an extraordinary tale of legal proceedings, in the year 1545, against a colony of weevils. The villagers of Saint-Julien, in France, sought 'appropriate measures' to demand the expulsion of the beasts from their vineyards, but it was argued that, as 'creatures of God', the animals possessed the same rights to consume plant life as the residents. The villagers (who lost their case) were required to sincerely repent, through prayer, tithes, and processions around the vineyards, followed by further devotions and penitence. All of this was designed to put right their error in the eyes of God. The weevils vacated and the matter ended, only to be brought again to the courts some forty-two years later; however, it appears that the villagers lost, once again. Not only did the judge order the vicar to re-apply the ordonnance (penalty) of 1546, but a compromise was suggested in which the weevils were to be leased 'a location of sufficient pasture, outside of the disputed vineyards of Saint-Julien' (Ferry 1995, pp. ix–xi).

Ferry does not give a final conclusion to this matter, but he discusses similar cases involving larvae (who won), leeches (who were ultimately cursed to evacuate by the bishop of Lausanne), dolphins (excommunicated from Marseille, for clogging the port), rats (who also triumphed), and beetles (case dismissed, due to their young age and the diminutiveness of their bodies) (ibid, pp. ix–xiv). What is fascinating about these cases is how Ferry captures a transitional moment in history that is rarely presented so clearly. His preface is a reminder that, for a certain period in European history, there was the possibility to think of other species in a manner which afforded them agency and equated their rights with those of human beings. Now, as Ferry laments, only humans are 'worthy of a trial' and

⁵ Note that in referring to 'Christianity' I am not intending to present it as a monolith. There are a number of Christianities which have diverged significantly from the central structures and dogma throughout the centuries, and in various cultural contexts. What I refer to here is a core set of precepts that are *generally* considered as central to Christianity and have been reproduced, with relative faithfulness, in historical and modern conservative interpretations and churches. It is this specific form of Christianity that has been informative in orienting the dominant scientific leanings of secular modern westernized societies in ways that affect the biases discussed herein (see Berger 1967; Berger and Luckmann 1967; Gillespie 2008; Lindberg 1983, 1992; Panikkar and Eastham 1993).

nature is a ‘dead letter’. “Literally: it no longer speaks to us for we have long ceased—at least since Descartes—to attribute a soul to it or to believe it inhabited by occult forces” (ibid, p. xvi).⁶

This transitional moment, like the shift from *mythos* to *logos*, is but one among many. What is interesting is that these transitions, when considered together, can be shown to have created the very particular sorts of cultural complexes we term ‘westernized’ (and the socio-ecological pathologies which accompany them). The Haudenosaunee, speaking to the United Nations in 1977 (Mohawk 1978), called this ‘West’ a culture with a ‘sickness’ that had emerged from certain civilizing processes over time, cutting the western people off from their ancient roots. They called for an urgent critical historical analysis of these processes and offered remedy as if an ‘elder looking into the affairs of a young child’ (ibid, p. 83). The Haudenosaunee identified continuity between the experiences of those afflicted by colonialism, and those who were colonized earlier, through essentially the same processes, but with a more serious and destructive result. “It is the people of the West, ultimately, who are the most oppressed and exploited. They are burdened by the weight of centuries of racism, sexism, and ignorance which has rendered their people insensitive to the true nature of their lives” (ibid, p. 91).⁷ The evidence for these critical transitions, also listed by the Haudenosaunee as signaling a move away from nature, can be found in ancient histories.

In *Mythtellers*, Kane (1998, pp. 21–23) determines that a significant break from nature occurred with the near-Eastern Neolithic shift to agriculture, progressively establishing the conditions for a class system and rules of property ownership. Feminist scholar Riane Eisler (1987) calls this the shift from a ‘partnership’ to a dominator model, and she dates it at 5000 BCE.

Abram (1996), in his lyrical text *The Spell of the Sensuous*, points to another, hidden, transition he identifies in the shift from the *aleph*-bet to a Greek alphabet. He specifically notes that what he calls the final ‘removal of the air’ from oral traditions (that is, the adding of scripted vowels), silences the power of the voice in a manner which disengages us from the natural world (pp. 93–135). In this, he echoes the insistence made in many traditional contexts that words are powerful, the spoken word in particular (see Burke 2011; King 2005; LaDuke 2005).

Religious influence is a particularly important mechanism for transition. Early organized political powers, such as those found in ancient city-states of specifically Persian political influence, mandated religious conversions in numerous empires, with resistance punishable by death. These regimes also progressively instituted, often by force, the dislocation of people from place. Such moves eradicated the layered ecological understandings peoples had acquired through long occupation of a site, and the ritual and practical maintenance of close, cohesive groups that were embedded in their relations with their local habitats.⁸ Local forces, energies, or gods, as residing with tribes or kin-groups, and the territories they were linked to, were deliberately unsettled in order to take command of a group of people: in fact, capturing, stealing, or destroying a portable ‘idol’ (or a representation of a sacred being) often constituted a victory over a people. Strong prohibitions against making portable idols or visual representations of gods (carried through within Judaic and Islamic traditions, for example) are inherently linked to these practices. In ancient ‘civilized’ worlds, as with the more recent practices of colonialism and missionary work, the elimination of a people was most effective if it was instituted *in*

⁶ The legal personhood of places and animals has very recently been revived following notable cases in India, the US, and New Zealand (see Coehlo 2013; Grimm 2013; Hutchison 2014; Kennedy 2012).

⁷ This position regarding the efficacy of indigenous ways of being as remedy and restoration for the pathologies of westernized cultural dominance has been suppressed, and obscured, by mechanisms that are both scholarly and social (Mander 1991). There are discussions and corrections regarding these issues in a number of recent publications by indigenous scholars, as well as clearly outlined differences between cultural appropriation and the call for westernized peoples to be led by those who possess the traditional wisdom which repairs ‘culture’ and a sense of connection with nature, i.e., to follow an indigenous ‘lead’ (Arrows 2016; Cajete 2015; Cordova 2007; Kimmerer 2013).

⁸ It is difficult to say to what degree this occurred prior to Christianity, and whether there were similar practices in ancient pan-Indian, Egyptian, or other advanced cultural complexes, precisely because it is normative to call these very ancient histories, myth. I can, however, note parallels with Egyptian regimes and shifting kingships, and find evidence (following the German Egyptologist Jan Assmann (1998, 2005)) for early monotheism and religious conquest.

the name of religion against what were called *other religions* (that is, against foreign, pagan, tribal, and local or place-specific beliefs). Whilst altering the spiritual or religious orientation of any community to align with the interests of the state is a powerful tool in maintaining social control, religious obligations that are set against political interests can be a motivator for extreme violence, as modern history attests to.

When a smaller tribal or kin group voluntarily aligned with a city state, the new cultural identity gradually absorbed and eroded the old, and this process was somewhat common. In China, for example, as Philip Nicholson (1999) writes: “The invaders and occasional conquerors of China, the Mongols of the thirteenth century and the Manchus of the seventeenth, were absorbed by the Chinese culture and became as ardently Chinese as the Chinese they overran” (p. 17). Similarly, it is difficult to find the traces and histories of the many peoples that became Egyptian, or Greek, or Roman, due to the absorption of their personal and localized histories into meta-narratives of identity during what were lengthy processes of assimilation. Economist and philosopher Rajani Kanth (2017, p. 242) notes that whilst cultural complexes can take millennia to evolve, they can be erased in just *two* generations.

Across the ancient empires, however, it was generally not by choice, but by military and political conquest, indebtedness, poverty, and starvation that people fell under the control of others (Nicholson 1999). Where locally-based beliefs and customs persisted, they often did so under duress, most especially after the advent of Christianity (following its adoption as a state-religion in Rome). This duress has continued into the present through the mechanisms of colonialism.

Whilst we cannot go back and alter these historical events, it is necessary to recognize the degree to which such transitions have progressively detached modern, westernized humans from our intimate sense of place.⁹ As Kanth (2017) argues, functional and emplaced societies have become replaced with flat, monotonic, uniform, homogenous, atomized, fragmented and alienated with residents who are privatized, individualized and isolated with “a gamut of ever multiplying gadgets as companions” (p. 242). Equally, notions of shared identity, as linked to an in-group sense of place and community (originally, *ethnos*), have become overly signified in urban environments where religion, ethnic or racial, political, economic and class affiliations keep diverse and separate groups in a competitive tension for rights and resources.

In the words of Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete (2015), our present crises come from a “narrow view of who we are, what the earth is, and what it is to educate our children so that they may live and think as human beings” (p. 20). The recovery of a community based on relationships with one another, including the Lakota concept of *Mitakuye Oyasin* (that we are all related), is central to his work. Similarly, Kanth (2017, p. 267) makes the powerful observation that whilst the westernized (he calls this Anglo-Norman) peoples are micro-oriented and reductionist in extremis, they are at a loss when it comes to putting the pieces back together: a good metaphor for what has been done to both planet, and peoples.

These transitions are directly culpable in obscuring an insight that is considered common across numerous indigenous and traditional life-ways: that the various capacities for instinctual and intuitive knowledge which accompanies these life-ways are not, in fact, primitive ‘magic’ or superstition, but are *endemic* to the human species. This is not to argue that certain groups of people are more, or less, instinctual and intuitive than others, nor is it a revival of the ‘noble savage’ argument, which elevates a mythic ‘primitive nobility’ of indigenous peoples in ways that are essentially racist. Conversely, this position, which is shared by a number of indigenous and non-indigenous thinkers (and is exemplified

⁹ There are many other examples that could be given here, extending right up to the present day. For example, in greater Europe many millions perished in the papal efforts to retain political and spiritual supremacy during the Middle Ages. This was followed by the workings of the Inquisition, progressive industrialization, urbanization, and the rise of modern scientific medicine (which eradicated all practices that were deemed to be superstitious, such as those practices labeled ‘witchcraft’). As was observed over a hundred years ago: “The noon of the papacy was the midnight of the world” (Wylie 1874, p. 18).

in the collective work of the Bioneers),¹⁰ is that we have forgotten what it is to be human, and how to live well on our shared planet. This *includes* many who have been affected by colonialism; that is, many contemporary communities of indigenous peoples.¹¹

Eurocentric ideologies also emphasize ‘universal truths’ which conceal not only the pre-colonial histories and life ways of indigenous and traditionally living peoples, but the histories of Eurocentrism itself. Metis scholar Howard Adams (1995) writes, with sentiments that could be extended to encompass all peoples affected by the global colonial project of domination:

The establishment requires documented ‘proof’ that corroborates its prejudices and upholds the dominant Euro-American ruling-class perspective. Academics discredit Aboriginals’ historical perspectives as ‘myth’ or ‘advocacy,’ and thus denigrate the works of Indian and Metis historians. White historians are obviously unaware of their rampant biases and subjectivity [. . .] Eurocentric interpretations create a false consciousness among the colonists and the colonized. Eurocentrism does not allow for alternatives and thereby deceives Aboriginal peoples into believing that their history can be acquired only through the colonizer’s institutions. Rather than critically attacking their oppressor’s dogma, indigenous elites have accepted historical distortions to an alarming extent. Many Aboriginal academics are intellectual captives and have become part of the colonizer’s regime [. . . writing] Indian and Metis history from a strictly Eurocentric and racist interpretation (pp. 31–33).

Adams makes one further, critical, point, which is especially relevant given that he is one of the very few indigenous academic voices writing about this subject in the 1990s, or perhaps (more accurately), being *published* in this time. He writes that an authentic Aboriginal consciousness “is an intrinsic or inner essence that lies somewhere between instinct and intuition, and it evolves from the humanness and spirituality of our collective, Aboriginal community. Without an indigenous consciousness, Indians, Metis, and Inuit people only claim to Aboriginality is race and heritage. That is not enough to achieve true liberation” (ibid, p. 45).

I argue with these scholars, and Cree philosopher and educator, Dwayne Donald (2010) in his statement that colonization is “an extended process of denying relationships. Everybody has been colonized. It doesn’t matter what color your skin is, or where you’re from . . . Decolonization can only occur when we face each other across these historical divides.” That is to say that we have all been collectively colonized, over a very long time, out of this integrated and intuitive relationship with other humans, other species, and the world around us.

This concept of decolonization is categorically separate from physical de-colonial processes (such as colonial withdrawal from colonized nations) and the various concepts of post-colonial intervention which also come under this heading. Whilst, as decolonization scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012) has argued, colonialism is a *remembered* phenomenon, experienced since the Age of Exploration (and one that has made minorities of the indigenous people who were once sovereign in their lands), I posit that the colonization of the mind and body goes back further, into ancient ancestral places long abandoned by those who have since stretched across the world.

¹⁰ The *Bioneers* is a global organisation that is committed to increasing socio-ecological literacy through combining scientific and indigenous knowledge. Speakers at their yearly conference are recorded and the proceedings are publically available on YouTube.

¹¹ Jeff Corntassel writes about this issue, quoting the words of Mohawk representatives Kanen’tokon Hemlock, Tyler Hemlock and Kahnawiiio Dione: “we’re doing our best in a lot of areas, but as a community we really have to ask ourselves that question of what are we doing? When we look at our community and seeing so much land being clear-cut; so many of the swamp and marshlands being land-filled; so many dump-sites. There’s all these things within our own little community and we’re supposed to be the Indigenous examples of living healthy and sustainably with the environment” (Corntassel 2012, p. 87). Corntassel goes on to add: “Being Indigenous today means struggling to reclaim and regenerate one’s relational, place-based existence by challenging the ongoing, destructive forces of colonization. Whether through ceremony or through other ways that Indigenous peoples (re)connect to the natural world, processes of resurgence are often contentious and reflect the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle” (ibid, p. 88).

Traditional and indigenous peoples possess a *living* memory of their colonization, a generally violent transition with tragic consequences, made even more potent by the thoroughness with which traditional ways of living were destroyed. These violences have been historically justified by values that derive from Christian cosmological ideas, such as exceptionalism, progress (teleology), proselytizing, piety, salvation by works, and fear of God. This way of absorbing and eventually eliminating local ways of life progressively achieves absolute dislocation from cultural traditions and place over an extended period of time. Kanth (2017) calls it an ‘export template’, characterized primarily by its capacity for destruction. Colonialism and globalization are the most recent incarnations of focused colonization processes, with the goal of ‘westernizing’ through instilling replacement institutions (both social and economic), whilst displacing people from place in systematic ways.

Modern examples of colonialism in action are illustrative of how this works: note the focus on breaking the bonds of tradition, with place, and between elders and the younger generation. Families and communities are often physically displaced from their homes (to reserves, reservations, ghettos, or urban sectors), severing their kinship with place. A sector of the community can be employed in (or bound to) work away from home, compelling labor from husbands, fathers, and sons for mining, logging, and other industrial labor forces. Finally, child removal policies (such as in the Americas, Canada, Australia, Switzerland, Greenland, and elsewhere), directly impact the ability of communities to pass on traditions through child rearing and education, with profound intergenerational effects. This is by no means an exhaustive list, and does not include assimilation by choice, or assimilation as a result of forced economic adaptation or acquiescence to political regimes.

None of this replacement process happens under the heading of ‘a culture’, and yet what we refer to as ‘western’ is very much a culture: albeit, a broken culture in dire need of refashioning and repair. Westernization is the process of adopting a particular culture with a very specific history in which certain ‘modern’ ideas are conceived of as valuable. *How* this happens is through extended colonization. Kanth (2017) defines it in a way that simply could not be put more clearly, as:

a misguided mélange of diverse elements involving: a specious, quantitative view of ‘progress,’ a related materialist calculus of happiness, a misplaced, suicidal stress on asocial individuation as a societal ideal, a stark reduction of human roles solely to their part in the accumulation process (producer, consumer, etc.), a reductionist scientism that is also privileged as a theology that must be obeyed, a philosophical flaunt of elevating the human as ‘above’ nature, with the latter seen as no more than a manipulable, disposable tool, and a ruthless proclivity to use force, ironically, to ‘free’ us all of any vestiges of any ‘culture’ than disdains its vulgar visions (p. 268).

This constructed culture lacks the cohesiveness which arises from a long-established culture that is emplaced. As Kanth reiterates repeatedly in his work, this construction has no ‘moral core’ as it is not based on the affective bonds between people that, traditionally, hold a “functional culture” together (and is not limited to either its capitalist or communist variations) (ibid, pp. 248–49). Although the older histories of colonization are more difficult to weave together, it becomes obvious that at some point in their ancestral lineages, every human has been displaced by these very mechanisms. These same processes that we associate with colonial violence—the assimilation techniques, introduction of oppressive infrastructures, indices of ‘progress’ linked to power, ascension of hegemonic forces, encouragement of urban work practices, and conformity in the name of betterment—have all been used before. The colonials (themselves, colonized in this way) were following in an already long-established tradition.¹²

¹² To be very clear on this point, there are very obvious examples of the continuance of colonialism across the ‘post-colonial’ world that have been perpetuated by successive governments, institutions, and communities in ways which show absolutely no respect for indigenous peoples, nor aid their recovery from colonial violences. I am in no way adopting an apologist

Colonization now continues through the global distribution of secularized westernized institutions and power structures which undermine and ultimately, replace, the cosmological foundations of non-western cultural complexes with a post-Christian, techno-capitalist, scientifically-privileged, and isolationist culture which has the proven capacity to re-orient both axiology and praxis over a number of generations. I argue that the core socio-ecological issues we face, as a species, are a by-product of this very long and complex process of colonizing people the world over with an anti-ecological, myopic, and dislocating philosophy, resulting in an artificial and unsustainable worldview that, nonetheless, appears coherent and familiar. As philosopher Régis Debray (2000, p. 15) has written, “optimal transmission is transmission forgotten”; and indeed, we have forgotten. The radical step I am suggesting is to recognize that the type of interspecies and ecological awareness that is evident within traditional and indigenous life-ways was normal before the rise of the west, and a functional and reverent way of living respectfully in place. If all of our ancestors were linked to places and traditions similar in kind, perhaps it is to those who can remember being colonized who we should turn to for answers? The late John Mohawk outlined this same notion in 1997:

We’ve been living through this very, very terrible period of conquest [...] there’s a possibility now of gathering consciousness among many hundreds of millions of people about how this is not only necessary but is a very good thing, a positive thing [...] I think that when we talk about re-indigenization, we need a much larger, bigger umbrella to understand it. It is not necessarily about the Indigenous Peoples of a specific place; it’s about re-indigenizing the peoples of the planet [...] We have to reach ordinary, everyday people. Ordinary, everyday people have to have their sense of moral injustice ignited. It has to be raised a bit. They have to come to understand that they are called upon to care about what happens to the peoples and living things of this world. That’s a huge job, but that’s the called-upon spiritual call of the re-indigenization of the world (in Cajete et al. 2008, pp. 254–60).

4. Steps to Decolonization

In an online essay, the philosopher Kwame Anthony Appiah (2016), tracks the lineage and legacy of ‘the west’ all the way back to Herodotus (circa 5BCE), and concludes that western civilization, and western culture, are ideas that justify racism and, more recently, Islamophobia. Beset with difficulties, he outlines this concept of western culture as the expression of an ‘essence’ linked to an identity that survives through time and space:

[From] the late middle ages until now, people have thought of the best in the culture of Greece and Rome as a civilisational inheritance, passed on like a precious golden nugget, dug out of the earth by the Greeks, transferred, when the Roman empire conquered them, to Rome. Partitioned between the Flemish and Florentine courts and the Venetian Republic in the Renaissance, its fragments passed through cities such as Avignon, Paris, Amsterdam, Weimar, Edinburgh and London, and were finally reunited—pieced together like the broken shards of a Grecian urn—in the academies of Europe and the United States [...] How have we managed to tell ourselves that we are rightful inheritors of Plato, Aquinas, and Kant, when the stuff of our existence is more Beyoncé and Burger King?

Appiah is calling out the great illusion that this western idea has some cohesiveness to it, when what actually went into the construction of ‘the west’ is anything but glamorous. Appropriations of science, technology and philosophy (at least, the coherent parts) are largely stolen goods added to the ‘corpus’ of the late great Western culture over centuries of pillage from China, India, Near Eastern cultural complexes, and even the Iroquois Confederacy, from which America ‘borrowed’ and then

position here, rather, I am emphasizing that the unacceptable behaviors of those who continue the colonial project in contemporary times have a history that needs to be considered in terms that go beyond settler-colonial discourses.

mutated the principles of dynamic governance. For the US, as flagship for all that is western, this doesn't even leave Beyoncé, Burger King, Coca Cola, McDonald's and Disneyland, as none of these, not even the silver screens of Hollywood, are an entirely local (that is, Native) initiative.

If the idea of the west is fundamentally broken, as Appiah argues (and I agree with), then we need new and novel ways of thinking about our place in the world, and to bring into alignment the complex contradictions required for maintaining our shared and diverse communities. Postcolonial scholar Gayatri Spivak (2003, p. 77) offers similar thoughts, and suggests that we consider ourselves as planetary beings who might embrace our differences, rather than exhaust them through the combination of colonization, globalization and consumerism. The planet, as she reminds us, is ecological—we cannot be separate from it, and even more obviously, from each other, except by way of our reified concepts of alterity.

According to the biologist, Edward O. Wilson (2012, para. 13), the struggle of 'us versus me' will direct people towards self-interest if they feel they are under threat. Empathy, altruism, and cooperation are key survival traits for our species (evidenced by acts of self-sacrifice, which are honored with great ceremony), however, these are difficult to maintain in societies characterized by alienation and perpetual struggles for rights and resources. Buddhist biologist John Stanley, with Buddhist author David Loy expand on Wilson's idea: "By glorifying self-concern as never before, consumerism generates a mental environment of endless competition. It undermines empathy, altruism and cooperation" (Stanley and Loy 2013, p. 42).

Fear of difference, or being ousted by the perceived majority, is also a very real component of the modern societal condition with a reasonable basis for its perception as a threat. Whilst fear is natural for the survival of all animals and has its good uses (Tuan 1980), it is a vulnerability that can be exploited by others. Any animal, including humans, will defer to an authority figure far more readily when it is under threat than when it is calm, which means obedience (and social control) can prove relatively easy to secure under the sort of conditions commonly experienced by people living in modern, urban, westernized societies. Furthermore, the wider concern for the survival of our species seems to falter if it involves breaking with the group, as for any individual or small group to go against a dominant majority has been historically quite dangerous, often resulting in violence and death.

Sociologist Frank Furedi (2006, p. 176) has argued that modern fear has the appearance of being quite independent: we use the precautionary principle (be careful or else), and unspecific and diffuse terms like 'stress', 'risk', 'trauma', and 'vulnerability' which work to verify the existence of fear in its own right, rather than a fear of some named threat. The absence of clear sources of authority and the rise of the individual over and above cohesive communities heightens anxiety, which is by definition, a fear of unknown danger.

This 'societal condition', if that is an appropriate term for it, is a part of what deep ecologist Joanna Macy (and other systems thinkers, such as Fritjof Capra) call a *crisis of perception*, or a crisis which is, at root, created by human consciousness. Macy (2013) writes that this crisis is compounded by a dysfunctional view of ourselves as individualized and disconnected from others, and the greater environment.

It is the delusion that the self is so separate and fragile that we must delineate and defend its boundaries; that it is so small and so needy that we must endlessly acquire and consume; and that as individuals, corporations, nation-states, or a species, we can be immune to what we do to other beings (pp. 149–50).

In contemplating a way out of this state, Macy aligns herself with ways of relational thinking common in traditional and indigenous life-ways by proposing (Naess 1988) the concept of the *ecological self*. The premise is simple: instead of self-identifying only with the 'skin-encapsulated ego', an expanded sense of self includes the tree, the wolf, and the spider. Neither virtues, nor moral exhortation, are required: "Sermons seldom hinder us from following our self interest as we conceive it" (ibid, p. 155). And as Naess (1988) himself wrote: "We need environmental ethics, but when people feel they

unselfishly give up, even sacrifice, their interest in order to show love for nature, this is probably in the long run a treacherous basis for ecology. Through broader identification, they may come to see their own interest served by environmental protection, through genuine self-love, love of a widened and deepened self" (p. 24).

From this perspective, as I would not cut off my leg (being part of my body), the idea of poisoning a river or destroying the Amazon becomes ridiculous. As Macy says, the trees are our external lungs. Drawing upon the work of fellow systems thinker, Gregory Bateson, Macy writes that the total self-corrective unit that processes information ('us,' or the self) is an open, self-organizing *system*, the boundaries of which do not at all coincide with the boundaries of the body. Breathing, thinking, and acting all occur *interactively* as currents of matter, energy, and information move through our bodies (Macy 2013, pp. 150–51).

This crisis of perception is founded in an outmoded worldview in which it was also promoted that humans are elevated as the masters of the world and, thus, are in possession of a license to exploit it (Boulot and Sungaila 2012; Kofman and Senge 1993). The 'encirclement' of the autonomous human by the environs (literally, meaning to surround) further encodes this separation in language. Environment is fragmented into urban and wild, garden and forest, built, suburban, lifestyle, and so on, with degrees of encroachment by other species permitted, or not, according to further classificatory rubrics. The late eco-philosopher Val Plumwood (2009) called this the delusion that we are *ecologically invulnerable* and outside nature, leading to "the failure to understand our ecological identities and dependencies on nature" (p. 117). This is both a peculiar, and an eminently modern dilemma. Perhaps we no longer know *what* we are?

Abram (1996), who appears to have devoted every word he has written to trying to *remind* us of these connections, puts it this way:

For the largest part of our species' existence, humans have negotiated relationships with every aspect of the sensuous surroundings, exchanging possibilities with every flapping form, with each textured surface and shivering entity that we happened to focus upon. All could speak, articulating in gesture and whistle and sigh a shifting web of meanings [. . .] And from all these relationships our collective sensibilities were nourished (p. ix).

There is plenty of conjecture as to the proper manner in which to categorize human instinct (which appears to be Abrams' focus) and intuition, most of which is forced into a cognitive, scientific, or religious mode of comprehension, and all of which grazes being deemed supernatural, or impossible. In different ways, both Macy and Abram point to, the idea that 'the human' may *not* be as we have typically conceived of it in westernized terms: instincts are considered to be residual capacities that stem from our animal origins, and intuition is considered an oddity; you cannot interpret 'nature in the active voice', as Plumwood (2009) refers to it, with continued reference to the old, established, westernized cosmology. We need new origin stories. It is, as Zen teacher Susan Murphy (2013) writes,

possible to live straight on to our reality instead of hiding out from it in ten thousand different ways. To do so, first we have to see through the way our sense of the world has been framed by stories that form the bedrock of our civilization, stories that pose nature as a dubious force to be mastered and utilized, or put more bluntly, raped and pillaged for profit (p. 121).

Decolonizing our westernized selves, or seeing through these stories (as Murphy phrases it), becomes central to "engaging with the new reality breaking upon our heads" (ibid). If we, as a species, are to collectively overcome our shared sense of impending socio-ecological crises, then we have recover an understanding of what 'the human' really is, or at least begin to open up to the possibilities of what might be underneath the delusions we have about what clever tool-makers we are. Yes, humans *are* remarkable—but the inventory of what is considered remarkable in westernized contexts differs profoundly from what countless traditional and indigenous communities consider as

such. Four Arrows' observation here is salient. "Most people assume that we must use the 'civilized' wisdom of the past several thousand years as a baseline to establish future goals for solving problems . . . [however,] research shows that when we operated under our Indigenous worldview we fared much better. Deeply acknowledging these facts might enable us to aim much higher" (Arrows 2016, pp. 9–11).

Many of the strengths found within traditional place-based communities are derived from very different cosmological arrangements to those found in predominantly westernized societies. This is not to suggest that there is always some kind of romantic or mythic harmony between humans and their environments, but that even in non conservation-oriented communities, there is an awareness of how to sustain basic reliance practices, as necessary. This is similar to Macy's concept of the ecological self. It *matters* how certain resources are regarded, because it directly impacts upon the continuance and health of the community. In Kanth's terms, this is *not* a utopia to be achieved, but an already-achieved, long-standing, way of 'being in place', strengthened by the affective bonds of community, which has been observed well before the onset of destructive modernist ideas (pp. 82–83).

Consider an example from Warlpiri Country, in Australia. As anthropologist, Miles Holmes, and Warlpiri elder and scholar, Wanta Jampijinpa (W.P.), write, no Warlpiri person would distinguish ecology from any other dimensions of their lives: "Look at it this way. This *ngurra-kurlu* [worldview] is *palka* [body, substance, presence]: *he's got his own heart, he's got his own kidneys, he's got his own liver. If you take one of them away, his whole body will drop . . .*" (Holmes and Jampijinpa 2013, n.p.).

From a Warlpiri perspective, the *ngurra-kurlu* worldview is a body of relations, or dependencies. It is the connections, rather than the individual elements, that are of primary relevance. Ecological and systems scholars (Gregory Bateson and Arne Naess are both exceptional examples) have been trying to teach these ideas for a very long time, however, scholarly and social comprehension of what it *really means* to be immersed in the constant motion of relations with nature has been slow to catch on. Sustainability discourses seem mired in confusion as to what it is we are trying to sustain, whereas the addition of ecological systems thinking in the spirit of traditional and indigenous conceptions of a 'continuance' between humans and 'nature' have the capacity to re-orient these. In his ground-breaking work *Designing Regenerative Cultures*, Daniel Christian Wahl (2016) writes that "what we are actually trying to sustain is the underlying pattern of health, resilience and adaptability that maintain the planet in a condition where life as a whole can flourish. Design for sustainability is, ultimately, design for human and planetary health (p. 43).

This is a very good, utilitarian reason for paying closer attention to how traditional peoples have lived and what they consider useful to know. Whatever shape it appears in, however, cosmologies (or origin stories) remain *inherently linked* to the pragmatic aspects of sustaining a human community, which means that interrogating cosmological matters becomes central to comprehending how a worldview actually works. The idea of reverence (the indigenous or eco-spiritual consideration for nature, or self-as-nature) and utilitarian principles are *not* mutually exclusive, but mutually *dependent* upon one another to be successful.

Another very good reason for considering traditional practices is already proven by history, as noted by the ethnocologist Gene Anderson (2014):

[If] people of traditional and local cultures and societies have solved these problems, or even done a little better than modern humanity has done, we can learn from those other cultures. Indeed many other societies have managed the world a great deal less destructively [. . . supporting] large populations over long time periods without destroying their environments (p. 15).

The suggestion I am making here is that, if our shared global socio-ecological circumstances are *also* inherently linked to the relationship between cosmology and practice, and one model has become dominant, then traditional and indigenous communities may have better models. The issue is that the coherence of these models has been obscured by the very crisis of perception, or worldview, that

is under critique here, which sets different markers of value or usefulness for types and levels of knowledge, along with different criteria for what is, and is not, possible.

What appears to be emerging from these debates (and others) is that the westernized way of organizing spiritual, scientific, and cultural knowledge offers us no suitable frameworks for dealing with rapid ecological or even urban change. As Wilson (2012, para. 7.4) says, we have a Stars Wars civilization with Stone Age emotions, and our conquest of the earth has happened so fast that the biosphere has not had time to adjust. Luckily, heresy on this side of the river may not be so on the other side.

5. Being 'Told' on Your Mind

Countless indigenous nations have employed traditional ecological management strategies that have comprised of an awareness of, and responsibility for, human dependence upon the natural world. These are reckoned in holistic and multi-layered models which vary from place to place, and yet are largely comparable in their ethic of respect, reciprocity, relationship, reverence, and the maintenance of protocols, both ritual, and practical. Such protocols secure the continuance of traditional community life in ecologically sustainable ways. Oren Lyons Jr. (of the Onondaga Nation, Haudenosaunee) has said: "There's no habeas corpus in natural law. You either do, or you don't. If you don't, you pay [. . .] The first peace comes with your mother, Mother Earth" (Lyons Jr. 2013, pp. 9–11).

Law is also fundamental to an indigenous Australian worldview, and is a word that denotes a code of living and associated values based on traditions established by living and spiritual ancestors, both human and more-than-human, which encompasses the entirety of the Australian history, Country (or, landscape), and the life that inhabits it. Law, Country, and Dreaming, when considered together, convey a worldview that has, at its heart, an ethic of *how to be* in the world. Aboriginal philosopher, Mary Graham (1999, p. 105) identifies two basic precepts central to how this worldview is organized: firstly, The Land (often called Country) is the Law, and, secondly, *you are not alone in the world*. By way of elucidation regarding the first:

The land is a sacred entity, not property or real estate; it is the great mother of all humanity. The Dreaming is a combination of meaning (about life and all reality), and an action guide to living. The two most important kinds of relationship in life are, firstly, those between land and people and, secondly, those amongst people themselves, the second being always contingent upon the first [. . .] all meaning comes from land (ibid, p. 106).

Graham's second precept hinges on two related aspects of indigenous Australian ways of being, kinship and Law.¹³ The kinship system employed extends into the land, and is organized into clans, each of which has their own Dreaming, which is a cosmological explanation of existence within place.¹⁴ Each person has a number of relationships to other beings: ancestral, mythic, and land-based, although these are not distinctly separate categories. Unlike westernized concepts of animate/inanimate, there is no simplistic distinction between the living and non-living, as such, but a contrast drawn between presence (i.e., a full water hole) and absence (an empty water hole), which is different to the concept of 'death' or inanimacy. As a parallel, consider the example given by anthropologist, Colin Scott (2006), who has lived and worked primarily with James Bay Cree. He observed that, in a Cree worldview, there

¹³ Graham's description of Aboriginal understandings of human motivations echo E.O. Wilson's almost exactly. She writes: "The Aboriginal understanding posits that the tendency to possess is more deeply embedded in the human psyche than is the tendency to share [. . .] possessiveness precedes altruism and it therefore takes a higher order of abilities to maintain 'sharing' behavior than it takes to demonstrate possessive behavior [. . .] When the Aboriginal child learns to share, he or she is given food and then invited to give it back; social obligations are pointed out and possessiveness gently discouraged" (Graham 1999, p. 112).

¹⁴ The English word Dreaming, or Dreamtime, is rejected by some Aboriginal communities as it presumes reference to a past and another place, rather than a Creation Time that is ongoing and happening now, with people, place and the ancestors concurring in a co-creative non-linear present.

is no inanimate opposite to their most inclusive category for the living: *iyiyuu*. Seeking a comparative, he writes:

I more recently asked an eastern Torres Strait Islander, a man with a local reputation for philosophical insight, to give me the most inclusive term in the Miriam language for 'life' or 'living things.' He responded without hesitation, *idid lu*. But when I asked him for a term for non-living things, he was stumped. He remarked, 'we have a word for things which have died [. . .] but in our way of thinking, everything, animals, winds, stars are *idid lu*.' So living things pass through some process of disintegration, but this passage is not a transition to inanimacy (p. 61).

Similarly, indigenous Australian ways of being do not conform (and have never conformed) to the idea of animism, existing as it does in relation with a presumed inanimate opposite. The world is saturated with life, and death is not conceived of as 'separation'. Graham (1999, p. 111) grounds her description of the sacred web of connections in what she calls a 'psychic level' of behavior common among natural entities, as grounded in common relation to the land. Language has various 'levels' in this conception, as I will explore: from instinctual 'knowing', to the communication that comes through 'paying attention', to opening to intuitive relationships and being 'told' things of use, or value, by the various interlocutors who are a part of a more-than-human world. Language (which is a broader category than simple verbal exchange, although it *includes* this) is operative amongst and between all entities in this way of being. Humans are not alone because they are connected and made by way of relations with a range of beings with whom they maintain relationships. Notice that it is the relation that makes the person, not the other way around. Graham writes:

To behave as if you are a discrete entity or a conscious isolate is to limit yourself to being an observer in an observed world [. . . the sacred] resides in the relationship between the human spirit and the natural life force. When there is a breach between the two, or rather, when the link between the two is weakened, then a human being becomes a totally individuated self [. . .] loneliness and alienation envelops the individual [. . .] the discrete individual then has to arm itself not just literally against other discrete individuals, but against its environment [. . .] (ibid, pp. 105–10).

Reflecting on how this worldview works, Graham points to collective responsibility for land and others, a communal sense of identity, and a deep appreciation of what it means to be human:

Aboriginal Law is natural law, in that if it was legislated at all, this was done not by humans, but by the spiritual ancestors of the Dreaming, so that Aboriginal Law is incapable of being added to, amended or repealed by any human agency [. . .] this Law was/is always an attempt to understand what it is that makes us human [. . .] Aboriginal Law could be said to be both an action guide to living and a guide to understanding reality itself, especially in relation to land as the basis for all meaning (ibid, pp. 115–16).

Warlpiri aboriginal elders, in the Tanami Desert region of central Australia, have a worldview described in terms aligned with what Graham is referring to. The current term they employ for this is *ngurra-kurlu*, which is interpreted as 'from country' or 'country within [people]' and it embodies the fundamental Warlpiri ethic of reciprocity between people and land (Holmes and Jampijinpa 2013). Holmes and Jampijinpa have stressed that each entity in a relation supports the healthy functioning of the other. *Ngurra-kurlu* was formulated inside and outside of community, and is based upon five elements: law (guiding principles), skin (responsibilities to people/country), ceremony (education and unity), language (communication between the elements), and country (home and identity). In Warlpiri worldview, the relation between Dreaming and Law is described in this way:

For Warlpiri, *kuruwarri* [law] is the highest reference for direction about how to live in the world. It is a strict but adaptable code that can be conceived of at multiple levels of

abstraction. In its most expansive sense, *kuruwarri* is the period widely known as ‘the dreaming’ [...] During the dreaming, ancestral beings traveled over the landscape and, through actions such as singing, hunting, copulating, and performing ceremonies, created all the features of the physical and social world. The dreaming ancestors are simultaneously both human beings and either nonhuman species or phenomena such as weather events. The dreaming period continues in the present day in that ancestral beings are manifest throughout Warlpiri country as landforms, elements, and organisms and can interact with Warlpiri through their cultural practices. The law is based in the narratives describing the dreaming ancestors’ journeys [. . .]

“See that tree. It is shedding its bark. No, we didn’t tell it to do that. That is just its purpose, the kuruwarri [law] for that thing [...] If a plant is edible that is its kuruwarri. But it might also be there to teach yapa [aboriginal people] something. Like the seasons; they tell you what to do . . . ” (ibid).

Note that he says ‘they tell you’—this description recurs again and again in indigenous accounts of how knowing happens when it is not limited by mental considerations or assumptions regarding the nature of the universe (Deloria Jr. 1978). The same connection between following Law, and being ‘told’ also figures in Lyons’ account of a Six Nations worldview.

The spiritual side of the natural world is absolute. Our instructions—and I’m talking about for all human beings—our instructions are to get along. Understand what these laws are. Get along with laws, and support them and work with them. We were told a long time ago that if you do that, life is endless. It just continues on and on in great cycles of regeneration (Lyons Jr. 2013, p. 9).

In a worldview that is shared in concept (if not strictly in detail) across indigenous worldviews, humans are not the only ones who are acting on/in the world, nor the only one’s ‘telling’ (Rose 2013). Abram is almost offhand about the obviousness of this idea. He says our own ‘chatter’ is a response to the world, so it follows that myriad things are also listening, or attending, to what we are doing. In fact, in our quest to represent, he writes, we have forgotten our etiquette, talking about entities behind their backs, as if they were not participants in our lives (Abram 2010, pp. 172–75). Plumwood (2009) offers similar observations in her work, as do others such as anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose (1992, 2004, 2011, 2013), who goes to great lengths to try and detail how active intelligences operate in the more-than-human world, as described from indigenous Australian perspectives.

Being ‘told’ is only possible outside of an anthropocentric worldview (unless the inner voice is attributed to divinities, such as Jesus and others considered able to ‘speak’ to the heart or mind). Being told may occur as you are, for example, sitting at a particular place, in which case the communicator is both the place and the ‘person’ with whom you are in relation. As Rose (2013) writes: “To live in a world of sentience is to be surrounded by others who are sentient” (p. 100). Being told appears in living, origin, and ‘good conduct’ or (ethical stories) as detailing *how to be* in the world, generally by an emissary (human or otherwise) who details the tenets of natural law and correct behavior (which can be general, or specific to the place being occupied at the time). This is part of the accepted context of many traditional and indigenous knowledge transmission systems and considered pedagogical, or a part of educational knowledge-yielding training systems. The trace of this can also be found in the traditional fable, or proverb, which conveys some kind of wisdom that is designed to be instructional.

In addition, the integrity of a person relating the wisdom of such an event back to the community is not queried in the same manner it might be within atomized, rather than close-knit, communities. To follow two notable Native scholars, Vine Deloria Jr. (1978) and Viola Cordova (2007), the reality of these types of experience is accepted and confronted, rather than rejected as invalid. There is no reason to assume the ‘incorrectness’ of another person’s experience, simply because it does not coincide with one’s own. Suspicion (be it of motive, or content) is weighed differently when there are long-established kin relations. Consensus is quantifiable, interpretation can be shared with others,

and the content is weighed in utilitarian terms, in that what is good to know is *useful* in some way. Philosopher Adam Arola (2011), of the Ojibwe Anishinaabe, writes:

[There is a] shared tendency in the pragmatic tradition and the indigenous philosophical traditions of North America to have a conception of truth that is both universally applicable but also eminently revisable; for any account of truth *qua* function can be communicated as the *best* thing to believe, the best way to accomplish a task, that we know so far. But openness to the possibility that experience may show us superior ways to accomplish a task indicates that this conception of truth is always understood to be flexible and at the mercy of what is shown in experience (p. 558).

The idea here is to pay attention so as to be always open to the 'tell'; to make time for whatever or whoever is delivering the message. The trouble is how to explain what is called 'language', and yet, is something more. Abram (2010), in trying to articulate his own more encompassing view, writes that:

When we speak of 'language', we speak of an ability to communicate, a power to convey information across a thickness of space and time, a means whereby beings at some distance from one another nonetheless manage to apprise each other of their current feelings or thoughts. As humans, we rely upon a complex web of mostly discrete, spoken sounds to accomplish our communication, and so it's natural that we associate language with such verbal intercourse. Unfortunately, this association has led many to assume that language is an exclusive attribute of our species . . . It is an exceedingly self-serving assumption (pp. 166–67).

Whilst Abram is trained on instinct as his primary means of describing human animal kinship and communication, the other aspect of communication is more intuitive. Whilst instinct is immediate (and somehow primal) in terms of *how* things are articulated, intuitive knowing through being told is different, although, according to indigenous peoples, both modes of being are equally shared across species . . . and mountain (people), river (people), weather (people), and so forth.

How this kind of 'telling' happens can vary. The message could be in 'Indian' or a local dialect, as anthropologists Paul Nadasdy and Richard Nelson detail. In a Koyukon (Alaskan) worldview, the animals understand human speech. "Each animal knows way more than you do. We always heard that from the old people when they told us never to bother anything unless we really needed it" (Nelson 1983, p. 227). Or, regarding the Kluane First Nations worldview: "I was told explicitly more than once that although animals in Kluane country probably cannot speak English, they most definitely can speak Indian" (Nadasdy 2007, p. 34).

Knowledge can also be directly received, described as 'spoken in your head'. In Australia, one of Deborah Rose's Aboriginal teachers, Old Jimmy Manggaiyarri, explains how he knows which way to go. He says the earth 'tells' him. When Rose asks, "How does it tell you?" Old Jimmy answers:

on your mind. Earth got to tell you all thing. Might be say: 'Ah, you leave me. What for you go away? You go over there you get hurt.' You got to go only what this earth tell you to. Where you going to go, you going to go right way. That's the way you got to follow this earth. Tell you everything right way [. . .] That's nobody been tell you and me to do that? This earth tell you! In your memory. Well that's the way. You and me can't miss. Do it properly, looking after ourselves. Do the right thing. This earth understand EVERYthing. Think on your memory now! You got that word from this earth (in Rose 2013, p. 105).

Rose is left frustrated by this description, asking: "How do we learn the attention that would enable us to admit earth 'words' into our lives?" (ibid). The suggestion I want to make to her by way of response has been outlined already: recovering our instinct, our intuitions, and remembering *what we are* through displacing the veil of artificiality that has resulted from these lengthy processes of westernization. A particular kind of intimacy with habitat and knowledge of how the human animal

'works', is modeled beautifully within these traditional and indigenous ways of being if we choose to pay attention to the instructions given in countless ethnographic accounts.

In his wonderful account of life in Arctic worlds, Barry Lopez (2001) writes that "something eerie ties us to the world of animals. Sometimes the animals pull you backward into it. You share hunger and fear with them like salt in blood [. . .] Few things provoke like the presence of wild animals. They pull at us like tidal currents with questions of volition; of ethical involvement, of ancestry" (para. 9.6). If we allow ourselves to be considered animals then these instinctual feelings should be of interest.¹⁵

6. Learning to be Human (again)

What are permitted as legitimate topics of inquiry in an academic context can be heavily restricted, with the exception of those modes of scholarship which engage a degree of political correctness with regards to 'cultural otherness'. Gillian Bennett (1987), a folklorist who studies afterlife beliefs, writes that: "No-one will tackle the subject because it is disreputable, and it remains disreputable because no one will tackle it" (p. 13). I have elsewhere called this racist, as the 'magical gloss of cultural difference' allows for just about any phenomenon in non-westernized contexts, whilst simultaneously banning the serious investigation of intuitive faculties 'closer to home', aligning these with religion, or even madness (Sepie 2016a).

Intuition, like the religious 'miracle', is generally considered an oddity or anomaly. We do have some words for it, such as second sight (or, 'the sight'), the sixth sense, clairvoyance, clairaudience, and others, however, these are considered as 'spiritual beliefs' and studied by scholars of religion. They are not necessarily considered to be *real*, but 'true for those who believe'. Interestingly, (as I have quietly tested for over twenty years), when there is little to no chance of such experiences being documented or publicly exposed, many westernized individuals will readily recall at least a few anecdotal accounts of foresight, sixth sense, direct insight, or verified intuition.

There are also countless ethnographic examples the world over that document in great detail case studies such as the one Rose explores, and plenty of Old Jimmy Manngaiyarri's who will explain clearly and directly how the 'tell' works. Jeremy Narby, in his work alongside Ashaninca communities in the Peruvian Amazon, was regularly confronted with the statement that local ecological knowledge came from the *ayahuasqueros*, or shamans, who said that their knowledge of plants came from the plants themselves. In his discussion of ayahuasca (the primary visionary botanical brew used by the *ayahuasqueros* in their role as healers and mediators with the spirit world), he notes that the very combination of the elements required for the brew is beyond 'rationality', as the westernized mind may conceive of it:

So here are people without electron microscopes who choose, among some 80,000 Amazonian plant species, the leaves of a bush containing a hallucinogenic brain hormone, which they combine with a vine containing substances that inactivate an enzyme of the digestive tract, which would otherwise block the hallucinogenic effect [. . .] and when one asks them how they know these things, they say their knowledge comes directly from the hallucinogenic plants (Narby 1999, p. 11).

Although the botanical knowledge of indigenous Amazonians astonishes scientists, there is no acceptable explanation beyond the assertion that their extensive knowledge must be acquired through 'trial and error'. The related claim, that ayahuasqueros acquire communications directly from the ayahuasca brew, detailing the rest of their extensive medicinal repertoire (equally as impressive), is just beyond the explanatory faculties of scientists. The discussion as to how their knowledge is acquired,

¹⁵ Authors such as the brilliant polymath, Lyall Watson, biologist Rupert Sheldrake, Stanley Krippner and others, have been detailing what might be thought of as extraordinary animal behaviors for some years now, whilst human equivalents are generally subsumed under the headings of 'culture' (non-Western), 'religion' (specifically non-Christian) or 'parapsychology' (not legitimate). (See Sheldrake 1991, 2011; Watson 1973, 1986, 1987; Webb 2013).

and how their medicine works, has been put aside in favor of the greater objective of appropriating 'shaman pharmaceuticals' for western doctors. Much of what is happening in these accounts comes down to understanding relationship, but not in the manner assumed by Narby's scientists.

Consider the explanation of Arola, who conveys a Native American, yet philosophical, position on 'knowing'. He writes that the only way to know what a bird *is* (for example), comes via understanding the web of relations in which it participates. It is in a *particular* place, at a *particular* time, and it plays a part in a structure of relations that is larger than the bird itself. 'Knowing' the bird is therefore dependent upon knowing its relation to the whole and yet, realizing that the relationship is fluid and thus, ever changing. In Arola's work:

An indigenous comportment . . . must perpetually attend to the fact that the manner in which what is shows itself will be multifarious and unpredictable. Any attempt to fully conceptualize how things will appear to us prior to our experience of them will place undue limits on the presencing of things (Arola 2011, p. 557).

In other words, any *predetermined* concept that an animal, a stone, or a storm cannot speak (or exhibit other features that do not 'match' their designation), can silence their 'tell'. In plain terms, you cannot learn from anyone or anything if you are not open to the possibility that it has the ability teach you.

A. Irving Hallowell [1960] (2002), an anthropologist who made the very first attempt to explain this in scholarship, was noted for using an Ojibwe example regarding an old man's account of the 'aliveness' of a stone, and his openness to regarding the stone as a potential teacher (for a contextual discussion of this, see Bird-David 1999). Arola writes that there is simply no distinction in a Native American worldview between natural and supernatural, animate and not. Hallowell's account did not necessarily mean the old man *had* spoken to a stone, just that he would not close off the possibility that such an interaction might teach him something. "If we approach the stone as an inanimate object in advance, assuming that it is nothing but a mute object that sits in front of us [. . .] we will never encounter a stone as anything more than such a mute object" (Arola 2011, p. 557). In this way of being, the same is true of mountains, rivers, and weather.

In the documentary film, *The Grammar of Happiness*, there is an extremely brief moment when the Pirahã men (in the Amazonia region) are hunting and listening to the monkeys, and one man asks another if he heard what they said (Everett 2008; O'Neill and Wood 2012). This was by no means a 'mystical' moment, but one scene in a documentary that had nothing to do with hearing and understanding the monkeys. For the Pirahã, this was an ordinary event, and it remains ordinary, provided we do not (as Arola warns) close down ontological possibility, which is the prerequisite for what can, and cannot, 'be' or exist.

Indigenous cosmologies (also called origin stories, or charter myths) generally leave room for considerably more ontological possibility than the dominant cosmological frameworks which continue to inform the processes of westernization. Cosmology sets the 'order' of things, quite literally, in predetermining the set of objects, events, and so forth, that are the terms of reference in the ontological, epistemological (knowledge), and axiological (value) schema of any cultural complex.

This may sound rather complex, but it is actually quite simple—if the creation story sets up certain conditions of possibility (consider God, Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, or the Big Bang onset of a material universe), then values and beliefs about what is possible and what can exist (atoms, genes, talking birds) flow on from this. In the Big Bang version of events, and the cascading narratives of earth's beginning that fill in the time between then, and now, at no point does an animal, nor a stone, talk. In a fundamentalist view of the Christian Bible, however, this happened, but only in a 'special place' (the Garden) and the animal was evil. Nor can you find an ancestral spirit speaking to you in a dream in either of these origin stories. So ontology, or what is possible/what can exist, is fixed by these stories.

In the complex we refer to as 'western', these stories are a mixture of scientific beliefs and Abrahamic religious ideas (with a very healthy substratum of pagan-Christian dogma regarding

the necessity of controlling errant spirits). These cosmological narratives ultimately inform what is 'allowed', and what is 'good' or 'useful' to believe or do. This worldview excludes everything being discussed herein, as it denies other species (and the more-than-human world) all potential for conscious interactions, personhood, and agency. The contrasts that can be drawn are stark.

All of these 'tells' are based, fundamentally, upon a core understanding of origin-in-the-sentient-land (earth as mother), on active attention to the kin relations for which we are responsible, and the other life forms with which we share a connection. Although they might be place-specific, origin in the land and kinship with a particular 'place' are not quite the same thing, in that land is the mother of connection to the *specific* places in which humans make home.

Rose (2013, pp. 102–3) notes a number of 'tells' that all depend upon paying attention—those that are visually or habitually cued (such as the march flies 'telling' that the crocodiles are laying their eggs), and those that rely on an internal sort of communication. Intuitive knowing, good listening, and familiarity with the landscape are all integral to 'figuring out the tell' that comes from a combination of connection, observation, and communications with other species. Usually this is called 'seeing', and 'hearing', rather than 'knowing', as such. Holmes and Jampijinpa (2013, n.p.) note *the land can talk to Warlpiri people*. This includes the nonverbal body language of Country.

Anthropologist Nurit Bird-David (1999), who has studied with the Nayaka peoples (of South India), describes their concept of kin, or relatives, as 'anyone whom we share with'. 'Sharing with' makes kin into persons. She also describes the Nayaka explanation of "talking with" other persons (in her example, trees) as something akin to 'attentiveness' to the variances (and invariance's) in the behavior, and responses, of those with whom the Nayaka are in relation. Seeing, hearing, talking, knowing, and other divisions, are collapsed in Nayaka ways of being, or perhaps not delineated in these discrete ways. Nayaka, indigenous Australian, First Nations and Native American descriptions all concur that intimate and useful knowledge comes from these sorts of relations.

There are also, importantly, reminders from indigenous scholars not to reify (or concretize) such experiences to appear as magical or purposeless mysticism. Cordova, for example, who was trained in the western philosophical tradition and 'studied white people' (as she put it), warned against divorcing pragmatism from the popular trope of the Native American who speaks to trees and birds and receives all knowledge from a spirit guide. She writes "If the American aboriginal peoples were truly of such a nature, they would never have survived. Embedded in the mythology, legends, and traditions, is a pragmatic core ... based on acute observation" (Cordova 2007, p. 213). In this defense against stereotyping Native Americans as 'mystics', Cordova might be misconstrued as suggesting a purely utilitarian connection with the more-than-human world, when in fact she eschews any such binary between myth and utility. Her perspective is inherently relational. Relationality, equally, collapses and disrupts privileged western categories of nature/culture and human/animal however this embedded ecological awareness is accompanied by responsibility, and what Cordova calls, *reverence*. Westernized people (beautifully phrased by Cordova as 'ghostly beings residing in decadent bodies on inanimate and alien ground) can, however, learn to be 'human' again (ibid).¹⁶

¹⁶ None of these scholars are advocating for a 'seeker' culture in which westernized peoples descend upon indigenous communities for guidance (or appropriate ceremony etc.), and nor are they proposing that there is something 'more intuitive' about indigenous peoples in general. Many of the traditional ways of being discussed in this paper are endangered and have been for some time, in other instances they have been almost entirely eradicated from a people or region, as have the languages that help sustain them. It is not the responsibility of indigenous elders, scholars, or communities to 'save' the westernized peoples of the world; rather, pedagogical responsibility for un-learning has been occurring through networks of transmission which venerate these life ways without reduction, or through appropriations which have not been gifted. It is the responsibility of each individual within one's own community to help one another 'get right' with the world, and to understand/teach how to have 'right relations'. Gifting is nonetheless a part of what the Haudenosaunee, and others, see as part of the remedy for decolonizing the westernized. For instance, David Mowaljarlai, senior Lawman of the Ngarinyin peoples of the west Kimberley, has said: "We are really sorry for you people. We cry for you because you haven't got meaning of culture in this country. We have a gift we want to give you. We keep getting blocked from giving you that gift [...] And it's the gift of pattern thinking. It's the culture which is the blood of this country, of Aboriginal groups, of the ecology, of the land itself [...] What we see is, all the white people that were born in this country and they are missing

Robert Wolff (2001), a psychologist and educator who has worked and lived in Indonesia and the Pacific Islands, writes of his experiences as follows:

For many years my work took me to many parts of Southeast Asia and the Pacific. I recorded and collected what I could of methods of healing and herbal medicines . . . It seemed that all such knowledge was being erased by our intolerance of other-ness. I was deeply saddened by what I believed was an irreparable loss. In our rush to create man-made chemicals, we rejected age-old knowledge of the riches of the earth that are freely available all around us. We invented machines, but ignored talents and abilities we must have in our very genes (p. 5).

Wolff recounts a story from time spent in Sumatra (in an aptly titled chapter called *Learning to Be Human Again*) about a walk he takes with a man called Ahmeed, when they came upon a snake in some bamboo (ibid, pp. 144–70). Ahmeed stops and motions, be silent—*no talking, stay still, quiet*. A large snake crawling along the ground crosses their path, maybe fourteen or more feet in length, uncommon in size and on the ground instead of a tree. Wolff, curious as to how Ahmeed knew the snake was there, questions him at length. All he would respond with, given the absolute lack of any signal from the snake prior to the encounter, was that he knew. He had neither seen, nor heard it, but he knew. The remainder of the chapter details how Wolff himself comes to learn how to pay attention, to find water, to hear the tell of a tiger (in Malay *'rimau*) and to recognize himself as a human in-relation to the knowledge and voices of the larger ecological unit in which he comes to recognize his connection to the whole. Once Ahmeed realizes the transformation that has taken place, he asks Wolff:

“Do you turn off the seeing?” Yes, I told him, I had to [. . .] “Good,” he said [. . .] “You are alone [. . .] It will be difficult for you to see because you do not have the village around you.” He used the word *kampong*, suggesting not only a settlement, but especially the extended social relationships of a village, or a Sng’oi settlement (ibid, pp. 166–67).

This example highlights one of the biggest obstacles to actualizing some of the wisdom and praxis described here. To embody Macy’s concept of the ecological self would be a necessary first step towards feeling less isolated, and heal the ‘breach’ that Graham mentioned in her description of an indigenous Australian worldview.¹⁷ A necessary second step would be for westernized peoples to adopt a systems view of what is referred to as ‘consciousness,’ in conceiving of the spaces-between-people as being *full* of communications and relationships, and our human selves as potential receivers to those communications.¹⁸

I, like many others, was not taught how to be in-relation-with the ‘pattern that connects’—as Gregory Bateson (1991) famously phrased it—with the world around me, with other humans, and with other species. I was born *already colonized*. I descend from a variety of variously hued migrants without a clear blood memory or place to which I might *whakapapa*—to use a genealogical word borrowed

the things that came from us mob, and we want to try and share it. And the people were born in this country, in the law country, from all these sacred places in the earth. And they were born on top of that. And that, we call *wungud*—very precious. That is where their spirit come from. That’s why we can’t divide one another, we want to share our gift, that everybody is belonging, we want to share together in the future for other generations to live on. You know? That’s why it’s very important” (ABC Radio 1995).

¹⁷ There are a number of initiatives in this area (called nature-connection modeling) which have emerged in the last fifteen years. In addition to the long-term work of Joanna Macy (Macy 2007, 2013; Macy and Brown 1998; Macy and Johnstone 2012) it is instructive to look at the work of Jon Young (Young 2016; Young and Gardoqui 2012) as supported through his work with Native American and San communities in Botswana, and by Richard Louv (2005, 2011) and Darcia Narváez (2014, 2016a, 2016b).

¹⁸ This perspective is sustained by philosophy of consciousness researchers who pursue non-local ideas of consciousness, as supported by quantum physicists such as Amit Goswami (Goswami 2000, 2008, 2011; Goswami et al. 1993), David Bohm (Bohm 1994, 2002; Bohm and Edwards 1991; Bohm and Hiley 1993; Bohm and Peat 2000), F. David Peat (Briggs and Peat 1984, 1999; Buckley and Peat 1996; Peat 1994, 2000), and others. Unlike the old scientific view of consciousness as localized to individual minds, this view is consistent with the inherent principle of non-locality within indigenous and traditional cosmologies in numerous communities, throughout the world.

from the indigenous nations of my country.¹⁹ I have no such word that can mean anything close to the same thing and the English language is all I know. The processes of colonization have converted and distorted all histories that might have aided me in knowing to whom, and to where, I belong. I know only that I lack any ancestral memory of a relationship with place, and have no knowledge of how to find, nor kill, nor be respectful toward, my own food.

I can attest, however, to the idea that it is possible for us to become aware of what we are being 'told,' and that we can learn, despite familial, social, or geographical disadvantages, to do this in modest ways. There is a *difference* between the chattering of my mind (in Abram's opinion, enhanced by literary culture), and the arrival of intuitive knowings or intuitive experiences with more-than-human nature as a component of waking consciousness. This confirms (to me) that we can begin from where we are, learn to pay attention to the conscious web of relations, and trust those intuitive moments that happen when we recognize what it really means to be a human, born on the earth, who is *also*, animal. We are not (as dictated by the fantasy of human exceptionalism) somehow *more* human according to the degree we move away from nature, but *less* human by way of this presumption.

7. Conclusions

Somewhat prophetically, Luc Ferry (1995) wrote that either ecology or barbarism would be the 'slogan of this century'. A barbarian, according to the ancient Egyptians, Chinese, and Greeks, is a term of reference for *those who did not know the language* (Nicholson 1999). Perhaps he was not referring directly to the language of the earth (or Rose's 'earth' words), and yet it would seem that this is precisely where we are 'at'. If we do not know the language personally, then we should be open to learning from those who do.

Trans-species psychologist, Gay Bradshaw (2013), in a memorable essay on ecological relations, wrote that the greatest myth is that we are all disconnected from the natural world: we are not and have *never been* disconnected, despite the sometimes overwhelming feeling that we are. She states that to imagine so is artificial, and it is a distortion that minds *can* be separate from nature:

[The] present planetary state that we wish to heal has been achieved by *denying connection*. Western society's false sense of separation has led to ethical distancing and legitimized an existence of psychological dissociation, normal [. . .] Now when learning of Harp seal mothers who have no ice on which to give birth and garbage islands the size of states floating in the Pacific Ocean, we understand that their plight is intimately connected to the hand that tosses away the plastic bag (p. 134).

I could add to this the insight that if we are (and have always been) connected, then it must follow that the character of our societies are a reflection of the *quality* of those connections, or lack thereof. If Bradshaw, Macy, Abram, and others are right, then we must become *aware of biospheric sentience* to mitigate the precariousness of our current situation, "given our age-old reciprocity with the many-voiced landscape" (Abram 1996, p. ix). I concur with these ecologically-oriented thinkers, and a multitude of global indigenous voices, in their assessments of our current global socio-ecological problems, and I agree with their conclusions that the continuance of our species and others relied upon immediate correctives to these errors in worldview.

It is possible, as suggested by the novelist, Amitav Ghosh (2016, para. 8.8), that 'the urgent proximity of non-human presences' in the Anthropocene are *forcing* a kind of recognition upon us. He asks:

¹⁹ *Whakapapa* is a Māori term that is used to refer to kinship ties, as both a noun (my whakapapa, or family tree) and a verb or process (as in, I whakapapa to that river). In Aotearoa New Zealand (unlike many other countries) indigenous words and concepts are used cross-culturally, with respect, as recognition of indigenous sovereign status despite on-going Crown ownership, and as recognition of *tangata whenua*, which refers to Māori ancestral and contemporary traditional guardianship of the land. Furthermore, the use of Te Reo Māori is a national language, and is encouraged and taught in schools. The adoption of appropriate words, such as the use of Māori greetings, is not considered to be cultural appropriation.

Can the timing of this recognition be mere coincidence, or is the synchronicity and indication that there are entities in the world, like forests, that are fully capable of inserting themselves into our processes of thought? And if that were so, could it not be *also* said that the earth has itself intervened to revise those habits of thought that are based on the Cartesian dualism that arrogates all intelligence and agency to the human while denying them to every other kind of being? (ibid, para. 14.8).

Perhaps, if we might set aside our ‘enchantment with how clever we think we are’²⁰ and how far we have supposedly come as a species, there may yet be a chance in what is being called the era of the ‘sixth extinction’. Hope is as important as action. Presently, myths, including those upon which contemporary religious lives are founded, are often conceptualized as important only in fictional, or developmentally immature terms (meaning what we believe in before we ‘grow up’ to accept the material realities of a naturalistic world). As such, appeals to intuition or nonlocal ways of knowing, and the possibility of sentience and intelligence in more-than-human beings (such as animals) are far outside the parameters of what is generally considered as possible. Yet my own beloved tomes of myths, legends, and fables now reside adjacent to rich ethnographies with which they have an extraordinary amount in common. Both afford glimpses into worlds in which animals have a ‘voice’ (as even Aristotle claimed), in which what we may be encouraged to deride as ‘magical thinking’ simply indexes a different way of living in the world; one in which animals are people and humans are just another kind of animal. These modern ethnographies are literally crawling with more-than-human life. Microbial ecologies—on us, in us, all around us—and the numerous plant and animal agencies that were once unfathomable except within the realms of storytelling or myth, are being gradually ‘awakened’ to. Do these life-forms *also* have ‘tells’? Presumably, they do.

Decolonization, as a mode of engagement, involves far more than just ethnographic exploration. As a method, to decolonize is to interrogate all cultural, religious, and scientific content that is a part of westernization and assess these elements in terms of their contemporary utility. In other words, what is their *usefulness*? What is good and useful to know, and what is not? Determining utility can be differently rendered in relation to different ethical objectives, so what ethical objectives do we *now* wish to pursue? These are questions that are still being negotiated, and are a necessary precursor to determining the most efficient and effective actions in response to the socio-ecological demands of the present time.

The objective of decolonization, as a global project, is to reassess our collective, diverse, cosmological assumptions with respect to all our relationships, in a manner that allows for the reconfiguring of the dominant perceptions of humanity, and recalibrates human relations with otherness of all kinds. If decolonization is ultimately oriented towards improved human-to-human and human-to-earth relations as the initial goal (if decolonization is thought of as *relational* and *processual*), an increased awareness of connection with the wider multispecies environments within which we are all embedded must involve caring for it. Conservation follows connection (see [Young 2016](#); [Young and Gardoqui 2012](#)).

If westernized peoples remain afraid and isolated, perceiving of other humans as a threat, then altruistic communal behaviors (following Wilson) are likely to remain idealistic goals. Rebuilding communities, by any means possible, is therefore of critical importance (see [Cajete 2015](#); [Wahl 2016](#)). [Cordova \(2007, p. 213\)](#) wrote that it was ‘unrealistic’ to expect people to give up their time-honored view of human superiority, trapped (as they are) in ‘mundane’ bodies in a ‘hostile’ environment. Conversely, I think decolonization offers a way out of this chronic state of alienated insecurity. Decolonization may be a way to find a crossing into another way of being in the world, and perhaps one which still exists under the convincing artificiality of westernized cities, structures, families, and selves.

²⁰ This is paraphrased from a song lyric from *Saltwater* (1991) by Julian Lennon: “We light the deepest ocean, Send photographs of Mars, We’re so enchanted by how clever we are . . . ” ([Lennon 1991](#)).

The Yu'pik (real people) of south-central Alaska say that the separation of the 'outsiders' (or the westernized peoples) from nature is 'too complete'; that the colonizers are 'the people who change nature' (Lopez 2001, para. 9.67). Through this on-going colonization, the world has been turned upside down, and those who 'take the fat' (an Alaskan First Nations term) have nearly destroyed entire collectives of people who have kept the wisdom of how to live on earth, *safe*. We cannot change this history, but responsible, respectful, and restorative practices may be able to reverse some of the damages to people and their communities, to other species, and to the planet we share.

The oft-cited idea of the 'seventh generation' ethic, a gloss from popular representations of Native American thinking, has at its centre a revelation as to where we might find a beginning. The worldview of many indigenous and traditionally living peoples the world over *includes* westernized people in conceiving of a collective human future. Very recently, in the media coverage of the Standing Rock Sioux occupation for water protection, the people gathered stated outright that they are also protecting the future of the children and grandchildren of the police, the army personnel, and the population of the US in general. This type of statement surfaced several times.

In light of this, I suggest that the world's populations defer to the indigenous, traditional, and ecologically-centered visions of leadership and suggestions for change which already exist, and have done for some time.²¹ Some of these suggestions are grounded in technology, engineering, and the wider sciences, repurposed to ecological goals, such as many of the solutions emerging from the *Bioneers*. Some are much older, and are literally grounded in place, tradition, and history. Both paths are needed, however, as directed by those who are *already* including the river, the wolves, the food, fire, and future generations in their sense of 'self'. As this paper has argued, there is wisdom there if only we might learn to hear it.

In closing, it is perhaps good to think with a concept from Bawaka Country and apply it to what lies ahead. In Yolŋu mathematics (the word Yolŋu have chosen to represent their technical systems of reckoning),²² there is a concept of *Gänma*, which is where the salt water and the fresh water meet.

As the fresh water comes off and out of the land and sky, it meets the salt water of the sea. There is a mixing, a meeting and mingling, that brings difference together without erasing it. *Gänma* thus means new life and new ideas. It evokes knowledges coming together. There is power and knowledge with two waters mixing . . . *gänma* has to be actually be two ways. Western knowledges too need to learn . . . people are not separated from nature. The earth is not separated from the sky. Songs and stories are not separated from people and objects. All these things exist as part of one another and come into being together . . . [as Lalak Burarrwanga explains] . . . you have to start from the place—whoever, whatever clan you are you start from your own land. And then you sing what's there in the land (Lloyd et al. 2016, n.p.).

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²¹ As many indigenous elders, scholars, activists, and communities have strongly advocated for indigenous leadership, especially regarding ecological issues, and will readily draw parallels between their own traditions and other indigenous traditions around the world, I offer this paper with due respect and support for this initiative.

²² "Yolŋu mathematics, like Western mathematics, is the science of patterns, groups, relationships, rhythms and space [. . .] it has to be linked to place" (Lloyd et al. 2016, n.p.).

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Article

Narrating Entanglement: Cixous' "Stigmata, or Job the Dog"

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Abstract: Cixous' "Stigmata, or Job the Dog" sits at the intersection of animal studies, autobiography, narrative voice, and philosophy. In this essay, I focus on narrative voice and trace its shifts—from human to entangled to animal. At the heart of this essay rest questions about what epistemological shifts are necessary vis-à-vis literature, such that an animal "voice" can be heard as a narrative voice. What would constitute a non-anthropocentric autobiography? What would constitute one narrated by, in this instance, an animal, specifically, a dog? In answering these questions, this essay at once grapples with philosophical-theoretical paradigms, with animal studies, with literary genre studies, and especially autobiography, and with narrative voice. I explore these questions with the aim of contributing to what Derrida has called zoopoetics and particularly to the study of non-anthropocentric autobiography.

Keywords: autobiography; genre; narratology; narrative voice; human; animal; anthropocentrism; entanglement; Cixous; dogs; zoopoetics

1. Introduction

Animals traverse the landscape of Hélène Cixous' writing. They include cats in *Messie* (1996); chickens and a three-legged dog in *Le jour où je n'étais pas là* (2000); the pigeon and the dog in *Les rêveries de la femme sauvage: Scènes primitives* (2000); the ox in "Bathsheba or the Interior Bible", the lamb and the wolf in "Love of the Wolf", the birds, especially the stork in "Unmasked!" and the donkey in "Writing Blind: Conversation with a Donkey" in *Stigmata: Escaping Texts* (1998). While the animals assume different shades of meaning depending on their specific context within the trajectory of Cixous' oeuvre, they consistently put forward questions about borders, about difference, and about alterity.

Cixous opens the section of *Stigmata* titled "From My Menagerie to Philosophy" by grappling with the difference between human and animal ethics. In that first chapter titled "Shared at Dawn", Cixous wakes up and discovers what she presumes to be a dead bird stuck in the outside of the latticework of her apartment's balcony (Cixous 1998b). Yet, she realizes, through the cat's pounce, that the bird is both not dead and not on the outside but on the inside of the latticework, and hence balcony. She puzzles over what to do: "I cannot separate the two without getting cruel" (Cixous 1998b, p. 177). That is, her wishes conflict with those of her cat, Thea's (those of the bird go unmentioned until the end. But Cixous is implicitly aligned with them). Ian Blyth and Susan Sellers, in their study of Cixous' writings, describe the scene, quoting from Cixous' texts, as follows:

Although she [Cixous] 'recognizes the rights animals have among themselves' (p. 178), as a human, Cixous still instinctually intervenes when the dead bird suddenly comes to life in her hands. Not wanting 'something to die in my house' (p. 178), she catches the bird and releases it out of the window. However, in doing this, she is faced with the anguish and 'sorrow' of Thea (p. 179), who searches in vain all day for the now missing bird. Cixous realizes that, in acting as a human, she has 'betrayed' her cat (p. 179).

This realization leads her into the position of imagining herself in Thea's place, behaving as Thea would do, becoming genuinely other. (Blyth and Sellers 2004, p. 65)

What would it mean to imagine the world from the vantage-point of the animal, in this instance, the cat? What would telling the story of the overlooked reveal?

In what follows, I examine Cixous' autobiographical essay, "Stigmata, or Job the Dog", focusing on the vantage point of the dog and delineating the experience of the borders articulated (Cixous 1998a). In so doing, I consider how this story aims to present or to narrate from a non-anthropocentric point-of-view. How, in other words, does this story and Cixous' writing suggest, as Cecilia Novero put it in an analysis of a dog in Kleist's "Beggar Woman of Locarno", a reading that is attuned to an alternative "cognitive mapping of the world" (Novero 2015, p. 492)? As Cixous states it towards the beginning of the story: "At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this mydog [not sic] was something else, that he *was*, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is" (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). In other words, what is being dog and how does Cixous' story narrate it?

2. Fips the Dog

In her autobiographical essay, "Stigmata, or Job the Dog", Cixous tells the tale of the dog, Fips, she had as a young child. More specifically, she shares how Fips experiences the effects of borders created by nation-states, colonization, race, class, and religious beliefs, which are incomprehensible to the animal. The story takes place in Algiers, Algeria, in a predominantly Algerian and Muslim neighborhood, that is, not in the part of town in which most of the French colonizers resided. Cixous' father was a physician and a humanitarian, who chose to live in the rather destitute neighborhood, in order to be able to offer his services to the area's residents. "The Arabs", Cixous tells us, read her family as French, that is, as colonizers. "Arab", she writes "is what one said at the time, though it was in no way the appropriate word, no one said Algerian, but rather Arab without any distinction. The Arabs. The word Arab belonged to French colonization" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). She delineates the borders circumscribing relations or relating.

This reading of her family as French, she states, was "an absolute misreading" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). For her, this reading compounds the fact that her family had just, as she puts it, "re-become" French after the Nazi era and World War II: "as Jews during the war [World War II and the Nazi occupation of France] we were thrown out of French nationality, we became nothing" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). In other words, as a French Jew and as humanitarians, she and her family did not really identify as only French or with the French colonizers in Algeria. Additionally, she tells us that her family was originally Spanish on her father's side and German on her mother's side. "But the history of nationalities had in turn made us French, de-French and re-French, and we were Jewish. Yet we did not identify with any nationality. For the Arabs this jewfrenchness was a double original sin" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Cixous' identity thus de-stabilizes a whole range of borders—ones created by colonization, by wars, and by nation-states, and ones suggesting differences of nationality, race, class, and religion. Cixous shows us, however, how slippery the borders are between each of these categories: she sometimes fell into more than one or no category or slipped from one to the next and back or on (re-French). And as humanitarians, her father and family overstepped and overlooked boundaries determined by race and nationality and class and religion to emphasize humanitarian aid for well-being and health instead.

Fips, Cixous' dog, bears the brunt of these confusing border crossings. As long as her father is alive, her family's presence is tolerated in this neighborhood. As soon as he dies, discord ensues. Neighboring residents begin to pelt their house with rocks: "It was then that from outside the garden the hunt was unleashed against us. Our Arab neighbors encircled us in a daily siege" (Cixous 1998a,

p. 189).¹ Fips was kept on a chain outside the house, so that he would not attack any attackers. “Ten times a day”, Cixous tells us, “there rained on the family a hail of stones. In no time, the volleys that wounded our spirit made Fips into a mad dog” (Cixous 1998a, p. 189). As a result of the daily barrage, Fips reacted, not understanding the religious, political, and colonial sources of these tensions.²

The figure of Fips thus pushes to the forefront all the categories and borders that humans establish for themselves, which he does not understand.³ Fips reveals what I have called elsewhere the animality of humans.⁴ That is, these categories at once classify and organize peoples by nation, by religion, by race, by border. But these categories also lead to the very violence brought about by their delimitations. In other words, as Novero puts it, “[it is] the landscape of human devastation that is the product of anthropomorphic insight” (Novero 2015, p. 492), referring to human speciesist claims or perspectives. Or, as Bowker and Star argue in *Sorting Things Out*, “To Classify Is Human”.

In this essay, I examine Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” and how his narrative voice, if one can call it that, reveals human-animal entanglement.⁵ In so doing, the tale contributes a multispecies narrative to the field of eco- or zoopoetics. Cixous’ essay and my analysis consider what might constitute a non-anthropocentric⁶ or animal autobiography.⁷ As such, it contributes to the Anthropocene-induced need to rethink epistemological and literary frameworks: the borders or genres, and their defining conventions, such as narrative voice for autobiography.⁸ In order to capture the *multispecies* narrative, rather than say, a cyno-narrative, the notion of sympoesis, drawing on Donna Haraway, who has proposed it in conjunction with “Sympoesis: Becoming-With in Multispecies Muddles”, will be critical. That is, this re-framing would entail a very constitutive shift in how we define being—as entangled, as multispecies, as a muddle—and would be celebratory of this entanglement or of this becoming with and of this muddle.

3. Animal History—Human History: Autobiography of a Dog⁹

Cixous describes “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” as “an autobiographical narrative” (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Yet whose autobiography is it? And what constitutes an autobiography? “Stigmata” begins, she states, with a *felix culpa* (blessèd wound), which will play a key role later in the text, hence the title “Stigmata”. The term, she states, comes to us from St. Augustine: she references his *Confessions*, while the term originally appeared in his *Enchiridion*. St. Augustine is, of course, a border crosser extraordinaire, as his *Confessions* reveals. The son of a pagan (who converted to Christianity on his deathbed) and a Christian, he became one of the Church Fathers of early western Christianity. He was

¹ See previous page for Cixous’ reasons for her use of the term.

² Fips’ behavior is narrated by Cixous and his behavior is narrated as a response to these borders.

³ Dogs are, of course, territorial and thus protect a different array of borders. But these borders are not the ones on which Cixous focuses in this essay.

⁴ By contrast, Cixous’ term humanimity or humanimal considers the fluid border between the human and the animal. Marta Segarra, Hélène Cixous’ Other Animal: The Half-Sunken Dog, “Hélène Cixous: When the Word Is a Stage,” Special issue of *New Literary History* 37.1 (Winter 2006): 119–34. See also the work of philosopher Cora Diamond.

⁵ Although I am aware of the terms “nonhuman animals” and “human animals”, I will use the terms “animals” and “humans” throughout this essay.

⁶ Anthropocentrism is, of course, the focus on the human, e.g., in discussions related to the Anthropocene, the “Anthro” names that humans created climate change, which will leave a trace in the geologic record (“cene”). This human-centered viewpoint is being challenged in discussions beyond the focus on climate change, to which this article aims to contribute. As Margaret Ronda put it: “We might see *anthropos* and its related term *anthropogenic*, then, as words that speak to the non-identity and internal estrangement that accompany this species-wide agency” (Rigby 2016, p. 103).

⁷ On animal autobiographies, see also (Colombat 1994; Dwyer 2015; Herman 2016; Huff and Haefner 2012; Middelhoff 2017).

⁸ On this pivotal shift, see also (Braidotti 2009, pp. 526–32; 2006, pp. 197–208).

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno, in his 1932 lecture “Die Idee der Natur-Geschichte” proposed the use of the hyphen between *Natur* (nature) and *Geschichte* (history) to underscore how each informed the other: how nature cannot be thought without (human) history and (human) history cannot be thought without nature. Or, as he puts it in *Negative Dialectics*: “It would be up to thought to see all nature [...] as history, and all history as nature” Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialektik, Gesammelte Schriften*, ed. Rolf Tiedemann, vol. 6 (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1997) 353. *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Seabury, 1973) 359. (Adorno 1997, vol. 6, p. 353; 1973, p. 359). I use the hyphen here, in human-animal, to suggest a similar relationship or to put the human and animal into a configuration or relationship with one another.

born in Thagaste, Numidia, present-day Algeria and then part of the Roman Empire. Despite his Berber heritage, his family was Romanized and spoke only Latin at home.

In mistakenly stating that the term *felix culpa* appears in St. Augustine's *Confessions*, rather than his *Enchiridion*, Cixous refers back to or re-inscribes her text into a genealogy of the genre of autobiography. "It is an autobiographical narrative, which does not mean very much, because an autobiographical narrative is at the same time a creation" (Cixous 1998a, p. 183). Cixous dwells on the genre, and what unfolds appears to offer a rumination about animal and human autobiographies, and on the place of narrative voice in both.

Cixous focuses on the wound referred to in the term *felix culpa*, considering its appearance in Joyce, Proust (buried), Genet (founding secret), and, quoting Genet, in Rembrandt. She thinks, at first, it might be very "Catholic" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Then, "as it became visible in [Derrida's] 'Circonfession'", she revises this assessment and states "it wasn't Catholic. This text is about circumcision, a wound inflicted on someone who is not present at the scene of his own mutilation" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Of course, the person is present at the infliction of the wound. They are (and are) not cognizant or aware of the wound being inflicted. As "Stigmata" reveals by its end, it, too, is about a wound inflicted and about not being fully cognizant of what it bespeaks. As I argue in what follows, the wound in Cixous' essay, in essence, expresses the human inability to hear, see, or think a non-anthropocentric narrative.

Cixous continues on wondering: "is the fertile wound [. . .] part of the masculine phantasmal makeup? And is there anything analogous in women's texts? What about my own relation to the inscription on the body of psychomythical events? I wrote a text called *Stigmata*, or *Job the dog*. Or else *The Origin of my Philosophy*. Or else *First Symptoms of Writing*. Or *The Opening of the Mouth*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). In his foreword to *Stigmata*, Derrida writes: "I hear it as a blessing of the *blesure*, a great poetic treatise on the scar at the origin of literary writing" (Cixous 1998a, p. ix). If this is so, what is this scar or wound at the origin of literary writing? I will come back to her question about the wound and its appearance in "Stigmata" in a moment.

First, let us return to the borders. This vexing topic rears its head in many forms across Cixous' oeuvre. In "The School of Roots", she discusses borders, grappling first with the not un-related topic of assemblings and matter (Cixous 1993, p. 128). "When I began to read Clarice [Lispector,] I was enchanted by a tiny sentence in *The Stream of Life* that asked: 'And the turtles?' This is her oriflamme. The forgotten of the forgotten" (Cixous 1993, p. 130). For Cixous, the oriflamme or rallying point in the struggle, is the thing overlooked, the thing forgotten. "What would the two natures be for Clarice?" (Cixous 1993, p. 130), Cixous muses:

"The first, the one I loved deeply, is the extraction from the repressed of what we are made of, i.e., *matter*. Clarice Lispector brings back more than the turtles to our feeble memories—because we notice tortoises from time to time; she returns the ability not to forget *matter*, which we don't notice: which we live, which we are. Clarice descends the ladder to the point of returning to think over matter. We are unable to think matter because we consider it to be invisible. We are made of assemblings that hide their truth, their atomic side, from us. We dislike matter, that is, ourselves, because we are destined to matter, because anonymous matter is called: death. (Cixous 1993, p. 130)

This matter. We dislike matter. We are unable to think matter. We consider it to be invisible. Donna Haraway, in her ground-breaking study, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* argues: "It matters what matters we use to think other matters with: it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with" (Haraway 2016, p. 12). The two natures for Clarice in *The Stream of Life* might be the very matter of bringing the turtles and our disregard for matter and our assemblings as Cixous puts it, that is, our entanglement, back into the conversation.

The entanglements of human-animal suggest a need to shift how we perceive, think, and write entanglements. On the writ large, Timothy Morton states in *Hyperobjects* that in this new age of the Anthropocene, which is new historically and geologically, "we are no longer able to think history

as exclusively human [. . .] The thinking style (and thus the writing style) that this turn of events necessitates is one in which the normal certainties are inverted or even dissolved" (Morton 2013, p. 5). Morton argues that this non-anthropocentric thinking demands a geo-philosophy, a model put forward by Gasché, that is, one that puts earth thinking at its center (Morton 2013; Gasché 2014). On the entanglements, Haraway continues: "human beings [. . .] often forget how they themselves are rendered capable by and with both things and living beings" (Haraway 2016, p. 16). Doing so, she writes would mean "to re-member, to com-memorate" (Haraway 2016, p. 25). So, it would lead to a shift in thinking and remembering, a re-membering or com-memorating or restoration of beings to the web or configuration, and a return of their voice.¹⁰

Returning to Cixous' questions posed at the outset of "Stigmata" in her preamble to the tale of Fips, about whether the wound is Catholic or "part of the masculine phantasmal makeup", the wound articulates borders and, more so, border crossings, and also marks the intersection of the human and the animal and bespeaks the attempt at an animal narration. She wonders about her text, "called *Stigmata*, or *Job the dog*", which she writes could also be titled "*The Origin of my Philosophy*. Or else, *First Symptoms of Writing*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182). Indeed, the origin of philosophy, is, de facto, if one shifts to a geo-philosophical lens, following Gasché, one that com-memorates entanglement. Cixous writes it could also be entitled: "*The Opening of the Mouth*" (Cixous 1998a, p. 182): who speaks, who narrates? And who speaks about whom? Or who narrates whom? Or, most provocatively, who narrates with what awareness of and acknowledgment of entanglement?

4. Writing from the Wound—Entanglement

While Cixous' dog Fips experiences a barrage of abuse mentioned at the outset as a result of human constructed borders, Cixous regards him with admiration and shame. "I marvel, my heart is loaded with a bitter joy and with shame, and I admire this dog, with the humility that in the past I was never able to feel, because a sacred terror prevented me" (Cixous 1998a, p. 184). A marveling, a shame, a humility, a sacred terror, invoking, thusly put, the Kantian sublime, and yet she continues reworking that idealist model by disavowing any universal law. "The manifestation of Fips", Cixous continues, "is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement" (Cixous 1998a, p. 184). Paul De Man had written about "the giving and taking away of faces, with face and deface, *figure*, figuration and disfiguration" vis-à-vis autobiography in "Autobiography of Defacement" (De Man 1979, p. 926). In this essay, De Man considers prosopopoeia vis-à-vis a stone. Following De Man's description, more recently Margaret Ronda has analyzed the importance of giving a face or a voice to a figure in anthropogenic poetics (Ronda 2014, p. 104).¹¹ Cixous' recognition that Fips "is the proof that there is no universal or absolute law of effacement" challenges at once idealist philosophical models but also anthropocentric autobiographical models. Cixous continues, returning to the topic mentioned at the outset of borders. She recognizes Fips' desire to cross the borders:

Fips, you wanted so much to cross, all your forms outstretched every day to try to pass through, to shatter the walls, you wanted to break the prisons, lacerate the skins, your soul called for deliverance, never have I seen a being in such furious rebellion against the ancient fates that fix our bounds right from birth, the polices, the stupidity, *les bêtises* that have debasing powers over every creature who goes beyond. (Cixous 1998a, pp. 184–85)

¹⁰ Of course, voice is often thought to related to humans as speakers of a human language. Yet this fact does not disavow the possibility of an animal voice. On this issue, see also Kári Driscoll, "An Unheard, Inhuman Music: Narrative Voice and the Question of the Animal in Kafka's 'Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk,'" *Animal Narratology*, edited by Joela Jacobs, a special issue of *Humanities* 6.2, 26 (2017).

¹¹ For a more detailed analysis of the importance of the face, figure, and figuration, vis-à-vis anthropogenic poetics, read together with Bruno Latour's *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (2013), see also Margaret Ronda, "Anthropogenic Poetics," *Writing on the Anthropocene*, edited by Tobias and Kate Marshall, special issue of *Minnesota Review* 83 (2014): 102–11.

She recognizes his desire to cross *human* borders, the ones fixed from birth. And as the text mentions, she recognizes that these borders are “debasement”. They reduce “every creature”. Despite her expansion of the creatures impacted by borders to encompass “every creature”, what borders are experienced and how of course differs between humans and animals. But as argued in the opening section of “Stigmata” (Cixous 1998a, pp. 183–84), Cixous’ essay pinpoints the animality of humans.

Then, the text shifts: Cixous’ continues her first person point-of-view but states that Fips “is the innocent author of the signatures that inaugurated my book on my feet and my hands” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The narrative point of view is, in other words, entangled. Who is the author? Who is speaking? Here, Cixous’ essay recalls the entangled text in E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *The Life and Opinions of the Tomcat Murr*, which consists of the autobiography of the Tomcat Murr spliced together with a biography of composer Johannes Kreisler (Hoffmann 1999). In this satirical novel, slow and subtle transitions take place, too. At first, the narrative seems to shift back and forth between the two texts. Even when sentences are abruptly interrupted at a chapter’s end, and the other narrative voice continues in a new chapter, the narrative strands and voices are distinct and clear. Eventually, however, the sentences from one narrative become entangled with and flow into those of the other: a sentence left dangling at the end of one narrative (voice) and chapter is seamlessly picked up and continued in the other narrative voice and next chapter, grammar intact. A coincidence? It leads the reader to re-read, to wonder where one begins and the other ends. Entanglements abound: of genres, of human and of animal, and of narrative voices.

In previous autobiographical narratives Cixous had split the narrative voice. In *Le Livre de Promethea*, as Blyth and Sellers write, Cixous “splits her writing self in two [. . .] Consequently, there are not one, but two narrators in *Promethea*: ‘I’ and ‘H’” (Blyth and Sellers 2004, pp. 47–48). As Blyth and Sellers put it, “This destabilizes the very foundations of autobiography, a genre of writing which relies on the uniqueness of the writing I for its definition” (Blyth and Sellers 2004, p. 47). The hallmarks of autobiography typically include: (1) a first-person narrative; (2) a chronology of life events written and narrated retrospectively, generally late in life; and, (3) by a prominent person. Countless writers and works have, of course, thwarted each of these conventions. Gertrude Stein wrote *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, her partner. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* was told to Alex Haley. And David Eggers’ autobiography, *A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius*, was written when he was thirty and brought him to prominence.¹² As to the first person narrator, as Philippe Lejeune wrote, “In order for there to be autobiography (and personal literature in general), the *author*, the *narrator* and the *protagonist* must be identical” (Lejeune 1989, p. 5). But in Cixous’ “Stigmata”, an entanglement of human and animal and thus of narrative voice appears.

The entanglement of human and animal constitutes the second section of “Stigmata” (Cixous 1998a, pp. 185–86). To be sure, it is a physical entanglement. “I have his teeth and his rage, painted on my left foot and on my hands”, Cixous writes, “I never think about it, because the little mute lips of the wounds have traveled, what remains of them on my feet and my hands is only an insensible embossment, the marks of the cries are lodged on the sensitive very sensitive membranes of my brain. I have that dog in my skull, like an unrecognizable twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The focus is not on one or the other but on both human and animal, Cixous and Fips.¹³ This physical tangle forms the transition or shift of the second section.

The essay is, in other words, not solely about what would constitute an animal autobiography but a *multi-species* narrative (meaning here the human and the animal). Philosopher Vinciane Despret

¹² I am engaging neither fictional autobiographies nor biographies in this essay. And truthiness is a slippery subject anyways or not an absolute category. On the slipperiness of the autobiography genre in the early 21st-century, see also Nancy K. Miller, “The Entangled Self: Genre Bondage in the Age of the Memoir,” *PMLA* 122.2 (March 2007): 537–48 (Miller 2007).

¹³ For more about “the ontological and generic hybridization” of animal autobiographies, see also David Herman, “Animal Autobiography: Or, Narration beyond the Human,” *Animal Narratology*, Ed. Joela Jacobs, special issue of *Humanities* 6.2 (2017).

writes of this relationship: “What is commemorated, then, is not the animal alone but the activation of two ‘becomings-with’” (Despret 2013, p. 15). Multi-species ethnographies might be useful for thinking about what would constitute a non-anthropogenic *autobiography* (Kohn 2007; Rose 1992). As mentioned, Cixous had previously written with more than one narrative voice in *The Book of Promethea*. Susan Sellers, focusing on Cixous’ autobiographies, calls this “Writing with the Voice of the Other” (Sellers 1996, p. 55).

Cixous’ narrative voice in section two, as it had done in her aforementioned autobiographical writings, shifts. “You who know my bursts of rage, the sudden moments when the door of my calm opens to give way to a very ancient furor, you do not know that then I am Fips”, Cixous writes, continuing “I leap out of myself called by his gallop that hoped to pass in a prodigious bound over the spikes of the portal, barking I follow his hope” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). She is Fips. She leaps out of herself. She begins to bark, to adopt his (narrative) voice. She follows his hope. An intertextual reference point appears here: Derrida’s subsequent *L’Animal donc je suis*, where he plays on the double entendre of *suis*, meaning both “to be” (*être*) and “to follow” (*suivre*) (Derrida 2002; Derrida 2008). Thus, the animal that both Derrida, and here Cixous, is and follows.

Cixous follows Fips’ hope. What is this hope especially for a recognition of the entanglement? It seems to be more or rather something else. Fips, she writes, “invented invisible wings for himself, [. . .] belying the envelope that made him small and dog” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). The envelope? The category? That labeled him dog? That made him small. That rendered him mute. Not audible. Not heard. The envelope. In other words: The human construct, also responsible for the borders and the walls mentioned previously. Fips manages to lift himself out of the envelope, out of these human boxes or categories.

An opening appears in the text, through the wound, through the mutual recognition. An opening. A responsibility. A response-ability, as Haraway puts it. That is, responsibility entails the ability *and* the obligation to respond. “Response-ability”, she writes, “is about both absence and presence, killing and nurturing, living and dying—and remembering who lives and who dies and how in the [. . .] naturalcultural history” (Haraway 2016, p. 28). This exchange is one of edification: “All that I manage to think today”, writes Cixous, “I learned from him without knowing that I was and would be his disciple while we lived tempestuously together” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). But it is also about suffering, about inflicting wounds on one another. As Cixous put it, “At the time, the suffering that came to us from the suffering that we inflicted on ourselves each one by the other was so great” (Cixous 1998a, p. 185). This mutual recognition, in Cixous, appears in tandem with suffering or pain, physical or ethical. The latter is illustrated, for example, by how torn Cixous is between the ethics towards the bird and the cat in “Shared at Dawn”.

5. Non-Anthropocentric Autobiography and Animal Narration

In what I would call the last section of Cixous’ essay, she recognizes that she does not recognize the dog or dog-dom, what being a dog is, and begins to consider the dog and what constitutes being a dog. Here, then, the focus is, for the first time in the story, on what would be a dog’s narrative. “At the bottom of the bottom of all my ignorances, I must have had a prescience inaccessible to myself, that this mydog was something else, that he *was*, much more than I, and that I do not know what a dog is nor what being a dog is” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The narrative provides an opening for thinking what being a dog is. What follows, however, does not answer this question or what the dog might be.

Instead, the narrative shifts from the first person singular to the first person plural and tallies up the reasons why the family did not recognize him. “We did not want to give our life to the dog. We wanted the ideal dog, the all powerful, the assistance, the idea of dog in the heavens. This is how his misfortune began even before he appeared preceded by our desire” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The dog does not accord with the image the humans have pre-formed for and of him. In the narrative, the *idea* clearly precedes the arrival of the dog. Marta Segarra analyzes how Cixous and her brother, as children, attempt to have the dog fit their notions of him, creating a box for him, to sleep in, but also reading that box as one indicative of attempts to humanize through this imposition of ideas and will and figuratively as bespeaking human boxes and categories (Segarra 2006, p. 120). Of course, Cixous might simply be presenting the temporal

unfolding of events. Yet she also flags a philosophical quandary, taking another jab at Kantian idealism. “For our inevitable misfortune, I the child-of-man, I considered him in the beginning as a dog of man, and *bêtement* ineluctably like every child-of-man I spoke to him as we do inadvertently with foreign visitors up to the day I stopped addressing him forever” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). The approach responsible for the misfortune, mentioned twice, is that she as a human, “child-of-man”, spoke to him “as a dog of man”. In other words, this misfortune stems, as Cixous precisely puts it, from her anthropocentric lens or her *lacking* geo-philosophical model; and, from the imposition of a model that considers Fips as a “dog of man” rather than one that considers what he is, what being a dog is. And then, rather than listen for the answer, however it might articulate itself, she never began listening and stopped addressing him.

Cixous is, in retrospect, aware of this lack. “On the one hand, he came too early: we the children were not ready, we were far from having the animal height and even from imagining that it existed, which is the trait of human immaturity” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). Only years after his death does Cixous make “the unexpected discovery of those heights so near and so denied [. . .] I nearly missed it, because it took place so accidentally, it could have not taken place, and it was accomplished in an oblique form, as if in order to happen it was obliged to deceive my old vigilances, take the most cunning detour” (Cixous 1998a, p. 186). She realizes, belatedly, that another approach was called for. “I should have spoken to him. I should have, if I had been able to understand him but I thought him perhaps incapable of understanding for I was then not capable of understanding the profound animal humanity” (Cixous 1998a, p. 190). Haraway writes about how the animal exists, in such a model, “on the other side of an unbridgeable gap”:

Not least, Derrida eloquently and relentlessly reminds his readers that responsibility is never calculable. There is no formula for response; to respond is precisely not merely to react, with its fixed calculus proper to machines, logic, and—most Western philosophy has insisted—animals. In the lineage of those philosophers with and against whom Derrida struggled all his life, the Human only can respond; animals react. The Animal is forever positioned on the other side of an unbridgeable gap, a gap that reassures the Human of His excellence by the very ontological impoverishment of a life world that cannot be its own end or know its own condition.¹⁴ (Haraway 2009, p. 121)

Cixous’ awareness here is key but as with Derrida’s concept of *animot/animaux*, put forward in *L’Animal que donc je suis*, as Michelle Slater has pointed out in her article on Derrida and Cixous, “[it] doesn’t necessarily ‘give speech back to animals’ but accedes to a thinking in which they are not deprived of language” (Slater 2012, p. 687). Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog” takes the first step. It leaves us with an opening for or awareness of the need for this epistemological shift. Her essay does not answer but rather sets the stage for the question of what would constitute a non-anthropogenic autobiography or an animal’s narratological point of view. As Marta Segarra, writing about Cixous’ “Love of the Wolf” argues, Cixous raises the question: “how can we understand or translate the other’s speech without betraying it?” (Segarra 2006, p. 122). Through readings based on an epistemological shift, keenly attune to the differences in temporal and spatial relations, in being, perceiving, hearing, speaking, that is, ones committed to what Haraway celebrates as the “becoming-with”, different narrative voices could emerge.

6. Conclusions

Recent studies at the intersection of literary and animal studies, putting forward models that shift away from an anthropocentric lens, to some extent responding to the Anthropocene and attendant epistemological shifts, have considered zoopoetics, that is, paying attention to the voice or behavior of

¹⁴ In this section, Haraway is referring to Jacques Derrida and Jean-Luc Nancy, “‘Eating Well,’ or the Calculation of the Subject: An Interview with Jacques Derrida,” Translated by Peter Connor and Avital Ronell, in *Who Comes After the Subject?* Edited by Eduardo Cadava, Peter Connor, and Jean-Luc Nancy (New York: Routledge, 1991), 96–119 (Derrida and Nancy 1991).

non-human animals and “translating this alter-species semiotics into human discourse” (Gannon 2014, p. 91). It involves or hinges on “discovering innovative breakthroughs in [poetic] form through an attentiveness to another species’ bodily poiesis” (Gannon 2014, p. 91).¹⁵ Scholars have carried out this type of analysis, providing careful re-readings of fiction and excavating the animal voice (Driscoll 2017; Novero 2015; Rigby 2016). While these re-readings contribute to animal studies and zoopoetics, they also reconsider and rewrite what constitutes the narrative voice, across various genres.

Re-reading Cixous’ “Stigmata, or Job the Dog”, as an autobiographical narrative whose narrative voice consists of more than one voice, of an entangled human and animal voice, suggests a new area of genre studies of autobiography, that is, the study of non-anthropocentric autobiographies. What would this narrative voice consist of? As Cixous’ essay suggests and as I argue, the narrative voice is not solely a cyno-narrative, whereby the dog speaks. The entanglement or what Cixous called “her unrecognizable twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 196) or her “own raving twin” (Cixous 1998a, p. 200) is key. She is not one. We are never one. So it is not about shifting solely from a human to an animal narrative. We are entangled. For the study of an animal narrative or perspective, the mindfulness of the entanglement, as proposed by Cixous, and by Haraway, among others, is pivotal. It is less about a cyno-narrative and more about *multispecies* poiesis or narratives or ethnographies.

This entanglement challenges not only the anthropocentric model but also the individualistic hubris of the human-centered model. Which is why Cixous’ discussion of the animal, or Haraway’s discussion of the animal, is also always one of all the other interrelations. The borders are and are not the issue. They are only problematic in that they aim to and yet cannot erase our inter-dependence, our inter-relationship, or to move beyond the notion of two independent beings to ones more entangled or, as Karen Barad put it, our intra-actions.¹⁶ Mireille Calle-Gruber in her afterword to *The Hélène Cixous Reader* writes that “the human which Hélène Cixous explores has nothing to do with ‘humanism’ nor with any anthropocentrism. What she places on the scene are the perspectives of a ‘human better’ [. . .] by which all frontiers are crossed, the being human enters in floods and expands its others, vegetal, mineral, animal: knows itself to be dust, convolvulus (*Dedans*), butter (*ibid*), air (*L’Ange*), body-fruit (*Vivre l’orange*); recognizes its arch-vegetal kinship (*La*)” (Calle-Gruber 1994, p. 210). Again, as Haraway writes, it is about “staying with the trouble” and about “becoming kin”. If Cixous writes at the outset of the essay, “I wrote a text called *Stigmata, or Job the dog*. Or else *The Origin of My Philosophy*. Or else *First Symptoms of Writing*. Or *The Opening of the Mouth*” (Cixous 1998a, p. 182), what the wound bespeaks, what grounds this first philosophy or writing or opening of the mouth, might well be the epistemological shift or learning (of) this kinship or entanglement.

For why “Stigmata, or Job the Dog”? Job as the prophet of all three Abrahamic religions: Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. By naming this shared figure, is Cixous gesturing to (unnecessary) borders (given commonalities) among religions? It is certainly possible, given Cixous’ fixation on borders throughout her writing and in this particular essay. Or is she gesturing to the story of Job, who was blessed but also blessed (in the sense of the French verb, *blessé*, to injure, to hurt, to wound), his faith tested by God, who took away Job’s protection and prosperity, and who then restored it. Is Cixous suggesting a similar testing of human faith by Fips? That is, given how Cixous depicts the plight of the family, is her story about a quest for faith’s restoration? Or, since *the dog* is named Fips but also called Job in the title, is the story about how *his* faith is tested by the humans? And if so, what then, would constitute restoration?

I read Derrida’s foreword to Cixous’ *Stigmata*, where he writes: “I hear it as a blessing of the *blessure*, a great poetic treatise on the scar at the origin of literary writing” (Cixous 1998a, p. ix) as

¹⁵ Gannon, 91, quoting Aaron Moe, *Zoopoetics: Animals and the Making of Poetry Poetry* (New York: Lexington Books, 2013) (Moe 2013, p. 10).

¹⁶ Karen Barad, “Meeting the Universe Halfway: Realism and Social Constructivism without Contradiction,” in *Feminism, Science and the Philosophy of Science*, Edited by L.H. Nelson and J. Nelson (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1996), 161–94 (Barad 1996).

indicative of this radical (also in the sense of *radix*, root) rupture. This scar or wound at the origin of literary writing, and more, could be read as precisely bespeaking the need for a non-anthropogenic philosophy, autobiography, and narrative point of view, or for one aware of kinship and entanglement.

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Article

Animal Poetry and Empathy

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Abstract: This article discusses how our ideas of empathy are influenced by the dichotomy of mind versus body, also known as Cartesian dualism. Within the aesthetic field, this dichotomy is seen when researchers define narrative empathy as imaginatively reconstructing the fictional character's thoughts and feelings. Conversely, the empathy aroused by a non-narrative work of art is seen as an unconscious bodily mirroring of movements, postures or moods. Thinking dualistically does not only have consequences for what we consider human nature; it also affects our view on animals. To show the untenability of dualistic thinking, this article focuses on the animal poetry genre. Using the ideas of the French phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty, I analyze two animal poems: "Inventing a Horse" by Meghan O'Rourke and "Spermaceti" by Les Murray. The analysis of these two poems suggests that the presiding ideas about aesthetic empathy and empathy in general need re-evaluation.

Keywords: empathy; Cartesian dualism; Maurice Merleau-Ponty; animal poetry; 'Inventing a Horse'; 'Spermaceti'

1. Introduction

For anyone interested in empathy research, the many definitions of the concept, the sometimes contradictory ways in which distinctions are made between forms of empathy, and the variety of fields and subjects in which the idea of empathy appears can be discouraging. Psychologists, philosophers, biologists, neuroscientists and aestheticians seek to answer questions about humans' supposed empathic nature, about our ability to read other people's minds, about our reservation to ascribe mind-reading to members of a different species than our own and about the question of how we can have the experience of 'feeling with' regarding a work of art. Researchers even differ in opinion on whether they should strive at a unifying theory on what empathy entails or not. For example, the psychologist Stephanie Preston and the biologist Frans de Waal favour a 'unified story', whereas the psychologist Amy Coplan maintains that the different definitions of empathy refer to different phenomena. In "Understanding Empathy: its Features and Effects", Coplan writes: "Preston and De Waal take us in the wrong direction [...] [t]he differences among processes [...] haven't been emphasized enough, particularly those that exist between some of the higher-level processes. We need more specificity, not more generality" ([1], p. 5).

One of these specifications in the empathy debate (of which Coplan believes requires further specification) is the distinction between high-level empathy and low-level mirroring. In this article, I argue that the peripheral genre of animal poetry can show us that this distinction rests on untenable Cartesian convictions about human nature. What these poems demonstrate is not only important in the literary field, but it also affects the empathy debate in general.

The structure of my argument is as follows: firstly, I explain the distinction in the empathy debate between high-level empathy and low-level mirroring as well as some concepts related to this distinction: affective matching, emotional contagion, self-oriented perspective taking and other-oriented perspective taking. Secondly, I analyze the underlying presuppositions to this distinction and I discuss some counterarguments. Thirdly, I will turn to the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Endorsing his position, I will argue that dividing low-level mirroring from high-level empathy is in fact based on the Cartesian dualistic conviction that there is a strict division between the mind (Descartes' *res cogitans*) and the body (Descartes' *res extensa*). Fourthly, I show how this distinction plays a role in aesthetic studies in general and literary studies in particular. Finally, I will return to the work of Merleau-Ponty. His critique of Descartes and his search for a monistic view on human nature is a fruitful way to approach animal poems. To illustrate this, I will discuss two animal poems, Meghan O'Rourke's: "Inventing A Horse" and Les Murray's, "Spermaceti". The analysis of these two poems suggests that the presiding ideas about aesthetic empathy and empathy in general need re-evaluation.

2. High-Level Empathy versus Low-Level Mirroring

It is difficult to give a unified definition of empathy. When theorists do define the phenomenon, the first step usually consists of contrasting empathy with sympathy. Empathy, then, is described as 'feeling with', whereas sympathy is described as 'feeling for'. For many researchers who strive for specificity, including Amy Coplan who I take as their representative, this definition of empathy is too broad. It captures instances that are perfectly described as 'feeling with', but would nevertheless not be generally considered as instances of empathy. For example, when we both suffer from arachnophobia and a spider approaches us, my fear will be similar to your fear, but this would not count as empathy. Sharing the same emotions, or 'affective matching' seems to be a necessary condition for empathy, but not a sufficient one. Another example of affective matching that would not be regarded as empathy according to Coplan, is the phenomenon of emotional contagion. Emotional contagion takes place when people catch the emotions of other people but are themselves unaware of the object of the copied emotion. An example of emotional contagion is the sensation of happiness one can suddenly feel when watching a group of happy people. To exclude such instances from empathy, Amy Coplan inserts the precondition that affective matching must be the result of imaginatively reconstructing the subjective experience of somebody else. She writes:

One of the key differences between emotional contagion and empathy is that contagion is a direct, automatic, unmediated process. Empathy is never fully unmediated since it requires perspective-taking. Roughly, perspective-taking is an imaginative process through which one constructs another person's subjective experience by simulating the experience of being in the other's situation ([1], p. 9).

Reconstructing someone's subjective experience can only be done through other-oriented perspective taking, which is to be distinguished from self-oriented perspective taking. I engage in the first form when I ask myself how it would be for *me* in *her* situation. When I, however, imagine what it is like for *her* in *her* situation, I am taking on an other-oriented perspective. According to Coplan, together with a matching of feelings *because of* my other-oriented perspective taking, the phenomenon deserves the denomination of 'empathy'. Coplan adds as a reminder that it is necessary in other-oriented perspective taking to 'preserve a separate sense of self' ([1], p. 15), because if we don't we "might end [...] up experiencing the other's perspective as [our] own" ([1], p. 15). The awareness of the other person as someone who has "his own unique thoughts, feelings, desires and characteristics [...] prevent[s] one from losing sight of where the self ends and the other begins *and* where the other ends and the self begins" ([1], p. 16). A final prerequisite for empathy is the perceived similarity between myself and the other: Coplan writes: "[...] since the more unlike the target we are, the more difficult it is to reconstruct her subjective experiences" ([1], p. 13).

In summary, according to Coplan, to feel empathy one needs to have a separate sense of self, have matching affects with the target—which is more likely to happen when the other is similar to one's self—and these matching affects must be the result of other-oriented perspective taking. Someone's perspective consists of his own unique thoughts, feelings, desires and characteristics and can be reconstructed imaginatively. Empathy is thus a mediated process, because it requires reflection on the self and the other. The reconstruction of someone else's subjective experience must be, according to Coplan, a conscious, non-automatic process, since otherwise I might confuse my own feelings and thoughts with that of the target.

Coplan distinguishes this non-automatic, voluntary, conscious process from another form of affective matching, which is, according to her, the result of the opposite: an involuntary automatic, unconscious process. Before I discuss the supposed differences between the two forms of 'feeling with', it is necessary to dwell on the many terms used in the empathy debate. Some researchers use the term 'mind-reading' where others would rather use the term 'empathy'. There are even theorists who use the term 'sympathy' in place of 'empathy'. Furthermore, the terms for the so-called higher processes differ. Coplan, in the citation above, describes perspective taking as an 'imaginative process', whereas others prefer the term 're-enactive empathy' or avoid the term 'empathy' altogether because of its unclear connotation. In some cases, researchers use different terms for the same concept, but in other cases the terms refer to slightly different instances of empathy. It is important to keep in mind that for almost all researchers there is a difference between automatic low-level mirroring resulting in affective matching and voluntary conscious perspective taking resulting in affective matching. For the purposes of this article I will use the term 'low-level mirroring' instead of 'high-level perspective taking'.

The idea that there are two routes to affective matching is thoroughly described by Alvin Goldman in *Simulating Minds: the Philosophy, Psychology and Neuroscience of Mind-reading*. Goldman goes even further in distinguishing these two routes from each other by linking them to different areas in the brain. In contrast to Coplan he calls both processes 'empathy'. This seems nothing more than a question of definition, because the distinction stays the same: there is a voluntary, conscious route to empathy and an involuntary unconscious route to empathy. The former "targets mental states of a relatively complex nature whilst the latter is to be considered as "simple", "primitive" "automatic and unconscious" ([2], p. 147). The low-level route to empathy is 'automatic' and 'unconscious' because Goldman connects this route to the working of mirror neurons. Since their discovery, mirror neurons have been considered to be the 'hard-wire of empathy'. They fire when we perform, for instance, a goal-oriented action, but they fire as well when we see the same action performed by someone else. It would be beyond the scope of this article to go into detail of how mirror neurons work. For the argument presented here, it suffices to say, that Goldman considers this route to empathy to be distinct from the high level, cognitive route, because the mirroring route stays "below the threshold of consciousness" ([3], p. 33). To illustrate the two routes, Goldman refers to a situation in which someone sees a friend with a happy face and mirrors that happy state, while "the object of the stranger's happiness remains undisclosed by mirroring". Mirroring reproduces in the observer only happiness, not happiness *about X or about Y*" ([3], p. 43). The 'aboutness' of the happiness can be reconstructed through other-oriented perspective taking, which can only be consciously done and is therefore a high-level process.

Before I discuss some counterarguments against the distinction between the two types of empathy, or the two types of affective matching, it is helpful to make the presuppositions visible on which this distinction is built:

- (1) There is a boundary (in the brain) between conscious, voluntary processes and unconscious, automatic processes.
- (2) There is a boundary between inner mental states and observable behaviour.
- (3) Someone's perspective consists of mental states: thoughts, feelings and desires (which we can deduce only from bodily behaviour).
- (4) My self has a boundary (which can be blurred by emotional contagion).

- (5) Similarity between the empath and the empathizee is a necessary condition for empathy.

Most of these presuppositions seem to go without saying, and maybe because of that Coplan and Goldman presume them without further reflection. However, the claims in these presuppositions have consequences. For instance, when we assume that subjective experience, or my perspective, consists of thoughts, feelings and desires and that these mental states are something other than bodily behaviour, we assume that there is a distinction between my perspective, or even *me*, and my body. Another consequence is that since someone's body only gives me an inkling of her closed-off inner mental states, I assume that my reconstruction of her perspective is far more likely to be successful when I judge her to be like myself.

This distinction between mind and body, between conscious and unconscious and between voluntary and automatic is known as Cartesian dualism. Looking at humans in this dualistic way has implications for our idea of empathy. Since it is exclusive to others we judge to be not like ourselves, it cannot account for an experience of 'feeling with' with animals. Descartes thought of animals as machines and even if we think this goes too far, empathy with animals is still looked upon with suspicion: are we assuming too many similarities and in doing so, are we anthropomorphizing the animal? These questions are natural outcomes when we have dualistic ideas about nature. However, I will show that they lose their validity when we give up Cartesian dualism.

3. Objections to the Distinction between High and Low Level

The objections against the distinction between high-level empathy and low-level mirroring can be categorized as direct objections and fundamental objections. Frédérique de Vignemont formulates some direct objections against the distinction in her article "Drawing the Boundary Between Low-Level and High-Level Mindreading" and more fundamental objections can be found in the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

In her article, Frédérique de Vignemont claims that the two systems in the brain do not operate separately and that, consequently, there is no clear distinction between high-level processes and low-level processes. To demonstrate her argument, De Vignemont takes 'motor imaging' as an example of how the two systems work together. Motor imagery is the phenomenon of imagining an action whilst not performing it. Goldman considers motor imagery to be a case of high-level simulation, because of its voluntariness and its demand for consciousness. The observation of a movement, however, would be a case of a low-level process to Goldman, given the automaticity of the mirroring process. In contrast to this idea of separate processes, De Vignemont writes: "action execution, action observation, and also action imagination, all three, overlap at the neural level. In other words, here is a case of high-level simulation implemented in the cortical circuit of low-level mindreading" ([4], p. 459). Hence, the two systems are not as easily divided as Goldman suggests. To further substantiate her view, De Vignemont refers to various studies that indicate that one can control one's emotions and empathy. The study by Cheng et al., for instance, showed that mirroring pain was subject to the intention with which the pain was caused. When the pain was caused by a medical practitioner with the intention to heal, brain images showed that mirror neurons for pain fired far less frequently ([4], p. 461).

Defending a non-division in the brain, like De Vignemont does in her article, is only necessary because of what I labeled as the first presupposition in the former paragraph, namely that there is a clear distinction between conscious, voluntary processes and unconscious, automatic processes in the brain. This assumption is nothing other than a modern version of Cartesian dualism. Descartes distinguished two substances: the physical, material substance (*res extensa*) and the mental, non-material substance (*res cogitans*), which he also linked to automatic, machinelike behavior and conscious voluntary thinking. Both Coplan and Goldman use terms that fit this dichotomy to describe high-level empathy and low-level mirroring. For instance, Coplan lists "making inferences about another's mental states" ([1], p. 4) as one of the most popular descriptions of empathy. She defines affect as "a broad category encompassing multiple mental states" ([1], p. 6). Goldman writes that some researchers might "balk at calling the resonant (i.e., mirroring) states 'mental' states, because the mirroring

episodes commonly occur below the threshold of consciousness" ([3], p. 33). The dichotomy between a conscious mind and automatic bodily behavior also becomes clear from the earlier cited passage in which Goldman divides the smile itself from the 'aboutness' of the smile. Reconstructing the 'aboutness' is the conscious, reconstructive method, whereas mirroring the smile is only unconsciously mirroring the surface.

Although many philosophers and scientists have questioned this dualistic conviction about human nature, from Descartes' own time until today, it remains present in our day-to-day language and even in the way we do research. The philosopher Mark Johnson writes about these common assumptions about human nature: "although most people never think about it very carefully, they live their lives assuming and acting according to a set of dichotomies that distinguish mind from body, reason from emotion, and thought from feeling." [5]. Johnson claims that the opposing idea of embodied thoughts and thus of the inseparableness of our body and mind seems far more difficult to maintain.

One of the philosophers who tried to think through what it would mean to leave Cartesian dualism behind is the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908–1961). His work belongs to the school of phenomenology. Phenomenologists try to capture the 'lived experience' in their theorizing about the world. Studying 'lived experience' puts theory in the second place. It is therefore not surprising that Merleau-Ponty's research is far more inclusive than that of dualistic thinkers and that his work *Nature. Course Notes from the Collège de France* deals with animals who are, according to Merleau-Ponty, our kin. Our experience of 'feeling with' animals is not something that has to be theorized away, on the contrary, we need to learn from it.

Just as Cartesian dualism has many consequences for thinking about human nature, the idea that body and mind are inseparable alters our ideas about who we fundamentally are. Consciousness, for instance, according to Merleau-Ponty, is always consciousness of something and not a faculty detached from the world. Relating to this central point Adrienne Dengerink Chaplin writes: "When I reach out my hand for a cup of coffee, there are not two actions, first my thinking about the action and then my arm responding to perform the action; it is one integrated bodily action" ([6], p. 168). Dengerink Chaplin cites Merleau-Ponty: "'I do not have a body, I am my body'" ([6], p. 168). From this follows, according to Dengerink Chaplin, that "[w]e have to reject any Cartesian subject-object, mind-body or consciousness-world dichotomies" ([6], p. 168). Fundamental to Merleau-Ponty's approach to other minds is his insistence that the human body is a psychophysical whole.

The question is what giving up these dichotomies might mean for the subject of empathy. First of all, since Merleau-Ponty sees consciousness as fundamentally embodied, it is not a question of whether I can take on your perspective by reenacting your thoughts, feelings and desires, as is suggested by approaches like those of Coplan and Goldman (cf. presupposition 3 in my overview above). So, my smile is not an expression of a specific joyous feeling, it is the specific joyous feeling. Since so-called mental states cannot be separated from the body, my mind is consequently not something that is closed-off from others: a detached thing that resides inside my body and to which others potentially can get access. Alec Hyslop writes in his entry to "Other Minds" in the Stanford Encyclopedia about the position of Merleau-Ponty: "to perceive a human body in action is to perceive, directly, a person" [7]. Even more strongly, and phrased by Merleau-Ponty himself: "thus there is an indivision of my body, of my body and the world, of my body and other bodies, and of other bodies between them" ([8], p. 279). From this it follows that our subjective experience does not hide inside of our brains; it is visible in a shared social world.

The idea that subjective experience is outside our heads and is to be found in a shared social world, seems difficult to envision and brings us back to Mark Johnson's remark that it is hard to leave standard dichotomies behind. One of these dichotomies is a result of the presupposition that my self has a boundary, which I formulated earlier (cf. my presupposition 5). As a result of this, my self is to be separated from others or the surroundings. For Coplan, having a separate self is an important prerequisite for empathy. According to Merleau-Ponty, however, there is rather an indivision between

me, others and the surroundings. Subjective experience is not the same as a mental state. It is found in a shared world, since we are our bodies and our bodies interact incessantly with the world. For Merleau-Ponty, this idea of a shared subjective experience rather than a closed-off subjective experience is not limited to humans. He writes:

Why would not the synergy exist among different organisms, if it is possible within each? Their landscapes interweave, their actions and their passions fit together exactly: this is possible as soon as we no longer make belongingness to one same “consciousness” the primordial definition of sensibility [...] ([9], p. 142).

He chooses to refer to this shared world as “the man-animality intertwining”. We can derive from this citation what consequences are connected to leaving Cartesian dualism behind. When one does not deny that living beings have intentions, wishes, thoughts and feelings, but at the same time rejects a mind-body dualism, one has to rethink not only the connections humans make amongst each other, but also the assumed special status of human beings in relation to other living beings. A simple and vivid example of this “man-animality intertwining” is given by Diane Dutton in her article “A View from the Bridge: Subjectivity, Embodiment and Animal Minds”. She writes that when a dog-owner walks his dog, the intentions of both parties are felt through the leash and are therefore not hidden inside their heads ([10], p. 216).

This man-animality intertwining connects with the presuppositions that I mentioned in the first paragraph. The supposed difficulties of empathy—knowing that I have a separate self, knowing that this ‘feeling with’ is the result of other-oriented perspective taking for which I need my consciousness to work—are being compromised by Merleau-Ponty’s statement that our subjective experience is present in a shared social world and that there is no boundary between body and mind. The presupposition of ‘similar to me’ consequently becomes far more inclusive than Coplan proposed, since we share the world not only with humans, but with other experiencing living beings as well. In the final paragraph I will formulate the implications for our ideas about empathizing with animals through a text. First, it is necessary to demonstrate that Cartesian dualism is also alive in the aesthetic empathy field.

4. Cartesian Dualism in the Aesthetic Field

Before I discuss what leaving the mind-body distinction behind might mean for the aesthetic field, let me first go back to the distinction made by Coplan and Goldman between high-level empathy and low-level mirroring and see how it materializes in aesthetics.

Within aesthetic studies, researchers usually approach empathy in the same way as interpersonal empathy. Therefore, the ingredients of narrative empathy are considered to be the same: there has to be a fictional character with who the reader can identify and the reader has to experience a matching of feelings between herself and the character and, lastly, the matching of feelings has to be the result of perspective taking. This makes the novel with a human protagonist the standard choice of genre in the narrative empathy debate. In the same way, when there are no characters involved, aesthetic researchers typically link aesthetic empathy to mirroring (bodily) movement. For instance, Gregory Curie in his article “Empathy for Objects” defines empathy as a bodily simulation of forms [11]. For example, he writes that if we look at Rubens’ painting *Descent from the Cross* we “undergo bodily simulations which mirror aspects of [the depicted people’s] dispositions” ([11], pp. 86–87). Not only with paintings, but also in poetry, researchers choose to link the engagement between a reader and a poem to bodily sensations. In this respect Susan Lanzoni refers to the work of the psychologist and poet June Etta Downey (1875–1932) who, in the early years of the twentieth century, concluded that “[i]mages of felt or bodily movement were of particular significance for empathic response” ([12], p. 39). Although attention to bodily sensations is a somewhat forgotten tradition in the aesthetic field, linking human fictional characters to high-level processes of empathy and aesthetic expressions without linking them to low-level bodily processes of empathy in fact reinforces Cartesian dualism.

Conversely, in the narrative field, empathy is understood as reconstructive, high-level perspective taking. I will give two examples of the working of the body-mind division in this field: one in which Noël Carroll discusses mirror reflexes to characters in fiction and one in which Lisa Zunshine discusses Virginia Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway* as an example of a cognitive experiment.

In his article "On Some Affective Relations between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fictions" Noël Carroll writes about mirror reflexes: "these imitative reflexes grant us some *inkling* of what others are feeling" ([13], p. 178) and "[t]his (our muscular feedback) need not give us full *access* to his emotional state, but it supplies us with a valuable *clue* to the nature of that state by providing us with an experiential sense of the bodily-component [...]" (italics are mine, tb [13], p. 178). Note that this bodily-component is separated from the full emotion, similar to Goldman's idea of dividing the bodily smile from the 'aboutness' of the smile. Carroll presents to us here the classic idea of the mind closed-off from the outside world and the body as a mirror of that mind. Facial expressions are the *clues* for entering the mind; they represent the mind, and are the outcome of thinking and feeling. Just as we have seen in the former paragraph, this classic idea that the mind is something that is hinted at on people's faces but is ultimately hidden from the outside world, is based on the presupposition that mind and body are separate.

In *Why We Read Fiction. Theory of Mind and the Novel*, Lisa Zunshine even goes so far as to consider the novel essentially a cognitive experiment [14]. According to Zunshine, readers test their ability to form a theory of mind of fictional characters; when we read, we ascribe to characters a mind of their own. Likewise, writers rely on this cognitive ability of their readers. So, just as Carroll described, we read about a certain behaviour and then, according to Zunshine, deduce, like a detective—hence the cognitive experiment —, certain feelings or states of mind. Before I come to the reservations of viewing the novel as a cognitive experiment and, more generally, aesthetic empathy as a phenomenon that is essentially an achievement of the mind, let me give Zunshine's reading of *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf.

Zunshine, in her opening chapter "Why did Peter Walsh Tremble?" uses the meeting of Clarissa Dalloway and her former lover Peter Walsh as an illustration of the novel as a cognitive experiment. *Mrs Dalloway* starts off with the protagonist, Mrs Dalloway, preparing for a party that she will throw in the evening. Since readers are immediately drawn into the sensations, half uttered thoughts and not fully felt feelings of Clarissa Dalloway, they are not introduced in an orderly way as to who is who in the novel. When the reader arrives at the scene of their meeting, she does know that Clarissa and Peter were lovers years ago, but that instead of marrying him, Clarissa decided to marry Richard Dalloway. Peter went to India, but is now returning, pays a visit to Clarissa and trembles when he sees her. According to Zunshine, we, as readers, implicitly ask questions about the behaviour of fictional characters. We infer states of mind and emotions from their body language and solve the other-minds-puzzle by filling in missing information. In this case, the trembling of Peter Walsh needs an explanation. According to Zunshine, the ability of a reader to explain behaviour proves that their theory of mind is working well. Zunshine writes the following about Peter's trembling:

When Woolf shows Clarissa observing Peter's body language (Clarissa notices that he is "positively trembling"), she has an option of providing us with a representation of either Clarissa's mind that would make sense of Peter's physical action [...] or of Peter's own mind [...]. Instead she tells us, first, that Peter is thinking that Clarissa has "grown older" and, second, that Clarissa is thinking that Peter looks "exactly the same [...]" Peter's "trembling" still feels like an integral part of this scene, but make no mistake: we, the readers are called on to supply the missing bit of information (such as "he must be excited to see her again" which makes the narrative emotionally cohesive) ([14], p. 22).

Here, we can see that indeed Zunshine considers the novel to be a fundamentally cognitive affair. The reason why we read, Zunshine says, is that we like to fill in, like a detective, the missing clues and in that way solve the puzzle and make the narrative cohesive. In an 'objective reading', Peter Walsh's trembling could have been caused by Parkinson's disease, but, claims Zunshine, since we are

trained readers we interpret the trembling in the right way—as indicative of his mental state—and are consequently pleased by our well-functioning theory of mind ([14], p. 18). That this occurs almost effortlessly does not change the fact that “we have cognitive adaptations that prompt us to ‘see bodies animated by minds’” ([14], p. 15). Deducing the thoughts and feelings from bodily language would count as high-level empathy, high-level mindreading or reconstructive empathy. Similarly to persons in the real world, readers grant fictional characters a mind of their own. All in all, Zunshine’s interpretation perfectly fits into the distinction made by Goldman and Coplan.

When we read the passage by Woolf, however, we can see that there is so much more going on than ‘cognitively filling in a puzzle’. Here follows the passage that describes Peter Walsh’s entrance. The servant Lucy opens the door and hesitates to let him see Clarissa. In response, Peter answers her:

“Mrs. Dalloway will see me,” said the elderly man in the hall. “Oh yes, she will see ME,” he repeated, putting Lucy aside very benevolently, and running upstairs ever so quickly. “Yes, yes, yes,” he muttered as he ran upstairs. “She will see me. After five years in India, Clarissa will see me” [15].

This passage is followed by Clarissa’s reaction to Peter’s unexpected visit:

“Who can—what can,” asked Mrs. Dalloway (thinking it was outrageous to be interrupted at eleven o’clock on the morning of the day she was giving a party), hearing a step on the stairs. She heard a hand upon the door. She made to hide her dress, like a virgin protecting chastity, respecting privacy. Now the brass knob slipped. Now the door opened, and in came—For a single second she could not remember what he was called! so surprised she was to see him, so glad, so shy, so utterly taken aback to have Peter Walsh come to her unexpectedly in the morning! (She had not read his letter.)

“And how are you?” said Peter Walsh, positively trembling; taking both her hands; kissing both her hands [15].

Perhaps the literary term ‘stream of consciousness’ is misleading in this context. What we can read in this short excerpt from the novel is a stream of sensations—whether they are conscious or not is not mentioned—and more importantly, the stream of sensations are not specific to a character. It is clear that Clarissa hears “a hand upon the door”, but “Now the brass knob slipped. Now the door opened” are surely her observations, but they lead the reader to see the opening of the door in their own mind’s eye rather than Clarissa’s. The interpretation of Peter’s trembling is not just a cognitive achievement; the whole of the text trembles, the whole atmosphere is vibrant. We can read the hurry in Peter’s ‘yes, yes, yes’ as he runs upstairs, one ‘yes’ on each stair tread. When Woolf puts what Clarissa is thinking in a proposition, between brackets, it is only meant as a helping hand to the reader. Clarissa’s propositional thought is in fact the stumbling “Who can—what can”. We feel his excitement and her initial irritation in the short sentences “She heard a hand upon the door. She made to hide her dress [...]” and “Now the brass knob slipped. Now the door opened, [...]”. As a reader, we do not deduce a feeling from body language, we are not given an *inkling* of Peter’s thoughts, and we do not read ‘bodies animated by minds’. The trembling of Peter Walsh is his excitement and we know this not because of a puzzle we solve, but because Woolf lets us tremble with him.

5. Leaving Cartesian Dualism behind

Perhaps a trembling text is not what we consider to be the cause of an empathetic reaction towards a protagonist. Usually, when we look at a narrative, we think that the protagonist’s likeness to us, her similar opportunities, her comparable course of life and her understandable thoughts and feelings make it easier for us to shift perspectives. We might think of Woolf’s sensory language and rhythmical sentences as means to enter Mrs Dalloway’s mind and not as empathy itself.

To show that this idea rests on a body-mind division is best seen when we focus on a genre in which no humans are present, namely that of animal poetry. When reading an animal poem we might hesitate as to what to call the feeling of engagement we can experience. The only reason, however, for this hesitation is because we do not think of animals (or ourselves) as psychophysical wholes. Contrastively, poets of the following poems do think of the animals as psychophysical wholes and stay close to their 'lived experience'. First I discuss Meghan O'Rourke's "Inventing a Horse" [16] and thereafter Les Murray's "Spermaceti" [17].

In a public reading on 19 February 2010, O'Rourke explained how the poem came into existence: "I grew up in New York City and, like not a few other little girls, was infatuated with horses. My main resentment about living in a big city was that it was impossible to have a horse. So, many years later, haunted by this childhood drama, I wrote 'Inventing a Horse'" [18]. Since the lines run over the stanzas, I will present the whole poem before discussing it:

Inventing a Horse

by Meghan O'Rourke

Inventing a horse is not easy.
One must not only think of the horse.
One must dig fence posts around him.
One must include a place where horses like to live;
or do when they live with humans like you. 5
Slowly, you must walk him in the cold;
feed him bran mash, apples;
accustom him to the harness;
holding in mind even when you are tired
harnesses and tack cloths and saddle oil 10
to keep the saddle clean as a face in the sun;
one must imagine teaching him to run
among the knuckles of tree roots,
not to be skittish at first sight of timber wolves,
and not to grow thin in the city, 15
where at some point you will have to live;
and one must imagine the absence of money.
Most of all, though: The living weight,
the sound of his feet on the needles,
and, since he is heavy, and real, 20
and sometimes tired after a run
down the river with a light whip at his side,
one must imagine love
in the mind that does not know love,
an animal mind, a love that does not depend 25
on your image of it,
your understanding of it;
indifferent to all that it lacks:
a muzzle and two black eyes
looking the day away, a field empty 30
of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees,
and some piles of hay.

The poem starts off with “Inventing a Horse” as an optimistic title, only to be downplayed again immediately by the first line that completes it: “Inventing a horse is not easy”. To explain why this may not be easy, O’Rourke asks the reader to imagine all the things that one has to have and bear in mind when keeping a horse in real life. Hence, the invention of the horse is not a gratuitous fantasy. Inventing a horse goes further than only focusing on a mental picture. In fact, it involves visualizing all the things you would have to do and give up to maintain a horse. All these things are listed in the first four stanzas. They probably echo the reservations her parents might have had when O’Rourke, as a child, expressed her wish of having a horse.

In the fifth stanza O’Rourke interrupts her list of practicalities. The sentence that began in line 6 ends here in line 13 with the imagining of the absence of money being the outcome of all the material things that one would need. After this conclusion of all the constraints it is as if she asks herself again what inventing a horse involves and the listing of practicalities seems to not be enough. Then, in line 18 and 19, she focuses first on the body (the living weight, the sound of his feet on the needles and again his heaviness in line 20) and after that on the horse’s mind, a word that she alternates with ‘love’. It is noteworthy that in the second line of the poem O’Rourke warned the reader that one must not only think of the horse, but rather of its surroundings. However, after imagining the horse’s environment its body nevertheless slowly comes into view. In line 16 begins a sentence that ends in the final line. Since the main clause is interrupted by a subordinated clause and a coordinated clause, the reader almost forgets that “since he is heavy and real/.../one must imagine love”. ‘Real’ is a word that stands out in this line. All the characteristics of the horse are mentioned and it is as if its realness is one among these many qualities. One might recognize this as a category mistake (“I have a brown, quick, strong and real horse”), but in this case the category mistake is intended. It reminds the reader of the task of a poet, which lies in the Greek word ‘poiesis’, which is to make or create something. Hence, it emphasizes the task O’Rourke has set for herself which is to overcome the drama in her childhood by inventing a horse.

The enjambment after ‘love’ in line 23 reflects the difficulty with the kind of love O’Rourke wants the reader to imagine. One must imagine love, yes; the whole point of keeping a horse is the love for the animal. However, this love will be less romantic than the clichéd imagery of horses offered by a TV-series. The love that is at stake here is a love for a real animal who has a mind that does not know love. Or, as the following line says: it is a love that does not depend on the image of it in a human mind. How can anyone imagine this? Can we set aside our comforting images and picture an animal mind?

In the final lines, O’Rourke helps the reader to imagine the hardest part of the invention, which is the understanding of the horse on his own terms. For doing this, one needs to leave one’s own images of love and understanding behind. When she focuses on the horse’s black eyes, she does not only describe what they look like, but also what they see. In the ongoing act of invention, the realization that easy images will not do and the constant effort of setting aside one’s own convictions of what a horse essentially is, O’Rourke finally arrives at imagining the horse from the horse’s point of view and she describes the world seen through his eyes: “a field empty of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees and some piles of hay”. What we can learn from the poem is that the horse’s mind, or the horse’s point of view is not something that is to be found inside his mind. The final sentences are formulations of the horse’s experience, but show at the same time that there is another way of approaching subjective experience. These sentences seem to indicate that there is no boundary between knowing what it is for me to have a horse’s experience and knowing what it is for a horse to have a horse’s (i.e., his own) experience. Such a boundary would, again, assume an underlying separate self, detached from the body.

Does this ‘perspective shifting’ count as an instance of empathy? It certainly would not if we as readers were to hold onto an idea of empathy based on Cartesian dualism. Then, we would not be able to know the horse’s subjective experience, since his mind would be understood as being closed-off from the world and his behaviour as an easily misinterpreted outcome. The inferences from his behaviour would probably be called anthropomorphic; ascribing human-like features to the animal.

However, what we can read in the poem by O'Rourke is that inventing a horse does not begin from the inside of the horse, but starts by a focus on his surroundings that cannot be separated from the horse himself. This is exactly what Merleau-Ponty means by the idea that subjective experience is to be found in the world. Notice how the final lines "a field empty/ of everything but witchgrass, fluent trees, /and some piles of hay" are comparable to the lines from Mrs Dalloway: "Now the brass knob slipped. Now the door opened [...]". Similar to Woolf's presentation of subjective experience-in-the-world, we are at the end of the poem not *inside* the horse's mind; rather the horse's intentions and interests are visible to the trained eye of the poet.

A famous answer to our hesitations with the possibility of taking up an animal's perspective is giving by John Coetzee in *The Lives of Animals* through his protagonist Elizabeth Costello [19]. She answers that she once wrote a book about a fictional character and had to "think [her] way into [her] existence" and then states about this 'thinking into': "If I can think my way into the existence of a being who has never existed, then I can think my way into the existence of a bat or a chimpanzee or an oyster, any being with whom I share the substrate of life" ([19], p. 49). To Costello, just as to phenomenologists, poems are the apt way of bringing forth animals' "living, electric being to language" ([19], p. 114). Elizabeth Costello is a fictional character and can therefore speak freely about the limitlessness of our imagination. Her ideas, however, were already addressed by Merleau-Ponty and are still being examined by phenomenologists. The phenomenologist Louise Westling writes in her monograph *The Logos of the Living World. Merleau-Ponty, Animals and Language* about how humans' and animals' behaviour and expressions are to be found in a shared world:

[H]uman linguistic behavior gradually emerged in the course of evolution from neural structures and physical behaviors we share with primates and other animals, [...] it remains embedded within shared abilities and cultures in a continuum of animal behaviors that are themselves part of a myriad of communications in the living world, and that increasing evidence suggests that it is embodied and gestural, as Merleau-Ponty claimed more than a half century ago ([20], p. 103).

Understanding empathy as entering an intersubjective realm is easier to understand when we share physical behaviour with an animal or when we can see that there is a continuum between the animal and ourselves. Costello claims that sharing a substrate of life is enough to get access to the world of another being. Along these lines, Louise Westling writes about Merleau-Ponty's view on the ecological relationships between all beings that "they carry with them the weight of time and entanglements with space" ([20], p. 34). The poem *Spermaceti* by the Australian poet Les Murray endorses the view of Costello and Merleau-Ponty. Although we are inclined to classify a whale as a creature very different from ourselves, Murray pushes the reader in this poem to feel her way into the lived experience of a sperm whale.

Spermaceti
by Les Murray

I sound my sight, and flexing skeletons eddy
in our common wall. With a sonic bolt from the fragrant
chamber of my head, I burst the lives of some
and slow, backwashing them into my mouth. I lighten,
breathe, and laze below again. And peer in long low tones 5
over the curve of Hard to river-tasting and oil-tasting
coasts, to the grand grinding coasts of rigid air.

How the wall of our medium has a shining, pumping rim:
the withstood crush of deep flight in it, perpetual entry!
Only the holes of eyesight and breath still tie us 10
to the dwarf-making Air, where true sight barely functions.

The power of our wall likewise guards us from
slowness of the rock Hard, its life-powdering compaction,
from its fissures and streamy layers that we sing into sight
but are silent, fixed, disjointed in. Eyesight is a leakage 15
of nearby into us, and shows us the taste of food
conformed over its spines. But our greater sight is uttered.
I sing beyond the curve of distance the living joined bones
of my song-fellows; I sound a deep volcano's valve tubes
storming whitely in black weight; I receive an island's slump, 20
song-scrambling ship's heartbeats, and the sheer shear of current-forms
bracketing a seamount. The wall, which running blind I demolish,
heals, prickling me with sonars. My every long shaped cry
re-establishes the world, and centres its ringing structure.

In 'Spermaceti' the 'I' in the poem seems to be the sperm whale. The title refers to the organ through which a sperm whale perceives its world: the spermaceti organ [21]. This organ consists of a waxy substance and was originally wrongly taken to be the whale's semen. A sperm whale has poor eye vision and uses echolocation—an auditory imaging system—for hunting and communication. Sperm whales emit a series of clicks through the spermaceti when they dive and the reverberation of the clicks gives them information about prey and other whales. The reverberation is picked up by an 'acoustic' fat pad in the whale's lower jaw which sends the information to the brain. There, three-dimensional images are formed about the size and the movement of the prey (mostly squid).

Entering Murray's poem from a biological perspective adds to the understanding of it. Knowing how echolocation works helps to understand certain lines in the poem in which this phenomenon is addressed. However, what a biological perspective cannot bring about is what it is like to be a sperm whale and this is what Murray is after. He does not emphasize the similarities between humans and whales to establish perspective taking, he instead focuses on two main differences between the two species: being in the water instead of being on land and using echolocation instead of using eyesight. In contrast to human experience, the air to a whale is rigid (line 7), dwarf-making (line 11) and true sight (i.e., echolocation) barely functions there. The Wall (the water and its surface) on the other hand gives the whale the possibility to shape his world through his song. Repeating in various depictions the difference between human and whale is one way to make the reader familiar with the whale's world. But Murray goes further than familiarizing the reader with another world. He even lets the reader feel the subjective experience of echolocation by using the poetic device of alliteration. When we read the first four words—I sound my sight—, we are drawn into the sensation of echolocation firstly by the use of 'I' and secondly by the alliterative use of the 's' in 'sound' and 'sight'. The alliteration establishes the effect of experiencing sound and sight as one thing—exactly what echolocation entails. The notion of 'sound as sight' occurs five times in the poem: 'I sound my sight' (line 1), 'I peer in long low tones' (line 5), 'we sing into sight' (line 14), 'our greater sight is uttered' (line 17) and 'I sound a deep volcano's valve tubes' (line 19). Becoming familiar with the world of the whale through repetition and alliteration establishes a sense of recognition even in the untrained reader. Following Merleau-Ponty, Louise Westling sees precisely in literature and poetry the possibility of bridging the gap between others—be they of a different species or not—and myself:

it [literature] functions as one of our species' ways of singing the world to ourselves, in concert with the songs and artistic creations of many other creatures, from birds and primates to dogs and dolphins ([20], p. 103).

This musical metaphor articulates that the human world is consonant with the non-human world. There is an obvious connection between this insight and Les Murray's 'Spermaceti', and not only because the citation reminds us of the singing whale in the poem. 'Spermaceti' gives us access to the world of the whale through its almost bodily language and lets us recognize our 'man-animality intertwining'. When we see animals and ourselves as psychophysical wholes in interweaving landscapes it is not a question of being alike enough to establish empathy. It is rather a question of how to train the senses to be able to see this wholeness. In finding a route to accomplish this, poets can serve as a guide.

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Article

A Question of Life and Death: The Aesopic Animal Fables on Why Not to Kill

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Abstract: This article deals with Greek animal fables, traditionally attributed to a former slave, Aesop, who lived during the sixth century BCE. As a genre, the Aesopic fables, or the *Aesopica*, has had a significant impact on the Western fable tradition and modern Western children's literature. The *Aesopica* owes much to the Mesopotamian fables and has parallels in other Near Eastern cultures. Modern research has concentrated on tracing the oriental roots of the fable tradition and the dating of the different parts of the *Aesopica*, as well as defining the fable as a genre. The traditional reading of fables has, however, excluded animals *qua* animals, supposing that fables are mainly allegories of the human condition. The moral of the story (included in the *epimythia* or *promythia*) certainly guides one to read the stories anthropocentrically, but the original fables did not necessarily include this positioning element. Many fables address the situation when a prey animal, like a lamb, negotiates with a predator animal, like a wolf, by giving reasons why she should not be killed. In this article, I will concentrate on these fables and analyse them from the point of view of their structure and content. Comparing these fables with some animal similes in Homer's *Iliad*, I suggest that these fables deal not only with the ethical problem of 'might makes right' as a human condition, but also the broader philosophical question of killing other living creatures and the problem of cruelty.

Keywords: fable; Aesopic fables; Greek fable; antagonistic fables

The so-called animal turn has encouraged classicists to read Graeco-Roman literature from the point of view of Human-Animal Studies, that is, to focus on human-animal interactions and the agency of animals.¹ However, although animals have many eminent functions in ancient literature—as symbols and as metaphors and similes—animals figured very seldom as protagonists or proper characters. There are no stories in which a non-human animal is depicted as voicing its (imagined) experience, perceptions, and life—like animals do in modern animal 'biographies', such as Anna Sewall's *Black Beauty* (1877). Yet, there seems to be one well-known exception: in Apuleius' *The Golden Ass*, which had a shorter Greek equivalent mistakenly attributed to the satirist Lucian (both versions are based on a Greek story), the protagonist is a donkey, which experiences various adventures and abuse by different owners.² However, the donkey is, in fact, a human named Lucius, who has been transformed into a donkey by the agency of a Thessalian witch. The aim of the story is not to make the audience feel sympathy for the ill-treated donkey, but to identify with the human, Lucius, whose body has been metamorphosed into that of a donkey. The reader is constantly reminded that the donkey is, in fact, a human being.

¹ On Human-Animal Studies, see, for example, (Marvin and McHugh 2014).

² Stefan Tilg argues that the original Greek story of this metamorphosis into a donkey is from the first century CE (Tilg 2014, pp. 2–3). However, the story itself could be earlier.

Besides the minor genre of the parodic animal epic,³ only animal fables used animals as prominent characters in antiquity. However, animals in animal fables are depicted as humanised, that is, they talk, reason, and act like humans—although they are seldom so humanised as in the fable where a dog wishes to sue a sheep for stealing a loaf of bread (Phaedrus 1.17). The main function of different species of animals in fables seems to be to mirror fixed human character types—foxes are cunning and sheep represent timidity. Animal fables are read as reflecting human experience, presenting it in an allegorical way by projecting human relations onto an artificially created animal world, often with fake interspecies relationships. In other words, fables picture social relationships and interactions between diverse species in an unnatural realm—the animal kingdom—which mirrors the human world, as well as its social structures and hierarchies. Like nowadays, the Aesopic fables were sometimes interpreted to especially represent the voice of the oppressed (human) classes, like slaves, in antiquity. Both the legendary Aesop and the Roman fable writer Phaedrus were former slaves.⁴

Animal characters in animal fables are thus thought to be easily substituted by humans and their situation can be smoothly transferred to the human world. This kind of allegorised reading of fables was already dominant in antiquity.⁵ Consequently, it is no wonder that modern animal sensitive⁶ scholars have lately criticised the Aesopic animal fables because ancient fables (in their view) seem to guide the reader to interpret the story *only* as an allegory. Fables are not supposed to convey animal life, with the result that the animals themselves—as animals—are erased.⁷ Therefore, although animal fables are nearly the only literary genre in antiquity where animals are the protagonists, actual ‘real’ animals seem to be absent.

However, some classicists, like Jeremy B. Lefkowitz (2014), have recently at least posed the question of the possible ‘animality’ (animals *qua* animals, not substitutes for humans) of the Aesopic animal fables. By seeing affinities with stories in ancient natural histories, Lefkowitz argues that fables sometimes depict animals not merely symbolically, but also reveal a zoological interest in animal behaviour.⁸

The first fable in Greek literature is from the eighth-century BCE, namely ‘The Hawk and the Nightingale’, which Hesiod included in his *Works and Days* (lines 202–12). The fable is told to a specific addressee, Hesiod’s brother Perses, as a moral lesson. A hawk has caught a nightingale and answers its cries of distress:

And now I will tell a fable (*ainos*) to kings who themselves too have understanding. This is how the hawk addressed the colourful-necked nightingale, carrying her high up among the clouds, grasping her with its claws, while she wept piteously, pierced by the curved claws; he said to her forcefully, ‘Silly bird, why are you crying out? One far superior to you is holding you. You are going wherever I shall carry you, even if you are a singer; I shall make you my dinner if I wish, or I shall let you go. Stupid he who would wish to contend against those stronger than he is: for he is deprived of the victory, and suffers pains in addition to his humiliations.’ So spoke the swift-flying hawk, the long-winged bird. As for you, Perses [. . .] (Trans. Glenn W. Most, see (Hesiod 2007)).

Usually, this fable has been interpreted simply to expose the ideology of ‘might makes right’. In Lefkowitz’s view, the fable also functions to show that animals ‘behave in a way which is not

³ The only extant animal epic from antiquity is *The Battle of Frogs and Mice* (*Batrachomyomachia*). On animal and bird epics, see (West 2003, pp. 229–37).

⁴ (Lefkowitz 2014, pp. 18–20).

⁵ On ancient theories of fable and its functions, see (Dijk 1997, pp. 38–78). Dijk mentions persuasive, didactic, comical, and aetiological functions of fables (Dijk 1997, pp. 38–78).

⁶ By the notion of ‘animal sensitive’, I mean not only an awareness of ethical issues concerning animals, but simply the awareness of animals, in addition to their function and role in human cultures.

⁷ (Simons 2002, p. 119; Teittinen 2015, pp. 152–53).

⁸ Naama Harel discusses the Aesopic fables in her essay as translations and also deals with such classic modern fables as George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* (Harel 2009).

appropriate to humans'. Lefkowitz combines this fable with the famous passage in the same work, *Works and Days*, in which Zeus is said to have only given justice (*dikē*) to humans and not to birds, fish and land animals, and this is shown by the fact that animals eat each other (*Works and Days* 274–80).⁹ The moral of the story is thus that decent human beings are not allowed to behave like the hawk in this fable. However, there are many unsolved problems with the interpretation of this fable. One way of explaining is that the nightingale as a singer possibly represents the epic poet Hesiod himself, so that the fable is an affirmation of the power of song that triumphs despite all. Be this as it may, 'The Hawk and the Nightingale' was well known in antiquity and functioned as a model for later fabulists with different emphases.¹⁰

What is notable about this fable is that the predator would seem to be justifying his behaviour to his helpless prey. Why would this be necessary if 'might is right'? There are similar fables in which the victim begs for mercy, even giving reasons why (s)he should *not* be killed. Animal fables often depict conflict or antagonistic situations between species, a motif – as well as a dialogic form – that goes back to Mesopotamian fables, to which the Graeco-Roman tradition owed a great deal.¹¹ Additionally, Homeric, especially Iliadic, animal similes depict conflict situations.¹² Therefore, it might be fruitful to compare antagonistic (or agonistic) animal fables with antagonistic Homeric similes – without, however, making any suggestions about the mutual influence between these two genres. In this paper, by comparing the Aesopic antagonistic fables with some animal similes in Homer's *Iliad*, I suggest that agonistic fables deal not only with ethical problems concerning the human condition ('might makes right'), but also the broader philosophical question of killing other living creatures, as well as the idea of the 'war' between different species. I will argue that although the 'animality' of the animals in fables is reduced in many ways, the philosophical problem of killing can be seen as an 'animal' topic in fables. I will start, however, with the problems of the interpretation of ancient fables, as well as their narrativity.

1. Animal Fables as Stories

David Herman defines *zoonarratology* as 'an approach to narrative study that explores how storytelling practices (and strategies for narrative interpretation) relate to broader assumptions concerning the nature, experiences, and status of animals'.¹³ Animal fables are narratives—even the Greek terms for fable (*ainos*, *mythos*, *logos*) semantically refer to stories¹⁴—in which animals are the characters of stories, but which seem, as mentioned before, to tell little about the animals themselves. Ancient critics noted that fables were 'false' (*pseudos*), that is, fictive, not historical or natural historical stories.¹⁵ Reading ancient animal fables as textual sources for a discussion on 'broader assumptions concerning the nature, experiences and status of animals' (Herman's wording) in antiquity poses some basic difficulties, like the dating of fables and their elements. The development of this genre is difficult to figure out in general. The problems for discussing how animal fables relate to assumptions

⁹ (Lefkowitz 2014, p. 2). Others, like Edward Clayton and C. Michael Sampson have introduced the same kind of interpretation. See (Clayton 2008, pp. 180, 196; Sampson 2012, pp. 473–74).

¹⁰ Deborah Steiner interprets 'The Hawk and The Nightingale' as an expression of rivalry between different kinds of poetics, see (Steiner 2010, p. 107). The hawk has also been interpreted to represent a divine instrument. On the different interpretations of this fable see (Dijk 1997, pp. 127–34). The antagonism between hawk and nightingale is the topic in two other Aesopic fables, Perry 4 and 567.

¹¹ On the Mesopotamian fable and its influence on Greek fable, see (Adrados 1999, pp. 287–306); on the agonistic ethos in the Aesopic fables, see (Zafropoulos 2001).

¹² On fables and Homeric similes, see (Dijk 1997, p. 125). According to Rodriguez Adrados, who has compared the fable with many other genres of archaic Greek literature, the typical situation of agonistic confrontation in the Iliadic similes, like a lion attacking a herd of cattle or a fold of sheep, 'provide the basis for fables from the Classical Age and collections'. Adrados does not, however, clarify what he means by 'the basis' (Adrados 1999, p. 198).

¹³ (Herman 2012, p. 95).

¹⁴ On the terminology of the Greek fable, see (Adrados 1999, pp. 3–16; Dijk 1997, pp. 79–89).

¹⁵ The grammarian Theon of Alexandria, who lived in the first century CE, defined a fable as 'a fictitious story picturing or reminding one of (*eikonizein*) reality' (Dijk 1997, pp. 47–48, 408; Adrados 1999, p. 23).

concerning the status and experiences of animals are problems of interpreting a genre which had a wide audience in antiquity, but no original authors. Fables were the product of oral literature, and literary fables were usually the author's reimagination of oral fables, although later, there were certainly some genuine literary (invented) fables. Besides the numerous references and retellings of fables by Greek and Roman authors, what we have—what the ancient fables have preserved for us—are mostly prose fable collections. The most important collection is the so-called Augustana, which consists of several anonymous collections first assembled around the third century CE (numbers 1–231 in the Perry index).¹⁶ Roughly contemporary, or even a little later, is the lyric fable collection produced by the Roman-Syrian Babrius, who wrote in Greek. Another Roman, Phaedrus, versified fables into iambic metre in Latin a few centuries earlier, in the first century CE. All these fables fall under the general term of 'the Aesopic fables'.¹⁷ The simple style of fables was noted by ancient critics and to versify a fable or amplify its prose was a rhetorical exercise for schoolboys, at least since Phaedrus' time or earlier.¹⁸

As narratives, fables recount some event, and they have a temporal dimension—one event follows another; events are structured in some order and they are told from a specific point of view or by a certain voice.¹⁹ From the formal point of view, fables are varied, but as Gert-Jan van Dijk notices, fables often have 'a tripartite narrative structure (introductory sketch of the situation—action—concluding action or comment)'.²⁰ This is evident, for instance, in a fable from the above-mentioned Augustana collection, 'The Donkey, The Raven, and The Passing Wolf' (Perry 190):

A donkey who had a sore on his back was grazing in a meadow. A raven alighted on his back and began to peck at the wound, while the donkey brayed and reared up on his hind legs in pain (*algein*). The donkey's driver, meanwhile, stood off at a distance and laughed. A wolf who was passing by saw the whole thing and said to himself, 'How unfairly we wolves are treated! When people so much as catch a glimpse of us, they drive us away, but when someone like that raven makes his move, everyone just looks at him and laughs.'

The fable shows that even before they act, dangerous people can be recognized at a distance.
(Trans. Laura Gibbs)

The fable starts with an introductory sketch of the situation, which has two actors: a donkey is grazing in a meadow and a raven pecks at its wound on his back. The 'action' simply consists of the owner of the donkey laughing at what he sees. The concluding action brings forth the fourth actor, the wolf, who is passing by and observes the situation. Although dialogues are common in fables, it is typical, too, that there is only one speaker, such as in this fable the wolf, who comments on the situation in the end.²¹ From this wolf's point of view, wolves suffer unjust treatment from humans. Thus, the wolf criticises humans. As the wolf sees it, the driver's laughter is the opposite reaction to the usual or normal one by humans concerning predators, namely anger and fear. The driver does not drive the raven away but lets him continue pecking at the donkey's wound. If the wolf had approached the donkey, the enraged (and perhaps frightened) driver would have immediately driven it away.

¹⁶ I am using the index system of Ben Perry's (Perry 1952). On fable collections, see (Adrados 1999, pp. 48–136).

¹⁷ One of the first collections was composed during the third century BCE in Alexandria by Demetrius of Phalerum, the one-time student of Aristotle's philosophical school. Demetrius' (now lost) collection could have been in use until late antiquity. On Demetrius' collection, see (Dijk 1997, pp. 410–97, 540; Adrados 1999, p. 23).

¹⁸ On writing fables as part of the rhetorical exercises (Progymnasmata), see (Kennedy 2003).

¹⁹ These four features of narratives—time, structure, voice, and point of view—are listed by Peter Lamarque. See (Lamarque 1990, p. 131).

²⁰ (Dijk 1997, p. 114); On different kinds of narrator-character combinations in fables, see (Dijk 1997, pp. 373–74) and on different formal schemes, see (Adrados 1999, pp. 35–36).

²¹ This kind of character is called *survenant* by the fable scholar M. Nøjgaard (1964–7). See (Dijk 1997, pp. 9, 373).

The *epimythium*,²² the moral of the story (italicised in the excerpt above), explains that the point of the story here is to tell us that dangerous people ('wolves') can be recognised. One raven can usually cause no serious harm to a donkey, whereas one wolf may. So, the driver laughs because he is not scared by the raven.

A modern, animal-sympathetic reader may still ask why the donkey's driver laughed. The donkey is described as rearing up on his hind legs, apparently in order to get rid of—at least momentarily—the pecking raven. Was it the two-footed stance which appeared so funny to the driver? The raven is, however, physically harming the donkey and thus affecting its ability to be a good draft animal. That the raven was causing *pain* to the donkey is clearly stated by the verb *algein*, 'to be in pain'. Modern critics often point to the different attitudes to laughter in antiquity (including open expressions of *Schadenfreude* and the acknowledged comicality of slaves and other underdogs).²³ Yet, one might ask in this particular case whether there is a somewhat sympathetic attitude to the donkey in pain and a critique of the laughing driver—that laughing at someone clearly in pain is an example of uncivilised behaviour. Or, to put it another way, if the donkey is thought of as simply a commodity, then it is stupid not to prevent the raven pecking at the wound. The implied critique, if there were any, is then directed towards the human in the fable, not towards predators harming or possibly killing domestic animals.²⁴

One may, of course, ask whether this is an anachronistic way of reading a Greek fable. These kinds of doubts are natural when reading succinct Aesopic fables because they are often enigmatic and the moral of the story frequently seems to point in puzzling, albeit not altogether incomprehensible (for the modern reader), directions—often simply because *epimythia* and *promythia* were late additions.²⁵ Written fables were stories told in a specific context which guided the interpretation. When fables were assembled together in collections, the contexts were lost. However, in their oral form, fables were originally quite flexible stories, so they fitted many situations and could be adjusted by storytellers. When ancient rhetoricians or other prose writers cited a fable, they used it for their own purposes, often as clarifications.²⁶

Ancient fables thus have common features with riddles and proverbs: they are enigmatic, and in this respect, they are part of the gnomic tradition. However, a fable can be differentiated from other gnomic forms in the sense that it is a narrative genre. Like fairy tales, fables are stories which are usually vague about the time and place. Moreover, the actors in fables are not described in detail. Although gods are specified by name (Hermes, Zeus), and there are some mythical persons (Teiresias) and fictionalised historical persons (Socrates and Aesop himself), humans are usually only characterised by their occupation or class (a shepherd, a donkey-driver, a sacrificer, a slave). For their part, animals represent their species, which accounts for their stereotyped descriptions. However, the events are depicted as unique and specific: they happen to that donkey, to that driver, and to that raven and wolf.²⁷

²² The term *epimythium* (plural: *epimythia*) denotes that the moral of the story is given at the end. The moral can also be given at the beginning, when it is called *promythium*. The latter case was probably the earlier practice, originating in the days when fables were collected and when the moral functioned as a kind of title for the fable (Perry 1965).

²³ (Halliwell 2008, pp. 38–50, 69–76, 301).

²⁴ A similar but much later fable in Latin is 'The Wolf, The Crow and the Sheep' (Perry 670). See also 'The Well-meaning Wolves' (Perry 676). Both are from the codex Bruxellensis 536 from the 14th century, including fables from late antiquity.

²⁵ (Adrados 1999, p. 29).

²⁶ Aristotle was the first to discuss fables theoretically in his *Rhetoric* (2.20.1393b8–94a9). In Aristotle's view, the fable (*mythos*) is a good instrument of persuasion and he tells two animal fables ('The Stag, the Horse and the Man' and 'The Fox and the Lice') to prove their usability in political speeches, especially in those directed towards the common people.

²⁷ Sometimes fables remind one of *mirabilia*, stories of the strange ways of animals, a genre which Aristotle made good use of in his zoological works, and later writers like Plinius, Plutarch, Aelian, and Athenaeus developed them as an ingredient in their works on animals. Miraculous stories of animals were part of natural histories depicting the wonders of nature, but they also included stories of unique incidences and individual animals. The Aristotelean corpus included falsely attributed work belonging to the *mirabilia* genre: *On Marvellous Things Heard*. On this genre and the paradoxographers, see, e.g., (French 1994, pp. 299–303).

In short, ancient animal fables are stylistically simple, fictitious narratives, which have animal characters. However, despite their simplicity, they are not non-reflective. Animals' reflections can be funny or satirical, often pointing to overly narrow, or too self-centred points of view. The wolf's speech in the above-cited fable is a reflective speech or self-reflective thought. The wolf is not communicating with other actors in the fable, but reflecting on the situation by himself (and in his own distorting way). In all, the wolf is a focalised character. Before considering focalisation, it is worthwhile to discuss one common topic in all kinds of animal stories, including the Homeric animal similes, namely antagonism, a conflict situation between different species.

2. Animal Antagonism and Focalisation in the Homeric Similes

The epic genre developed the effective literary device of an epic (also known as Homeric) simile. Animal similes in Homeric epics compare the human situation with that of animals. As, for instance, Helmut Rahn has pointed out, at the very core of the idea of animal similes, there is the supposition of the possible continuation between the qualities of human and non-human animals, which is what makes it possible to compare them in the first place. The comparison is not only with the animal's movement (body), but also its emotions and moods, representing its current situation in life.²⁸ The Iliadic warriors are compared not only with predators (like lions, wolves, boars, hounds), but also with a donkey (Ajax) and with a just-mothered cow (Menelaus): the donkey's steadfastness suggests the same quality in Ajax, and the anxiety of the cow for her calf describes how Menelaus protects Patroclus' body (*Iliad* 11.558–562 and 17.4–6).

Although the human situation is most central, similes can provide a glimpse into some aspects of the active life of an animal. Animals in similes can, as Steven Lonsdale has put it, often be viewed as 'actors in their own right'.²⁹ The vivid descriptions of a lion's corporeality and movements in the lengthiest of the lion similes (*Iliad* 20.164–75), for instance, almost turns the simile into an animal poem, one that praises the solemn existence of this predator. Here, Peleus' son Achilles runs to engage with Aeneas, the Trojan warrior, who was, like Achilles, of divine descent:

On the other side Peleus' son ran to meet him, like a lion / bent on slaughter that a whole village's resolute men have / gathered together to kill; at first it pays them no attention and / continues on its way, but when some war-swift young man / hits it with his spear it crouches, jaws gaping, and foam / gathers around its teeth, and the brave spirit in its heart / groans, and with its tail it lashes its ribs and flanks on / both sides, and drives itself on to fight; staring-eyed, / its fury carries it straight at the men, hoping either to kill / one of them or to die itself in the forefront of the conflict. / In just this way his fury and noble spirit drove Achilles on / to come face to face with great-hearted Aeneas. (*Iliad* 20.164–75) (Trans. Anthony Verity)

Fables do not have these kinds of forceful descriptions, which are like eulogies to animals as embodied beings with specific bodies.³⁰ Although humans are compared with some animals in similes—like Achilles with the lion in this simile—animals do not act as substitutes for humans in similes. Instead, there is an imaginative assimilation of Achilles with a lion, despite their dissimilar bodies (the hero, of course, has no tail with which to lash his flanks). In the Aesopic fables, although there are some references to the bodies of animals, the human *words* uttered by the animal characters are usually more important than their non-human *bodies*. Although their speeches may, however, be

²⁸ (Rahn 1953, p. 288; Rahn 1954, pp. 452, 466–67). According to Rahn, human beings are not seen as 'rein menschlich'.

²⁹ (Lonsdale 1990, p. 1).

³⁰ The famous stallion simile, which occurs twice in the *Iliad* (6.506–14 and 15.263–268), depicts the stallion's exultant gallop. All translations of Homer's *Iliad* in this paper are by Anthony Verity. See (Verity 2011).

uttered from the (imagined) point of view of the animal, animals' bodies are not utilised to any great extent as a narrative element in animal fables.³¹

Thus, the emphasis on animals *qua* animals in fables is slight, if not altogether missing when compared with such expressive animal similes as the lion simile above. Furthermore, fables may mention the emotions of animals, but usually only by naming an emotional state. Instead, the Iliadic animal similes depict emotions, like anger and fear, quite lengthily, in order to simulate the emotional state of the warriors in the battlefield. One of the best examples of the depiction of fear or panic is the simile where a mother hind loses her fawns. The object of comparison in this simile is that Agamemnon kills two young Trojan princes, which causes fear in the Trojan troops (*Iliad*, 11.113–21):

As a lion easily crushes the bones of a swift hind's / young fawns, when it came upon
their lair and seized / them in its mighty teeth, and rips out their tender hearts; and the
mother, even if she chances to be nearby, cannot / help them, because fearful trembling
overcomes her limbs, / and at once she darts away through dense thickets and woodland,
/ in a sweating fervour to escape the powerful beast's attack; / so no one of the Trojans
could keep death from these two, / but were themselves driven in panic before Argives.
(Trans. Anthony Verity)³²

This simile contains elements of a story by telling what 'happens' to the mother hind. Lonsdale observes that the scene is seen 'both from the point of view of the aggressor and the victim'.³³ Irene De Jong has compared the Iliadic narrator to a war reporter: the narrator is an external narrator-focaliser.³⁴ In this simile, it is as if the narrator is accompanying the mother hind and her sweating dart through woodland.

It is often noted that the Homeric equality of vision is rare in war literature in general. In the *Iliad*, a tale of war, the rapid focalisation from one side to the other (from the Achaeans to the Trojans or between the different factions inside each camp) is a token of the general Homeric narrative technique, which is then reflected in the similes. The agonistic animal simile thus depicts the situation with different focalisation—sometimes giving only the predator's point of view, sometimes the victim's point of view, and sometimes both the predator's and victim's viewpoints. Only very rarely does the animal victim in the Homeric similes manage to win, that is, to escape. One example is that where the goddess Artemis' fear is compared to that of a pigeon:

The goddess Artemis fled cowering and weeping, like a pigeon / that flies from a hawk's
pursuit into the hollow of a rock, a / deep cleft, because it was not its destiny to be
caught; just so / Artemis fled weeping, leaving her bow and arrow where they were.
(*Iliad* 21.493–496) (Trans. Anthony Verity)

In Hesiod's fable, the hawk has already captured the nightingale. Here, the pigeon manages to flee from the pursuing hawk and the emotional focus is on the prey animal. However, in another Homeric simile concerning the hawk and the pigeon, which characterises Achilles' pursuit of Hector, the emotional focus is on the frustration of the *hawk*, which does not manage to catch the pigeon (22.138–44).

The focus of the Homeric animal simile can thus vary from predator to prey animal. Along with focalisation, the Homeric narrative in similes is 'objective'; it observes the situation as a detached

³¹ Fables can play with the differences in animal bodies, like in the fable 'The Fox and the Stork', where one animal cannot enjoy the food served by the other—the stork cannot lick the broth from the low bowl or the fox eat from the narrow-mouthed jug (Phaedrus 1.26).

³² The frame of the simile is the following: Achilles formerly captured two sons of King Priam, Isos, and Antiphon, when they were herding the king's cattle on Mount Ida, but then he gave them up as a ransom. In this scene, Agamemnon kills these warrior princes like the lion kills the fawns. Hector is not there to rescue his young brothers. The absence of Hector is compared with the *absence* of the mother hind, but the *fear* of the mother hind simulates the fear of the Trojans.

³³ (Lonsdale 1990, pp. 58–60).

³⁴ (De Jong 2014, p. 69, 61).

onlooker, in the sense that it does not condemn the predator's behaviour as cruel. The reason for this is that the Iliadic heroes are compared with predators on account of their courage and skill as warriors.³⁵ For their part, the Aesopic fables may express the imagined animal point of view of both prey and predator animals in the speeches by their humanised animal characters. Often, it is expressed with comical and satirical twists, but nevertheless, animals are pictured as genuine narrators of their own stories.

3. Begging for Mercy

In the Homeric similes, the emotional and narrative focus on the victim may sometimes be elaborated, as in the above-mentioned mother hind simile. In the Aesopic fables, however, the victim also has the opportunity to clearly voice its (imagined) situation. This is along the general lines that fables tell the other side of the story, the view of common people, the underprivileged, or the underclass.

Even the predator himself may be pictured as considering the situation from the point of view of his victim. In Babrius' fable 'The Hare and the Hound', a hound starts a hare from her lair. The hare runs away, and after a long chase, the dog gives up. A goatherd observes the situation and mockingly addresses the dog: 'The little one proved to be faster than you.' The dog replies that the goatherd does not see the different purposes of their running: the dog runs for his dinner, the hare for her life (Babrius 69). Thus, for the outside human observer (who is not a hunter, the owner of the hound, but a goatherd), the chase is like a running contest. The dog for his part—as though giving an excuse for his frustrated failure to catch the hare—knows the difference between running for one's life and running in order to fulfil one's transitory needs. The hare's speed allows her to survive.

In 'The Wolf and the Lamb', a lamb negotiates for her life. This fable is included in the Augustana collection (Perry 155), but also the Roman fable writers, Phaedrus (1.1) and Babrius (89), both retold this fable in verse. In Phaedrus' Latin version, the wolf and the lamb have come to drink from the same brook. The wolf is hungry ('prompted by his wicked gullet', *improba latro incitatus*) and therefore begins a 'quarrel' (*iurgium*) with the lamb. He accuses the lamb of spoiling the water. The lamb, however, is able to deny this accusation because it stands much lower down the river than the wolf. The wolf then states that the lamb has cursed him six months ago. The lamb is able to reject this too because she was not even born then. Eventually, the wolf accuses the lamb's father of cursing him. Using this as a reason for killing the lamb, the wolf pounces upon her and tears her to pieces (the verb *lacerare*). Phaedrus ends the fable with the statement that the lamb died because of unjust killing (*iniusta nex*).

The reasons given by the wolf for killing the lamb are like playing with one's prey: they are pretexts. It is as if it is part of the predatory disposition to tease or bully one's prey. However, the fable also seems to record the common demonising stereotype that wolves are insatiable and unnecessarily cruel.³⁶ Wolves occur in some Homeric animal similes, too, as paragons of predators, and their 'predatory' ways of eating are depicted graphically (cf. *Iliad*, 16.156–163).³⁷ According to the modern zoologists, wolves sometimes attack their prey without eating them at all or only partially eating them.³⁸ This so-called 'surplus killing' was surely an observed fact in antiquity, too (for ancient shepherds at least), although it is rarely mentioned in ancient texts. In a probably late fable, preserved only in the so-called Syntipas collection, a hunter (not a shepherd) encounters a wolf tearing to pieces (*diasparattein*) as many sheep as he can. The hunter with his hounds defeats the wolf and says: 'Where

³⁵ (Clarke 1995, p. 137).

³⁶ On wolves in ancient Greek iconography and literature, see (Calder 2011, pp. 67–69). Aelian states that wolves are extremely fierce and they might even eat one another (*On the Characteristics of Animals* 7.20).

³⁷ In this simile, Achilles' men, the Myrmidons, are compared to wolves, which are depicted as 'eaters of raw flesh, whose hearts are full of unbelievable strength'. They have killed a stag and tear it apart, their muzzles are gory. After that, they go in a pack to the river to drink and have eaten so much that they 'belch forth clots of blood' (*Iliad*, 16.162).

³⁸ Wolves may cache food for times when prey are scarce, but 'surplus killing' may happen when prey is abundant. See, for example, (Peterson and Ciucci 2003, p. 144).

now is the might that you formerly had? Against the dogs you can't make any stand at all.' The hunter's question echoes the ancient ideas of hunting as a noble sport, where two mighty and/or cunning antagonists confront each other.³⁹ The wolf was only successful in attacking the weaker and more helpless creatures. Thus, the hunter is rebuking the wolf for bad 'sportsmanship'.

In the Augustana version of 'The Wolf and the Lamb' (Perry 155), the wolf accuses the lamb of drinking from his spring and insulting his father. In vain, the lamb denies these accusations, followed by the wolf killing and eating her. The *epimythium* states that when rulers commit crimes, they do not listen to the reasoning of their subordinates.⁴⁰ In Babrius' version of 'The Wolf and the Lamb' (Babrius 89), the lamb has gone astray and the protagonists do not meet beside a river:

Once a wolf saw a lamb that had gone astray from the flock, but instead of rushing upon him to seize him by force, he tried to find a plausible complaint by which to justify his hostility (*egklēma ekhthrēs euprosōpon*). 'Last year, small though you were, you slandered me.' 'How could I last year? It's not yet a year since I was born.' 'Well, then, aren't you cropping this field, which is mine?' 'No, for I've not eaten any grass nor have I begun to graze.' 'And haven't you drunk from the fountain which is mine to drink from?' 'No, even yet my mother's breast provides my nourishment.' Thereupon the wolf seized the lamb and while eating him remarked: 'You're not going to rob the wolf of his dinner even though you do find it easy to refute all my charges.' (Trans. Ben Perry)

Babrius begins the fable by asserting that the wolf resolved not to kill and eat the lamb immediately, for the wolf wants to find a plausible complaint by which to justify his hostility (*egklēma ekhthrēs euprosōpon*). The above-mentioned Augustana version (Perry 155)—which in its written form could be earlier than Babrius' version—has the expression *met' eulogou aitias katathoinēsasthai*, to feast with good reason or pretext. Precisely the same phrase is used in a similar fable in the Augustana collection, 'The Cat and the Cock' (Perry 16):

A cat had seized a rooster and wanted to find a reasonable pretext for devouring him (*met' eulogou aitias katathoinēsasthai*). He began by accusing the rooster of bothering people by crowing at night, making it impossible for them to sleep. The rooster said that this was actually an act of kindness on his part, since people needed to be woken up in order to begin their day's work. The cat then made a second accusation, 'But you are also a sinner who violates nature's own laws when you mount your sisters and your mother.' The rooster said that this also was something he did for his masters' benefit, since this resulted in a large supply of eggs. The cat found himself at a loss and said, 'Even if you have an endless supply of arguments, do you think that I am not going to eat you?' (Trans. Laura (Gibbs 2002) slightly modified)⁴¹

The fable may remind one of the hunting practice of cats, in which they 'play' with their prey—not killing it immediately.⁴² In any case, like the lamb, the rooster wins the argument, but is still going to be killed. However, the cat accuses the rooster not only of minor misdemeanours, but of unnatural or criminally taboo behaviour. The cat's second accusation deals namely with inbreeding, which as such, can easily be observed in domestic animals (whereas in wild species, there are many means to

³⁹ Syntipas 6 (404), see (Perry 1952, p. 531). On the ideology behind hunting in antiquity, see (Barringer 2001).

⁴⁰ On the Augustana version of this fable, see (Clayton 2008, pp. 179–80). Clayton interprets this fable to point to the difference between humans and other animals: justice does not matter to animals and the wolf enacts here 'a parody of justice' (Clayton 2008, p. 195).

⁴¹ Gibbs translates the last line as 'Well, even if you have an endless supply of arguments, I am still going to eat you anyway!' The elaborate *epimythium* of this fable states: 'The fable shows that when someone with a wicked nature has set his mind on committing some offence, he will carry out his evil acts openly even if he cannot come up with a reasonable excuse.' See also Perry 122, in which a cock tries to persuade humans (thieves) not to kill him.

⁴² One reason for this behaviour is that it ensures that the prey is weak enough to be killed (Fraser 2012, pp. 35–36, 57–58).

avoid breeding among close relatives, for instance, by dispersal).⁴³ Here, the cat accuses the rooster of violating ‘nature’s own laws’ (or, literally, that the rooster is impious or unholy towards nature, *asebēs eis tēn phusin*). Thus, if the ‘reason’ for the wolf’s predatory behaviour is ‘personal’, that this lamb has caused *him* harm once, the cat finds more general charges against the rooster.

Sometimes, the prey animal manages to convince the predator not to kill and eat it. However, the result of the convincing is not always clear. In Babrius’ fable, a fox begs a wolf to spare her life (*zōgrein*) because she is so old. The wolf promises not to kill her if she can produce three true statements. The fox pronounces three clever platitudes and the fable ends there (Babrius 53). The fox may have managed to persuade the wolf or maybe she didn’t. In another fable told by Babrius (107), a lion catches a mouse, and the latter remarks that it is suitable for lions to hunt down stags and bulls and ‘with their flesh make fat your belly’, but a little mouse is not a sufficient meal for a big lion. The lion releases the mouse, which later, when a hunter has captured the lion in a net, releases him by gnawing through the ropes. The fable may also begin with a predator in trouble, which causes it to ask for help from other animals, including its prey. However, the difficulties or dangers are sometimes fake and the weaker ones either decline the request because they know that after being rescued the predators will attack them, or the prey animal assists the deceptive predator, to its own ruin. The replies of the weaker ones are often sarcastic—they know the ulterior motive of the predators.⁴⁴

There are thus various fables where a powerful animal is defeated by a weaker one. In an Augustana fable, a bat begs for mercy from some weasels (*galai*) (Perry 172). A weasel has managed to catch a bat, which has fallen to the ground. After the bat has begged for mercy, the weasel argues that weasels are at war (*polemein*) with all birds. The bat then assures the weasel that she is not a bird but a mouse, so the weasel must let her go. The fable thus plays with the uncommon nature of bats, a mammal which is able to fly. The second part of the fable recounts that the bat is in danger of being killed by another weasel. This time, the other weasel states that there are constant hostilities (the verb *diechthrainein*) between weasels and mice.⁴⁵ The bat assures the weasel that she is not a mouse at all, but a bat. It is noteworthy that the fable calls the prey-predator relationship ‘a war’ between species. This was, however, a common idiom, and was also used by Aristotle.

4. ‘A War against Each Other Among All Animals’

In the eighth Book of his *Study of Animals* (8.609a4–610a36), Aristotle lists pairs of animal species which are each other’s enemies (*polemios*), that is, at war (*polemos*) with each other, like the eagle with the snake, the crow with the owl, the gecko with the spider, and the horse with the heron. The reason for ‘war’ or enmities between different (non-carnivorous) species can be the harm which they cause – such as some species of birds stealing other species’ eggs. In Aristotle’s view, the most obvious reason for the enmities is the scarcity of food for animals which occupy the same place and obtain their sustenance from the same things. However, Aristotle begins this passage by assuring that even the ‘wildest’ or ‘cruellest’ (*agrios* means both ‘wild’ and ‘cruel’) animals can live with each other if there is enough food (8.608b32–3). Yet, as Aristotle puts it, some animals are at war with *many* animals: for example, the wolf with the ass, the bull, and the fox. The wolf is likely the most dangerous predator in some areas, but for Aristotle, the simple reason for this expansive enmity of wolves is that the wolf is *ōmophagos* (literally ‘an eater of raw meat’), that is, carnivorous (8.609b1–3). Besides, all animals are at war (the verb *polemein*) with carnivores, which feed on other ‘animals’ (*apo tōn zōōn*).⁴⁶ The Greek

⁴³ On the so-called inbreeding avoidance hypothesis, see, for instance, (Pusey and Wolf 1996, p. 202).

⁴⁴ (Adrados 1999, pp. 174–75; Zafiroopoulos 2001, pp. 125–26). Examples of these kinds of fables are ‘The Kid and the Wolf’, in which a kid asks a wolf to play the flute in order that she can dance her death dance before the wolf kills her. The piping sends hounds to the spot and the kid is rescued (Perry 97).

⁴⁵ The war between mice and weasels was the topic of animal epics and fables. See Perry 165, Syntipas 51 (see Perry 1952, p. 546) and Phaedrus 4.6.

⁴⁶ Aristotle discusses flesh-eaters in the seventh Book of the *Study of Animals* using the usual word *sarkophaga* (*zōa*)—not the word *zōophaga*. See, for instance, 7.594b18 (lion).

word for 'animal', used and generalised by Aristotle, is *zōon*, which refers to a living being, especially sentient living beings. In his *Politics*, Aristotle discusses different kinds of human lifestyles (nomadic, hunting, and agriculture) and prefaces this by speaking of different kinds of food, which different kinds of 'animals' (*zōa*), sentient living beings, use: some eat plants, some eat other (sentient) living beings (*zōophaga*), and some are omnivorous. Aristotle concludes that it is the liking for different kinds of food that makes the lives of living beings different. Nature (*phusis*) has made different modes of life to suit different kinds of natural abilities and preferences for food, so that each lifestyle facilitates the acquisition of suitable food (*Politics* 1.8.1256a26–28).

Aristotle has, apparently, a neutral or non-sentimental view about the fact that some animals (including most humans) eat other animals. Sometimes, however, he describes the enmity between species in a way which may be reminiscent of animal fables. For example, in the above-mentioned passage from the *Study of Animals*, he tells about a bird named the *anthos*, which is 'at war' with the horse (8.609b14–19). The bird only seems to make minor mischief for the horse by, for instance, mimicking him or scaring him:

Anthos is at war with the horse: the horse drives it out of the pasture, for the anthos forages in grass, and has white film on its eyes and does not see sharply: it mimics the horse's voice and scares him by flying at him; and he drives it away, but whenever he catches it he kills it. The anthos lives beside river and marshes; its colour is beautiful and it lives well. (Trans. D.M. Balme)

The *anthos* has been identified as the yellow wagtail, because some of its sub-species have been observed to pick insects from farm animals and some of their calls remind one of the whinnying of horses.⁴⁷ Aristotle also mentions a bird named the *aigithios* (probably the long-tailed tit), which pecks the sores of donkeys—like the raven in 'The Donkey, a Raven and a Passing Wolf' quoted above. The reason for the *aigithios*' enmity is, according to Aristotle, that donkeys accidentally upset their nests placed in thorn bushes (8.609a31–35).⁴⁸ Modern ethology may interpret reasons for 'enmities' between species as based on (in this case) parent defence behaviour due to the possible damage to be done to the offspring. For his part, Aristotle seems to stress specific reasons, using a specific case when the nests were upset. Particular reasons are also the cause (or pretended cause) for the wolf's enmity toward the lamb in the fable 'The Wolf and the Lamb' quoted earlier.

However, the idea of peaceful existence between species—rather than constant war—was assured by Aristotle in the above-mentioned passage. In his view, wild animals—even the wildest, 'cruellest' ones—can live peacefully together if there is enough food. Aristotle gives an example of crocodiles in Egypt which have become tame and gentle (*hēmeros*) towards the priest who feeds them (8.608b33–609a2).⁴⁹

Some fables point to the idealised Golden Age—also known as the Age of Zeus' father, Cronus—when all living beings lived in peace and harmony, or when they were at least striving for all-inclusive justice. One of the defences against injustices was to seek help from the gods. Aristotle mentions in passing an animal fable in which the hares insist on equality with the lions (*Politics* 3.13.1284a15–17 = Perry 450). Traditionally, the passage has been understood to include the lions' answer (which Aristotle does not mention) that the hares' petition lacks 'teeth and claws'.⁵⁰ An equally disappointing result occurs in a fable told by Phaedrus, in which a lion which had appointed

⁴⁷ (Arnott 2007, pp. 14–15) s.v. *anthos*.

⁴⁸ (Arnott 2007), s.v. *aigithios*. The description of the *anthos/aigithios* and other stories of animal friendships and enmities are later copied by Pliny (*Natural History* 10.95) and Aelian (*On the Characteristics of Animals* 5.48).

⁴⁹ Aristotle is naturally referring here to Egyptian animal cults. Although there were no animal cults in Greece, some animals were in a way protected as sacred animals to gods (like Apollo's doves in Delphi). On gods linked to specific animals, see (Gilhus 2006, pp. 93–95).

⁵⁰ Aristotle is here presenting the idea that the best men in the *polis* are outside the law, like gods. Laws are made for citizens, which are equal, but the 'lions' in the *polis* are above/below the average citizens. After that, Aristotle moves on to discuss the *ostracismus*, the institution which made it possible to get rid of unpopular rulers—unpopular 'lions'. Aristotle mentions

himself king tries first to be fair by restricting his diet, thus upholding ‘the sacred law of justice’ (*sancta incorrupta iura*); nonetheless, the lion soon lapses into his old habits of eating other animals (Phaedrus 4.14). Babrius, however, tells a fable (102) about an animal kingdom ruled by a lion which is not ‘wild’ or ‘restive’ (*thymōdes*), but is fair-minded (*dikaios*)—as fair-minded as a human might be assures the fable—and therefore all animals are ‘at peace’ (*eirēnē*). The lion acts as a judge and weak animals are able to seek justice: the lamb against the wolf, the wild goat against the leopard, and the deer against the tiger. One hare then states that he had always prayed that this would happen, that weak animals would be ‘feared’ by the strong. Here, the topic of the equality of the weak with the strong is also a reference to the mythic Golden Age with its all-inclusive justice. The weaker ones could seek protection without having to submit to the natural law that ‘might makes right’.

The oldest example of this type of fable is the fragment preserved by the seventh century BCE iambic poet Archilochus, in which a fox pleads for justice from Zeus against an eagle which had violated their friendship pact (fr. 177). The fox says that Zeus is a source of justice *both* among men *and* animals (*thēria*). This has been interpreted as Archilochus’ mocking comment on the Hesiodic passage mentioned above of Zeus only giving justice (*dikē*) to humans (*Works and Days* 274–80).⁵¹ For Hesiod, Zeus’ *dikē* means, in its basic form, the right to live and not to be killed. If this basic right is violated, the transgressor should be punished—but this right concerns only the human sphere.

Hesiod thus makes a clear distinction that Zeus’ justice concerns only humans. However, both Plato (*The Laws* 7.766a) and Aristotle (*Politics* 1.1.1253a34–7) state that without education and other restraints, it is man who is the cruelest (*agrios*) living being. Although both philosophers were only concerned with human cruelty towards other human beings, the fable genre also discussed, to a certain extent, the ill-treatment of animals and cruelty towards animals by humans.

5. Humans as a Threat to Other Animals

There are hence some fables or fragments of fables where animals seek help or even justice from Zeus—sometimes against other animals, including humans, and sometimes specifically against humans. For instance, bees ask for killing stings from Zeus so that they would be able to defend their honeycombs against humans (Perry 163), donkeys ask to be released from their toils (Perry 185), and a snake which has been trodden on by several men complains about it to Zeus (Perry 198). Dogs also petition the supreme god for better treatment by humans in Phaedrus’ fable (4.19 = Perry 517).⁵² However, in general, Zeus declines animals’ petitions or promises to give them what they want on impossible terms. Therefore, these kinds of fables surely functioned as aetiologies—and justifications—for animal husbandry, as well as the ill- or carefree treatment of domestic animals. Donkeys were worked to death because Zeus did not give them equal justice.

The most extensive of the kinds of fables depicting humans as an enemy for other animals is the fable ‘The Owl and the Birds’, part of which is found in the so-called Ryland papyrus 493, which is from the first century CE.⁵³ The owl tries to warn other bird species of the dangerous fowler (*ikseutēs*). It is naturally an everyday observation that birds warn birds of their own species (and therefore, unintentionally, also of other species) about enemies. That the owl, a predator bird, is the warner here, is perhaps because of its sharp sight. The same kind of fable is preserved in the Augustana

that the fable of the hares and the lions was told by Antisthenes. We may suppose that Antisthenes, the founder of the Cynic School, has told the fable in order to advocate the philosophy that ‘might makes right’.

⁵¹ (Steiner 2010, p. 104). Steiner also suggests that Archilochus’ fable functions as a subtext for Callimachus’ (fragmentally preserved) second *Iamb* (from the third century BCE), where a fox and a swan complain that Zeus’ rule is not fair—thus implying that it is not like the rule of his father Cronus, which guaranteed peace and harmony for all animals and not just for humans. (Steiner 2010, pp. 97–99, 102).

⁵² The camel asks for bull-like horns (Perry 117; Syntipas 59, see (Perry 1952, p. 549)), and in a later fable, a hare asks the supreme god for horns like those of a stag (Perry 658). See also ‘Jupiter and the Goats’ (Phaedrus 4.17). In the Latin later fable, it is the lion as king of the animals, not Zeus or Jupiter, who dispenses justice by ordering that a wolf be hanged for eating sheep (Perry 596).

⁵³ The Ryland papyrus contains remnants of a collection of fables, five in all. (Adrados 1999, pp. 54–60).

collection (Perry 39), where it is not an owl, but a swallow, which tries to warn other birds about the fowlers' nets.⁵⁴

Dio Chrysostom, who lived in the second century CE, tells the same fable in a more elaborate fashion. The owl's warnings happen in the course of a long time. The time of the story marks human cultural and technical development, which meant more advanced methods in fowling. Time after time, the owl tries to warn other birds, but the situation becomes worse at every step. Finally, when she sees a man armed with a bow, the owl 'prophesies' (*prolekein*): 'This man will outstrip you with the help of your own feathers, for though he is on foot himself, he will send feathered shafts after you.' Other birds do not trust the owl's warning, albeit too late.⁵⁵ The teaching of this fable is apparently that wise men ('owls') are worth listening to. However, the fable also approaches bird-catching from the birds' point of view: fowling methods are painful and lethal and it becomes increasingly difficult to escape them. The growing threat to birds from human fowlers in these bird fables, and the one portrayed especially in Dio Chrysostom's version of 'The Owl and the Birds', reminds one of such modern classics as Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972) and Walt Disney's film *Bambi* (1942), where men are depicted as impersonal threats.

Describing humans as the enemies of many animals is expressed more clearly when humans are represented as carnivorous, as eaters of other animals. Some fables include sacrificial scenes and sacrificial animals, but they rarely make the connection between sacrificing and meat eating (see Phaedrus 5.4, Babrius 132, Perry 465). Eating animals is, however, treated in a much more concrete sense in the Old Comedies with animal choruses from the fifth century BCE, e.g., *The Birds*, *The Storks*, *The Ants*.⁵⁶ One possible theme in these mostly only fragmentally preserved animal-named comedies was the question of why humans treat animals as they do and why humans eat animals despite usually having plenty of other food to eat. The most explicit example of this theme is Crates' *Animals* (*Thēria*).⁵⁷ The animal choruses demanding the basic right to live or decent living can be compared with Aristophanes' women's comedies (*Lysistrata*, *The Women Celebrating the Thesmophoria* and *The Assemblywomen*), where women take over power (at least temporarily). Although these demands by animals in animal chorus comedies were apparently viewed as comical, these 'animal comedies' might also point to the current ways in which humans treated animals. Thus, in Aristophanes' *The Birds*, the only extant one of animal chorus comedies, cruel fowling practices are referred to both by the human protagonist Peisetaerus (522–38) and by the bird chorus, which even declares laws to protect birds from fowlers and bird-sellers (1077–87). Because these are all comedies, the Athenian audience were more likely to have laughed at, rather than pitied, the animals for these kinds of appeals. However, both the women's comedies and the animal chorus comedies gave the male audience of Athenian theatre the possibility to imagine situations from the (imagined) animal or female point of view. Therefore, they could have been lessons in empathy, a partial immersion in another's situation.⁵⁸

6. Concluding Words

Fables may sometimes bear traces of observation of the everyday behaviour of animals, although their motives can be humanised for the sake of the story. The most humanised feature of the animals

⁵⁴ Birds detect a man sowing flax seed, and then the seed sprouts. On both occasions, the swallow warns other birds that the men would make nets by braiding flax strings, but they ignore her. Therefore, birds live in constant danger of being trapped by nets. The swallow, however, decides to leave the other birds and live close to humans. The fact that swallows live near humans is also pointed out in the fable 'The Swallow and the Nightingale' (Perry 277, also told by Babrius 12): the nightingale declines the swallow's offer to live with humans by referring to her former tragic life as a human, a reference to the myth of Procne, Philomela, and Tereus. The swallow alludes to the same myth in 'The Crow and the Boastful Swallow', by asserting that she is the daughter of the King of Athens (Perry 377).

⁵⁵ Dio Chrysostom *Discourse* 12.7–10 (= Perry 437); see also *Discourse* 72.14–16 (= Perry 437a). See also (Adrados 1999, pp. 34–5). Translation of Dio's text is based on J. W. Cohoon's translation (1939). See (Cohoon 1939).

⁵⁶ The first were Magnes' *Birds* and Pherecrates' *Ant-men*. Crates' *Animals* (*Thēria*) in the 420s BCE was followed by Aristophanes' *The Birds* in 410 BCE, and later Archippus' *Fishes* (c. 402 BCE). On animal choruses, see (Rothwell 2007).

⁵⁸ (Korhonen 2017, pp. 144–58). The definition of empathy is Erika Ruonakoski's (Ruonakoski 2017, p. 40).

in fables is that animals are depicted as speaking human language.⁵⁹ While talking animals are part of the general storytelling in different modern genres (comics, animations, fairy-tales), talking animals were rare in Graeco-Roman literature and mythology. Fables are the exception, but the most commonly stated function of these talking animal characters in fables is to enable a discussion of ethical problems in everyday (human) situations by means of the simplification created by the use of animal characters. Unlike, for instance, the forceful and lively depictions of animals in the Homeric animal similes, which truly bring to mind the animals themselves, the animals in fables are humanised, often, however, more strongly in the concluding action (like the wolf's speech in 'The Raven, the Donkey and the Passing Wolf'). Yet, although animals in the Aesopic fables may talk, they are otherwise not overtly humanised (they do not, for example, wear clothes or stand upright).⁶⁰ Furthermore, fables in the type 'Begging for Mercy' could deal with such observed zoological facts as the 'surplus killing' of wolves and cats 'playing' with their prey.

Besides, if humanising makes it possible to use fables as examples for human situations, it also makes non-human species more readily understandable. Pascal Etler speaks about the emotionalisation of human-animal relationships in modern children's literature, meaning that humanised animals form part of a child's emotional education.⁶¹ In a way, fables already acted as children's literature in antiquity. The Roman rhetorician Quintilian from the first century CE states in his *Orator's Education* (1.9.2) that fables follow after nursery stories. However, the main function of the Aesopic fables was not to teach Greek and Roman schoolboys how to *feel*, but how to express themselves simply and clearly, along with the general worldly wisdom that fables offered.

Still, although animals in fables are humanised and the point of the story is not to sympathise with animals, fables also invite readers to consider the (imagined) point of view of animals, especially that of prey animals, the underdogs. If the audience of the *Iliad* identified with warriors and therefore, with predators in the similes, the overt focalisation of the victim, the prey, makes it possible to identify with them, the weak ones, in the fables. Then, one of the basic (and implied) questions behind some of these short stories, fables, may be why do animals (humans among others) harm, kill, and eat other animals? Why should one's life continue only at the expense of the death of others? Why are there those who kill? The modern response is that carnivorous predators eat prey because, otherwise, they simply could not survive and, furthermore, predators have an ecologically important role in the ecosystem. Instead, some fables imply that eating other sentient living beings may also be viewed as an act which needs to at least be humorously justified. The larger picture is the idea of decline, a lapse since the Golden Age when all animals lived in 'peace' without harming each other. In this train of thought, killing and eating other animals was a sign of moral decline.⁶²

The 'war' between species, which was based on some enmities between two animals of different species, was not only a fictitious reason, but an explanation used by Aristotle. In his hunting manual with hounds, Socrates' contemporary Xenophon calls prey animals strong 'adversaries' (*antipala*) of (human) hunters, which fight both for their lives (*psychai*) and for their dwellings (*Cynegeticus* 13.14). Some fables can depict a reverse rhetoric by depicting humans as enemies – even as a collective threat to other animals, especially wild birds. Although animals attempting to seek justice against human

⁵⁹ In Greek myths, animals usually did not talk human language, but there were some humans, like the seer Teiresias, who could understand animal languages. In the *Iliad*, Achilles' divine horse Xanthus is bestowed with the gift of human speech at a critical moment (*Iliad* 19.400–423). But it was a special occasion, a present by the goddess Hera, not an ability of this divine animal in general. Poets sometimes used a certain rhetorical device, the so-called *prosopopoeia* ('making a mask', speaking as another person), like Theognis, the lyric poet from the sixth century BCE: he has a few lines in which the lyric speaker is a mare (Theognis 257–60).

⁶⁰ Although animals in modern animal sensitive children's literature, like the rabbits Hazel and Fiver in *Watership Down*, seem to be much more humanised than the animals in ancient fables (the rabbits have names, for instance), they also preserve their animal specificity, e.g., the societal structure of rabbits.

⁶¹ (Eitler 2014, p. 95).

⁶² On the ancient ideas that the introduction of meat eating coincided with the moral decline of mankind, see, for instance, (Dombrowski 2014, pp. 536–37).

violence can be viewed as a satirical or comical topic – like women gaining power in Aristophanes’ women’s comedies—this topic might also be viewed as an implicit way of educating empathy by putting oneself in the position of the underdogs in human societies, the non-human others.

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Article

Eloquent Alogia: Animal Narrators in Ancient Greek Literature

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Abstract: Classical Greek literature presents a variety of speaking animals. These are not, of course, the actual voices of animals but human projections. In a culture that aligns verbal mastery with social standing, verbal animals present a conundrum that speaks to an anxiety about human communication. I argue that the earliest examples of speaking animals, in Homer, Hesiod and Archilochus, show a fundamental connection with Golden Age tales. Later authors, such as Plutarch and Lucian, look back on such cases from a perspective that does not easily accept notions of divine causation that would permit such fanciful modes of communication. I argue that Plutarch uses a talking pig to challenge philosophical categories, and that Lucian transforms a sham-philosopher of a talking-cock to undermine the very pretense of philosophical virtue.

Keywords: animals; Achilles; Archilochus; fox; Gryllus; Hesiod; Homer; Lucian; pig; Plutarch; Pythagoras; rooster; Xanthus

1. Introduction

Aristotle (*Politics*, 1.2) and Cicero (*De inventione*, 1.4) both maintained that language forms one of the critical distinctions between humans and beasts (Fögen 2003, 2007). This attitude can even be felt in the Greek adjective *alogon* (“without *logos*”), which means not only “irrational” and “without language” but also (as a noun) “animal”.¹ Thus, as Gera and Heath have amply demonstrated, in early Greek culture verbal mastery was strongly correlated to social standing (Gera 2003; Heath 2005). Animals, since they lack altogether the capacity for language, demarcate one end of a spectrum that leads toward the masters of persuasive speech, and marginal figures like children, women, foreigners, the uneducated, and those with communicative disabilities are mapped somewhere between these extremes. Verbal animals, therefore, represent a category crisis that demands explanation (Fögen 2003, 2007), and by situating speaking animals in the wider range of classical attitudes we can hear a paradoxically eloquent *alogia*.

The “animal turn” in contemporary literary studies seeks to take the role of animals in literature more seriously, based, in part, on the modern realization that animal (and even plant) communication is far more complicated than had previously been realized (McDonnell 2014; DeMello 2013; Plec 2013; Karban 2015; Radick 2007; Diamond 1992; Herman 2016). Yet efforts to study animal narrators constantly bump up against the limits of this project.² Speaking animals are presented in terms of a uniquely human trait, namely *human* language (Wolfe 2016), and thus they are constructed via a pathetic fallacy that offers us not a window into the bestial soul but a mirror that reflects how humans

¹ In the story of Epimetheus’ botched distribution of animal capacities, for example, Plato says that the dim-witted Titan apportioned all available skill-sets and capabilities among the beasts (*ta aloga*) while forgetting to reserve any such benefit for humans (*Protagoras*, 321b–c).

² See (DeMello 2013) and (Herman 2016) for creative efforts to overcome this problem.

conceptualize (i.e., create and make knowable through our language) animals. Such an assertion need not deny or even erode the possibility of animal languages or human–non-human communication.³ I am confident that I and the dog, who keeps me company as I write this article, communicate, but as soon as I “report” his words by means of my vocabulary, grammar and personal context, I am speaking through or for him rather than hearing his voice.⁴

Even if the idea of hearing what animals really want to “say” must remain a fantasy, in taking literary depictions of verbal animals more seriously, we can hope to reach other goals. In the following pages I build on the work of Gera, Heath, and Fögen (Fögen 2003, 2007; Gera 2003; Heath 2005) to suggest that speaking animals from ancient Greek literature often engage with Golden Age narratives. I begin with two archaic case-studies: a horse, who speaks prophetic Homeric hexameters, and a fabular fox, whose voice provides an ethical example for human conflict. In these early examples, the animals are fully animal and their voices derive from an earlier world order that is no longer directly accessible. These animal voices thus have another-worldly authority, and their speech works differently from the limited and fallible language of humans, thereby setting up a contrast between the two systems of communication. I then turn to the later end of antiquity, where a pig and a rooster speak, but only because they used to be human. The gimmick of a talking animal may have lost its attractions by this era, since these animals speak not from another world but as overtly humanized voices that provide philosophical (pig) and satirical (rooster) commentary on their contemporary world and earlier Greek culture.⁵ These later examples look back to earlier models to establish animal voices as a miraculous interruption of the world order, but the supernatural gambit quickly devolves into a commentary on purely human affairs.

2. Houyhnhmic Prophecy

With his divine maternal inheritance, Achilles experiences human emotions at a superhuman level. His *mênis* (the “rage” that drives the *Iliad*) is a form of divine, rather than human, anger, and his grief at the loss of his beloved Patroclus prompts a berserker’s bloodlust few social codes can tolerate (Muellner 1996). Thus, as he grieves for his dead friend it is hardly surprising that he rails even against Xanthus and Balios, his horses that had conveyed Patroclus into, but not back from, battle. The surprise, rather, is that Xanthus replies to Achilles’ chastisement with ten hexameter lines that refute the hero’s charge that the horses were somehow negligent in Patroclus’ death and predict Achilles’ own imminent demise at the hands of Paris and Apollo. Homer frames the horse’s words with two divine interventions: he notes that Hera had granted Xanthus the power of speech (*audêeis*, 19.407), and the Erinyes (Furies) then immediately check his voice (*eskethon audên*, 19.418).⁶

These lines have long puzzled Homeric commentators, and the relevant issues are difficult to resolve.⁷ I follow Johnston’s arguments that this scene pulls together a variety of mythical motifs that are only alluded to here (Johnston 1992). Most importantly, she reconstructs a heroic pattern of Hera giving divinely-sired speaking horses to heroes and claims that the Erinyes appear because of

³ For this general concept, see (Plec 2013); for the ancient debate about animal rationality in general, see (Sorabji 1993; Horky 2017); and on the role of talking birds in this ancient debate, see (Sorabji 1993, pp. 80–85) and (Newmeyer 2017, pp. 66–67).

⁴ I am grateful to the anonymous referee of this article who directed me to Arrian, *Cynegeticus* 5.2 as an ancient parallel for this relationship between an author and his dog.

⁵ Though the historical disjunction is not strict. (Spittler 2008, pp. 130–40) discusses the example of a talking dog in the *Acts of Peter* in relation to classical models.

⁶ Homer’s *Odyssey* presents several other moments of animal communication: an eagle that represents Odysseus speaks in a dream to Penelope (19.535–50), Odysseus’ dog Argus does not speak, but he lifts his head, sees through his master’s disguise, and wags his tail at the sight of his long-lost friend (17.291–327), and the Cyclops Polyphemus addresses his ram (9.446–60) in a manner that may suggest that the animal had the ability to respond in the past. For the latter scene, see (Fögen 2007, pp. 67–68; Gera 2003, pp. 13–15; Heath 2005, pp. 79–84).

⁷ Already the ancient commentaries (*scholia vetera*) on Homer grappled with these lines. A note on line 407 takes the time to explain that *audêeis* implies “having the voice of a rational animal” (λογικου ζώου φωνήν έχοντα) and another on 418 alternately proposes that the Furies are involved here because they are “overseers of things contrary to nature” (ἐπίσκοποι γάρ εἰσι τῶν παρὰ φύσιν) or because a pronouncement about death had been made.

their chthonic connections with prophecy. On Johnston's reading, we should not assume that Hera has just now given Xanthus the power to speak nor that the Furies have done anything more than brought the motivation for this prophesy to an end. They do not, that is, permanently remove Xanthus' ability to converse in human language. I agree with Johnston's assessment of the details of this scene, but I add that the Erinyes' silencing of Xanthus parallels a range of details suggesting that epic bards pitched their tales as coming from a lost era that was closer to a Golden Age (Gera 2003, pp. 18–67). The Erinyes take the horse's voice, that is, not in a narrow move to deprive Xanthus of his special powers but as one of many indicators that the "there and then" is different from the "here and now".⁸

Narratives about the end of a Golden Age tend to draw on a standard set of motifs, such as the separation of divinities from humans, a shortening of the human lifespan, the end of spontaneously produced agricultural bounty, the need for clothing and, most important for our project, the transformation of language. Familiar stories from Genesis make this clear. Adam and Eve must leave the Garden of Eden, where they had interacted directly with God, after an encounter with a talking serpent. Once outside this enclosed paradisiacal space and cast into the wilderness beyond, the world is governed by a different set of rules. Later in Genesis, the cataclysmic flood (a common Near Eastern motif) provides a second cultural rupture that reboots humanity and leaves us with shorter life spans. The theme of language looms most prominently in the tale of Babel, where the unified human language is divided into countless tongues in response to human transgression.⁹ The end of Golden Age narratives helps construct a familiar pre-modern world in which we no longer live as long as Methusela, and we wear clothes as we work the fields; animals provide us with labor and food; and whereas snakes no longer speak, humans have a wide variety of languages. Augustine even suggests that language as we now understand it is itself a consequence of our expulsion from the Garden: "The explanation for the bodily (*corporaliter*) uttering of all these words is the nadir of the age and the blindness of the flesh, by which thoughts cannot be seen, with the result that there is this tintinnabulation in the ears" (*Confessions* 13.23.34).¹⁰

Although the details can be changed, the rough opposition between *then* and *now* is replayed in Greek sources as well. The wedding of the mortal Peleus and immortal Thetis, which precipitates the entire Trojan saga, shows gods and humans feasting together as a feature of a world that is fading away in Homer's poems.¹¹ Scodel has shown that the flood narrative has been adapted into the Homeric context through the anticipated deluge that Apollo and Poseidon will orchestrate at the end of the Trojan War to destroy the Achaean wall (*Iliad* 12.3–35) (Scodel 1982). Both the land of the Cyclopes and Scheria, the home of the Phaeacians, show some signs of being Golden Age spaces, at least until they interact with Odysseus.¹² The same idea of a new world ordering appears in Hesiod's tale of how gods and humans gathered at Mecone and made a new settlement to facilitate communication for the coming era in which mortals and immortals no longer interact directly. This new order came about when the Titan Prometheus (the father of Deucalion, the lone male survivor of the Greek flood) demonstrated the basic sacrificial precedent for burning the well-dressed but inedible portions of an animal to the gods while reserving the seemingly humbler but more nutritive bits for human consumption. Human existence is now framed in terms of our estrangement from the gods and

⁸ This is not to say, however, that I agree with those who interpret the Erinyes as guardians of the natural order (e.g., Edwards 1991, p. 285). There is some evidence for this position in the scholium (ancient commentary) to line 19.418, but that is hardly convincing whereas Johnston's counterarguments are.

⁹ Herodotus (2.2–5) preserves a tale about the Egyptian Pharaoh Psammetichus conducting an experiment to discover the original and natural language of humans. Based on the first word uttered by an infant raised in isolation, the Pharaoh concluded that Phrygian is the original human language.

¹⁰ All translations are my own.

¹¹ Descriptions of the wedding are preserved at *Kypria* fr. 3 Davies 1988 = fr. 3 Bernabé 1987, Pindar *Pythian* 3.86–96, *Nemian* 4.65–68, 5.22–39, *Isthmian* 8.46–47, and on the Francois Vase.

¹² Both areas are notably fecund and their inhabitants have easier interactions with some divinities, yet both have non-Golden Age traits as well (Vidal-Naquet 1998, pp. 26–27) on Scheria as both an ideal and a typical Greek settlement; (Gera 2003, p. 15) on the land of the Cyclopes as a "halfway golden age world"; see also Plutarch, *Cryllus*, 986F.

our domination over animals, who come to serve as our food and a means for contacting the gods. The clearest proof that Hesiod was thinking in terms of epochal distinctions appears in his account of the five ages, in which the Golden Age fades to Silver, then Bronze before an age of heroes intervenes, and we find ourselves (with Hesiod) in the sad age of Iron (*Works and Days*, 109–201). The heroes who became the subject of Homeric poetry thus inhabit a story world that precedes our current degraded age, but they too are separated from the earliest and best eras. What all these stories have in common is that they present a different system of being in the world, in contrast to which the current era must develop indirect and imperfect means for communicating with the divine realm through such structures as sacrifice and prayer.

In classical sources, we hear more about the movement from loquacious humans into the animal realm (most famously in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*), but a few writers preserve the idea of a primordial world in which animals could speak. Callimachus, working in Alexandria in the third-century BCE, offers one example of this in the second poem of his now fragmentary collection of *Iambi* (Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 152–90; Steiner 2010). The poem centers in an Aesopic tale about an era when animals could talk, and a swan asked the gods for a release from aging.¹³ The request seems to have been turned down, because a fox accuses Zeus of ruling unjustly (without *dikê*). In response to this increasingly unruly cacophony of voices, the father of gods and men decides to silence the animals and transfer their voices to humans. There follows a list of jokes that modern readers are not well positioned to assess, but the basic logic is simple enough: the story explains why so-and-so now speaks like a dog, someone else like a donkey, etc. Years later, Callimachus' fellow Alexandrian, Philo (c. 25 BCE–50 CE) told a similar tale, surely inspired, as Acosta-Hughes has shown, by Callimachus' poem (Acosta-Hughes 2002, pp. 175–82). In commenting on the Biblical story of Babel, Philo relays a tale about a time when animals shared a common language (*De confusione linguarum* 6–8). This ability to communicate leads to a network of shared values and sympathies, and eventually they raise a collective voice demanding immortality for themselves. Predictably, the animals are punished by having their shared language splintered. The unified political force of the animals is neutered when their ability to share their thoughts and feelings is taken away, and the Golden Age concludes by leaving the world with voiceless and brutish animals that have no claim to justice. Finally, the fable writer Babrius (probably working in Cilicia in the first or second century CE) looks back to a bygone era when animals could speak. His first prologue sets up this division between *then* and *now* by positing three ages (Gold, Silver and Iron) and then positioning Aesop as the unique intermediary whose knowledge of the animal world permits him to transmit that lore to us (Prologue 1.5–16, Perry):

ἐπὶ τῆς δὲ χρυσοῦς καὶ τὰ λοιπὰ τῶν ζώων
 φωνὴν ἔναρθρον εἶχε καὶ λόγους ἦδει
 οἷους περ ἡμεῖς μυθέομεν πρὸς ἀλλήλους,
 ἀγοραὶ δὲ τούτων ἦσαν ἐν μέσαις ὕλαις.
 ἐλάλει δὲ πεύκη καὶ τὰ φύλλα τῆς δάφνης,
 καὶ πλωτὸς ἰχθύς συνελάλει φίλῳ ναύτη,
 στρουθοὶ δὲ συνετὰ πρὸς γεωργὸν ὠμίλου.
 ἐφύετ' ἐκ γῆς πάντα μηδὲν αἰτούσης,
 θνητῶν δ' ὑπῆρχε καὶ θεῶν ἔταιρείη.
 μάθοις ἂν οὕτω ταῦτ' ἔχοντα καὶ γνοίης
 ἐκ τοῦ σοφοῦ γέροντος ἡμῖν Αἰσώπου.
 μύθους φράσαντος τῆς ἐλευθέρης μούσης.

Now, in the Golden age the other creatures, too, had intelligible voices and used words such as we ourselves do in telling each other tales, and their gatherings were among the trees. Even the Pine and the leaves of the Laurel talked, the Fish as it swam chatted with

¹³ Speaking animals are, of course, a commonplace of ancient fables. See (Fögen 2007, pp. 67–68) and (Gera 2003, pp. 207–12).

the friendly sailor, and the Sparrows conversed intelligibly with the Farmer. Everything grew from the untilled earth, and among mortals and gods good fellowship prevailed. That this was so, you may learn and fully understand from wise old Aesop, who has told us fables with his free Muse.

The wisdom of fables, that is, comes to us from a different era of discourse, and whereas Homer and Hesiod claim to access privileged information via the inspiration of the divine Muses, Callimachus and Babrius set up Aesop as the historical intermediary node of communication. Callimachus, Philo and Babrius provide an outline for understanding the end of the Golden Age in terms of a transformation of language that explains why communication—among humans but also between the realms of animals, humans and gods—is so difficult. The fantasy of a time when such communication was simpler and more straightforward speaks to a deep human anxiety about limitations of language.

To return to the case of Xanthus, as the Erinyes silence the speaking horse, we can recognize one more epoch-ending moment. On this reading, it makes perfect sense that the horse speaks in an oracular mode. A speaking animal in this context does not replace human voices (as, for example, the mock-epic *Battle of Mice and Frogs*, which substitutes animals for Homeric characters), rather it gives the impression of a Golden Age moment of communication. The voice is, therefore, not uniquely equine either, since the information Xanthus gives could have been provided just as well by a passing eagle or come through the medium of a human prophet, a divine epiphany or an animal sacrifice.¹⁴ The layering of temporal frames within which Xanthus' lines ring forth makes this particularly poignant, as the greatest figure of the heroic age hears a last Golden Age communication. Achilles learns that his own demise draws near, while we realize that we stand at a double separation from such clarity of communication and understanding. Animals no longer speak, and Xanthus' unexpected Homeric eloquence derives not from his horseness or his animality but, rather, from the entire complex of Golden Age idealizations against which the human condition is framed.

3. What Does the Fox Say?

Whereas Homer and Hesiod emerge from a panhellenic story-telling tradition in contact with the Near East, Archilochus, remembered as the seventh-century BCE “inventor” of iambic (and sometimes also elegiac) poetry, speaks with a voice localized in the Aegean islands (especially Paros and Thasos). Archilochean *iambos* conjures a strikingly un-heroic world that contrasts sharply with the beauty and nobility of Homer. The scurrility for which he was later reviled, however, seems not to have been out of place in the archaic and classical eras. Indeed he was frequently remembered as one of the preeminent early poets (“second only to Homer”), which makes it all the more lamentable that his corpus survives today in a hodge-podge of papyrus scraps and quotations by later authors.¹⁵ Legends about his life coalesce around a scenario in which an older Parian named Lycambes had promised to give his daughter Neobule to him in marriage. When Lycambes reneged, Archilochus retaliated with such a vicious barrage of poetry that Lycambes and his daughters hanged themselves in shame. Whatever kernel of truth may lie beneath the accreted layers of elaboration, this story provides an ideal etiology for one aspect of archaic Greek *iambos*, namely its power to launch blistering verbal attacks upon a personal enemy. A prominent feature of Archilochean invective is the incorporation of fables (not yet associated with Aesop at this early date) in which animals speak, and these voices offer a starkly different kind of eloquent *alogia*.

¹⁴ This is not to say that the role of the horse is irrelevant here. Horses have close connections with heroes, making the former an apt choice for communicating with the latter. The Greek fabular economy of animal types was rich and complex, but that is a matter of medium. In this case, the aptly chosen medium of the horse delivers a message that is not, in itself, in any way equine.

¹⁵ Dio Chrysostom (*Orations* 33.11–12) is the most overt in putting Archilochus on par with Homer. For a detailed assessment of the ancient pairing of the two poets, see (Lavigne 2016).

The poem that has most plausibly been connected to the rupture between Archilochus and Lycambes begins by setting the conflict in front of the Parian community (fr. 172 West):

πάτερ Λυκάμβρα, ποῖον ἐφράσω τόδε;
τίς σὰς παρήειρε φρένας
ἦς τὸ πρὶν ἠρήρησθα; νῦν δὲ δὴ πολὺς
ἄστοῖσι φαίνεται γέλως.

Father Lycambes, what have you schemed?!
Who has taken away your wits,
Which once were sound? Now before the citizens
You seem completely ridiculous.

Very little is certain about the reconstruction of this poem, but it seems to go on to mention a broken oath (fr. 173 West) before introducing a fable (*ainos*, cognate with *ainigma* or “riddle”) about a fox and an eagle, who struck up a friendship (fr. 174 West). This fable later became associated with Aesop and was widely known throughout antiquity, but presumably Archilochus’ version was not exactly the same as those later retellings. Nonetheless, the bits of this poem that survive accord with the basic plot that the eagle broke faith with the fox, snatched up its kits, and gave them as a meal to her eaglets (fr. 175 speaks of “bringing an unlovely meal to unfledged children” who seem to be in a nest). As the fox curses its fate, the eaglets somehow fall to the ground where they are gobbled up by the bereft fox.

Most commentators associate details of the legend of the broken marriage agreement with specific themes in the fable (Steiner 2010; Irwin 1998; Hawkins 2008) “Father” Lycambes, the older, loftier, figure stands for the eagle, since both turn their backs on a pre-established plan. Archilochus plays the part of the fox (which he does in other poems), who is jilted but ultimately finds a path to revenge. And the whole animal narrative hinges on the role of children, the expected goal and outcome of any marriage in ancient Greek culture. By going back on his promise to marry his daughter to Archilochus and thereby depriving the poet of future offspring, Lycambes acts like the eagle.

Within this framework, we find two moments when the fox speaks. First, in fr. 176 West, most readers agree that the fox, already mourning the loss of its kits, says to itself:

ὄραῖς ἴν’ ἐστὶ κείνος ὑψηλὸς πάγος,
τρηχὺς τε καὶ παλίγκοτος;
ἐν τῷι κάθηται, σὴν ἐλαφρίζων μάχην

Do you see where that high crag is,
sheer and unapproachable?
There it [presumably the eagle] sits making fun of your assaults.

Nothing that the fox can do—accusing, cursing, grieving, pleading—influences the eagle, safe at its inaccessible elevation, just as Lycambes remains safe from the complaints of Archilochus. It may be that as the fox recognizes the ineffectiveness of such approaches, she comes up with a more powerful strategy. Fr. 177 West (again, assumed to be spoken by the fox) is a prayer to Zeus:

ὦ Ζεῦ, πάτερ Ζεῦ, σὸν μὲν οὐρανοῦ κράτος,
σὺ δ’ ἔργ’ ἐπ’ ἀνθρώπων ὄραῖς
λεωργὰ καὶ θεμιστά, σοὶ δὲ θηρίων
ὑβρις τε καὶ δίκη μέλει.

O Zeus, father Zeus, you who wield heaven’s power,
You look upon the affairs of humans,
Both reckless and lawful, and the beasts’
Transgressions and justice are your concern.

These lines stake three claims, when we focus on the role of the speaking animal. First, Archilochus here reverses a point made by Hesiod in *Works and Days*, which claims that Zeus gave justice (*dikē*) to humans but not to “fish, beasts and winged birds” (276–80), who eat one another as part of the natural order.¹⁶ Earlier in that same poem, Hesiod had told a fable about a hawk and a nightingale, and that inset tale, directed specifically to “kings who understand” (202), suggested that might makes right both among animals and humans. With his later comment about the uniquely human relevance of justice, however, he shows the limitations of thinking of animals as models for people. As a symbol, the hawk appears in the poem as a representative of human rapacity, but as a bird, its domination of the nightingale has no ethical valence whatsoever, since matters of justice are absent from the animal realm. Animals are incorporated into a human ethical discourse only to be excluded *as animals* from ethical concerns or included only inasmuch as they offer a taxonomy of human types.

Second, by reversing Hesiod’s separation of humans and animals in terms of justice, Archilochus makes a strikingly different move—one that encourages fantasies about how animals might have been conceptualized differently had Archilochus, rather than Hesiod, emerged as the canonical poet. Archilochus’ (fox’s) presentation of a Zeus concerned for animal justice allows us to return to the relationship between his poem’s framing narrative (about Lycambes and, presumably, the ruptured marriage pact) and the inset fable. As Payne has already noted, the fox’s claim establishes a sympathetic continuity between human and animal (Payne 2010, p. 35). Archilochus’ anger at Lycambes exists on the same spectrum as the fox’s anger at the treacherous eagle, and this encourages us to evaluate the human and animal scenarios on similar terms. If it is natural and unobjectionable for the fox to eat the eagle’s offspring, then such a response should be acceptable in Archilochus’ reaction to Lycambes. The story that Lycambes and his family committed suicide thus balances the conclusion of the fable. Whereas Hesiod’s denial of justice to animals makes the hawk’s treatment of the nightingale ethically different from an unequal power dynamic among humans, Archilochus creates a scenario in which human justice can be informed by non-human behavior. The fox’s eating of the eaglets becomes both ethically justified and driven by an impassioned need for revenge.

If Archilochus’ fable elides the differences between him and the fox, we find two apt comparisons in Trojan War mythology. Near the end of the *Iliad*, as Achilles and Hector face off, the latter suggests a plan that the eventual victor should respect the corpse of the defeated enemy. To this Achilles responds that there can be no such agreements between lions and humans or between wolves and sheep (22.261–67). Moments later Hector lies dying, and he begs Achilles to grant him proper burial. Achilles wishes that “my fury (*menos*) and spirit (*thumos*) could prompt me to chop you up and eat your flesh raw” (346–47), and he predicts that Hector’s corpse will be devoured by dogs and birds (335–36 and 348). We hear no speaking animals in this scene, but we find the limits of Achilles’ rage, since he cannot quite become animal to actually ingest his enemy, a job he leaves to scavenging birds and dogs who will eat Hector’s flesh but without Achilles’ animus. Later, in an episode not preserved in Homer but related in Euripides’ *Hecuba*, Hector’s mother, Hecuba, reaches her breaking point after the fall of Troy as she is forced to face horror upon horror enacted upon her children. When she hears that her youngest son Polydorus has been killed by a former ally, she takes vengeance on her enemy’s children. In the outcome, the ghost of her son tells her that she will be transformed into a dog (1265) and her final resting place will be known as “Bitch’s Tomb” (1271–73). Franco has shown how this fate represents a fitting emblem of Hecuba’s relentless focus on defending her children, a trait closely associated with a maternal canine instinct in early Greek literature (Franco 2014, pp. 108–18).¹⁷

¹⁶ As noted by Corrêa (Da Cunha Corrêa 2007, pp. 112–13). For the fullest treatment of animals in Archilochus, see (Da Cunha Corrêa 2010).

¹⁷ Gregory emphasizes the darker side of this association when she notes that “Hecuba has become morally indistinguishable from the dog whose shape she is destined to assume” (Gregory 1999, p. xxxiii). For an excellent treatment of Hecuba’s revenge narrative, as well as a succinct overview of the history of scholarship on this topic dating back to the Renaissance, see (Mossman 1995, pp. 164–203).

Whereas Achilles cannot quite cross into an animal savagery, Hecuba behaves like “a bitch protecting her pups” (Semonides, fr. 7.34–36 West), and this brings her to the point of being something other than human, what Kovacs has described as an “extraordinary force, at once sub-human and super-human, bestial and divine” (Kovacs 1987, p. 109).¹⁸ Archilochus uses his animal fable and the words of the fox to do something similar: within his poem he assimilates his lust for revenge to that of the fox and thereby normalizes his murderous intent via the just practices of animals as authorized by Zeus. At the conclusion of the fable we return to the world of human voices, but the speaking fox demonstrates that human passion is both regulated by the dictates of justice while also being extended and normalized through the example of the animals’ conflict.

As a final comment on the fox’s voice, we can return to the comparison between animal voices and sacrifice. Hesiod’s Prometheus shows that sacrifice was established at the moment when gods and humans ceased to eat together, the moment, that is, when face-to-face communication ended. A new social order goes hand-in-hand with a new approach to food and animals, and sacrifice becomes an imperfect substitute for direct communication between humans and divinities. At a moment of crisis and despair, the Archilochean fox prays, and his prayer (another postlapsarian stop-gap) is answered. Later versions of the fable, such as *Aesopica* 1 (Perry 1952) and the Latin version of Phaedrus (1.28), say that the eagle snatched a bit of smoldering sacrificial meat from an altar and that this hot morsel set the birds’ nest ablaze, causing the unfledged eaglets to fall to the ground, where the fox gobbled them up. Although the surviving Archilochean fragments are so incomplete that we cannot be certain of all the details, several words suggest that this basic pattern was to be found in his poem as well. The fox’s ability to speak derives from a Golden Age past, but whereas Xanthus speaks with divine authority and inspiration, the fox serves as an idealized model of life beyond the Golden Age. The fox’s prayer works, since it leads directly to a violation of sacrificial practice (food on an altar is for the gods) and divinely sanctioned retribution. The fabular animal’s voice can do what human prayer intends, namely to convey mortal concerns directly to the divine realm and to prompt a direct response. Prayer does not always work that way for humans, and thus the fox’s voice (like that of Achilles’ horse) suggests the fantasy of a world in which contact with the divine is direct and efficacious. This pattern inside Archilochus’ poem parallels the legendary efficacy of his poetry in human society as attested by the legendary suicide of the Lycambids.

4. Happy as Pig in Mud

We now jump nearly a thousand years from Archilochus’ archaic milieu to a time when Rome exerts stable control over Greece and imperial trade routes foster communication across a huge swath of cultures. Earlier examples could, of course, be adduced, but by sampling cases of talking animals from the early and late extremities of the classical Greek world, we can find a broad vista of attitudes and approaches to this narrative device. As we will see, furthermore, imperial Greek authors frequently returned to material drawn from much earlier eras. One such example comes from Plutarch (c. 46–120), the prolific Boeotian biographer, essayist, civil servant and Middle Platonist philosopher. Within his collection of shorter works known as the *Moralia*, we find a brief, and probably fragmentary, dialogue typically known as *Gryllus*, also titled “On the Fact that Unreasoning Creatures Use Reason”. This longer title plays on the oxymoron that animals (*ta aloga*, “the things lacking *logos*”) by etymological definition lack *logos*, which means both “reason” and “voice”, even though the text presents a speaking pig arguing on behalf of its own intelligence. As often with humorous texts, how we assess that pun will frame what we take away from this essay, which can be understood as anything from pure frivolity to a serious case for animal intelligence in stark contrast to Stoic thinking.

¹⁸ Franco speaks of Hecuba’s “uncontrollable wrath”, which calls to mind Achilles’ ferocious return to battle after the death of Patroclus (Franco 2014, p. 110). Hecuba’s delimitation of human boundaries participates in a network of themes that Ringer studies throughout Euripides’ corpus (Ringer 2016).

Plutarch sets the stage at a very particular moment in mythical history. Odysseus is speaking with Circe in a manner that suggests that he has already saved his own crew from her magic and that we are toward the end of his first and longer stay on the island or, perhaps better, during his brief visit on his return from the Land of the Dead. The latter seems to be suggested in the text's opening statement from the hero: "I think that I've learned and remembered these things" (985D), which presumably refers to the information that Circe had sent Odysseus to learn from the dead seer Tiresias. This abrupt beginning immediately transitions into Odysseus' real interest, namely whether or not Circe has any Greeks among the menagerie of "manimals" living in her yard whom he might save. He expects, reasonably enough, that he would gain even greater renown if he were to bring home anyone who has been living in thrall as a beast under her magical spell. Circe acknowledges that there are quite a few Greeks and gives Odysseus a chance to persuade them to leave with him. To facilitate this exchange, she calls forth one pig, whom she dubs Gryllus ("the grunter"), who will speak on behalf of the others.

Odysseus makes his pitch to the pig and is immediately rebuffed. Gryllus says that he and the others live a life of plenty and would hate to become once again human, that "most wretched of all animals" (986D). Odysseus responds with the observation that Gryllus seems to have lost not only his human form but also his intelligence (*dianoia*). This quip looks back to a detail in the *Odyssey* where Homer specifies that Circe transformed the outward appearance of Odysseus' crew into pigs in every detail but they retained their human minds (*noos*, 10.239–40). Konstan stresses the point that Gryllus must be considered either completely porcine or (far preferable) completely human in the appearance of a pig, because ancient Greek thinking did not include a concept of an actual hybrid nature. That is to say that even hybrid creatures, such as centaurs, do not exhibit "a split within the rational function itself, which would take the form of a double identity," on the model of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Konstan 2010–2011, p. 373). Yet this point seems to be perfectly clear already in the Homeric scene and Plutarch's rebooting of it: neither author presents a pig but, rather, a human who is living in a boarish guise and lifestyle.¹⁹ For the purposes of this volume, this might seem to disqualify Gryllus from our discussion, yet since I am beginning from the assumption that we never hear actual animal voices in these texts, we are on much the same footing as we were with Achilles' horse and Archilochus' fox: we are hearing a human or divine or Golden Age voice projected into an animal body. In contrast to our archaic examples, however, Plutarch makes this more explicit.

The question then remains, what can we make of this later example of a ventriloquized voice? The dialogue plays out like a defense of the ethical capacities of animals in contrast to human shortcomings, and Newmeyer is among those who find in these arguments a strong case in favor of the existence of animal rationality (Newmeyer 2017, pp. 66–67; Newmeyer 2006). Gryllus discusses the primary virtues in succession, working through courage (*andreia*), moderation (*sôphrosunê*) and prudence (*phronêsis*).¹⁹ In each case he argues that animals fulfill these human ideals naturally and effortlessly, whereas humans require enormous amounts of effort and training even to approximate their bestial counterparts. Yet as Konstan shows, the concept of virtue within the classical and post-classical Greek philosophical vocabulary exists separately from those capacities that a being fulfills naturally, by *physis* (Konstan 2010–2011, pp. 375–76).²⁰ That is to say that if an animal naturally displays what humans would call courage, then this cannot be an example of the courageous virtue, since it is not a learned or reflective behavior but is, rather, reflexive and automatic. More modern observational studies of animal behavior complicate this picture significantly in ways that leave exceptional human capacities in serious doubt, but from the perspective of Plutarch's era, it seems unlikely that Gryllus could be read as pushing a serious proposition about animal rationality, the necessary prerequisite for the idea of animal virtue. Yet this circular system of exclusion that

¹⁹ This point is picked up by Spencer, who depicts Gryllus as happy to remain a pig because of his preexisting character: "Let Grill be Grill and have his hoggish mind" (*Faerie Queene*, 2.12.87).

²⁰ Pre-classical, pre-philosophical virtue (*aretê*) by contrast, was inborn and therefore not a matter of training but of birth.

privileges human definitions at every turn does not necessarily exhaust the possibility of hearing an important message in this animal voice.²¹

If animals cannot be virtuous, there remain two possible reasons for thinking of them as beings worthy of moral consideration. One idea, raised by Plutarch in another text (*On the Eating of Animals*) and endorsed by various thinkers throughout the classical era (most famously by Pythagoras and most thoroughly by Porphyry, the third-century Neoplatonist) posits that animals and humans exist within the same cycle of metempsychosis. If an animal contains the soul of my dead parent, then that animal deserves serious moral consideration and should not be eaten or mistreated.²² This theme is peripheral to Gryllus' arguments, but if Plutarch was angling for a serious reconsideration of attitudes toward animals, he may have taken up different aspects of this larger project in separate texts. What may, however, be implicit in Gryllus' strategy, is the idea that without any philosophical rigor animals have developed a manner of living that is superior even to a philosophically informed human existence.²³ As Newmeyer puts it, "[in Gryllus], as in *De sollertia animalium* [*On the Intelligence of Animals*], Plutarch is suggesting that *physis* and reason, or *λόγος* (*logos*), are not incompatible, but are rather to be seen as equally responsible for guiding the actions of animals" (Newmeyer 2006, p. 37). Plutarch, often quite stark in his disdain for Stoic principals, may have used Gryllus to show that even if we find the pig's philosophy to be problematic, animals exert a different but valid kind of ethical claim upon humans.

Plutarch, then, presents animals not as rational creatures (since their seemingly virtuous behaviors are the result of instinct) but, rather, as creatures who inhabit something like a Golden Age frame of existence in the here and now, in which desires are aligned with capacities and needs in such a way that virtue itself is irrelevant. Just as Adam and Eve initially had no shame at their nakedness and Greek mythology recalls an era when humans and divinities shared easy and direct interactions, Plutarch's animals have no need for virtue to achieve a good life. Virtue and philosophy, like sacrifice and prayer, are postlapsarian means for attempting to return to an idealized (perhaps hypothetical) primitive state. We need not assume that Plutarch had any real commitment to the idea that such an era actually existed for his philosophical point to carry weight. Gryllus tells us not that animals are philosophers but, rather, that animals have no need to take up philosophy (whether they could ever do so or not). As he, a human in pig form, speaks to us, we do not hear the voice of a pig—only another voice delimiting the human experience through a pathetic fallacy that maintains a human exceptionalism in response to our inability to communicate more directly with the gods we believe to be above us or the animals we assume to be beneath us. The problem with Gryllus' voice, that is, may have less to do with animals and more to do with the shortcomings of human communication that cannot adequately account for the position of Plutarch's pig. As Gryllus says, "if you do not think it appropriate to call this rationality (*logos*) and thought, then look for a better and more fitting word for it" (991F).

5. The Philosopher King of the Farmyard

Lucian of Samosata (part of the Roman province of Syria) was born about the time that Plutarch died and he himself probably expired near the beginning of the third century, though we know extremely little about his life. Like Plutarch, Lucian left us a large body of work, but his satirical and playful style contrasts sharply with that of his predecessor.²⁴ This difference can be seen clearly in

²¹ This idea is paralleled in the work of Levinas, for whom a dog named Bobby played an important role in helping him develop his theory of ethics emerging from the reciprocal obligations implicit in looking into the face of another. Yet even though Bobby spurred Levinas in this direction, the philosopher never granted an important ethical subjectivity to non-human animals (Plant 2011).

²² On Plutarch and vegetarianism, see (Newmeyer 2006, pp. 85–102) and (Newmeyer 1995).

²³ Such a position is associated with the opinions of Diogenes the Cynic. Plutarch's contemporary Dio Chrysostom makes this particularly clear (Oration 6.13–33 and 10.16). (Sorabji 1993, p. 161) likens this possibility to Greek narratives about noble barbarians, such as Anacharsis the Scythian.

²⁴ The best overarching studies of Lucian's corpus are (Bompaire 1958; Branham 1989; Ni Mheallaigh 2014).

Lucian's *Cock* (alternately titled *The Dream*, though this can cause confusion since he has another text by that name), which may respond directly to Plutarch's *Gryllus*.²⁵ If Lucian did not intentionally model *Cock* on *Gryllus*, then they at least share the same basic narrative ploy. Whereas the earlier work began with Odysseus setting up an interview with one of Circe's surprisingly opinionated pigs, Lucian's *Cock* opens with a bleary-eyed cobbler hollering at his early-crowing rooster, who turns out to have been Pythagoras in a former life. Both texts thus orient themselves in terms of early Greek lore, both feature a human discoursing with a speaking farm animal who used to be human, and in both cases the animal comes off much better in the exchange. Yet Lucian's reworking of the human–animal conceit serves a more deconstructive purpose in questioning the pristine and primitive authority that animates most ancient examples of speaking animals.

The text begins with Micyllus the cobbler cursing his rooster for awakening him so early, since he was in the midst of an amazing dream that he was as rich as Croesus. When the rooster responds in human voice, it takes the cobbler several minutes to get his head around what is going on. There ensues a discussion about the rooster's experiences living in various human and bestial guises and then a demonstration of the vanity of human wealth. The latter point accords well with Harmon's comment that this is a "Cynic sermon in praise of poverty" (Harmon 1915, p. 171), and to some extent this is surely correct. Yet we can hear a complementary theme about the Golden Age as we pay attention to the rooster's blending of animal and philosophical voices.

As the rooster speaks, Micyllus reacts with shock and terror (2, Harmon):

Micyllus: ὦ Ζεῦ τεράστιε καὶ Ἡράκλεις ἀλεξίκακε, τί τὸ κακὸν τοῦτ' ἔστιν; ἀνθρωπίνως ἐλάλησεν ὁ ἀλεκτροῦν.

Cock: Εἰτά σοι τέρας εἶναι δοκεῖ τὸ τοιοῦτον, εἰ ὁμόφωνος ὑμῖν εἶμι;

Micyllus: Πῶς γὰρ οὐ τέρας; ἀλλ' ἀποτρέποιτε, ὦ θεοί, τὸ δεινὸν ἀφ' ἡμῶν.

Micyllus: O Zeus of Portents (terastios) and Hercules the Averter! What evil is this?

The rooster speaks like a human!?

Cock: Why do you think it's a portent (teras) if I am homophonous to you?

Micyllus: How could it not be a portent (teras)? Please, o gods, avert this disaster from us!

The word *teras* (and the cognate adjective *terastios*) refers most directly to any sort of monster, but by this era encompasses anything marvelous that confounds expectations or, in a grander sense, the natural order. The latter seems to be appropriate in this case, and I have elsewhere analyzed a similar discussion in the picaresque *Life of Aesop* about the applicability of the word *teras* to the situation in which Aesop, born a mute slave, begins to speak (Hawkins 2016, pp. 261–63). In both texts, the possibility that the acquisition of speech might be a *teras* prompts reflection on the boundaries of personhood. If language (or at least complex grammatical language) is a unique attribute of humans, and if human society is organized in terms of a hierarchy of language mastery, then speaking animals and mute slaves who become loquacious similarly call attention to the principles around which the cosmos has been organized (whether in terms of a progressive transgression or a conservative statement of normative boundaries). The cock next chides Micyllus for not knowing his Homer well enough and points to the passage discussed above in which Xanthus, Achilles' horse, does not just speak but utters prophecies in hexameters.²⁶ The combined effect of the cobbler's reference to a *teras* and the evocation of an old tale in which a horse speaks with divine authority reiterates the impression that the voice of the rooster signals a supernatural intervention into the normal cosmic order.

Yet that order soon begins to fray as Micyllus responds by recalling a story of metamorphosis (3). Once upon a time, a man named Alectryon ("Cock") became friends with Ares and ended up working

²⁵ A point advanced by (Wälchi 2003, pp. 230–37). The best study of this text remains that of (Helm 1906, pp. 322–36).

²⁶ Aelian (2nd–3rd c. CE), who wrote the largest compendium of animal lore from antiquity, includes Xanthus as one of the few examples of talking animals. He excuses Homer on the grounds of poetic license, but in the same passage chastises the backwards Egyptians for believing in the reality of a talking (and two-headed!) lamb (*On the Nature of Animals*, 12.3).

as the god's lookout whenever he and Aphrodite had a fling behind Hephaestus' back. On one such occasion, Alectryon fell asleep at his post, the lovers were caught, and Ares turned his friend into an *alectryon* as punishment. The narrative pattern of a human becoming an animal while retaining certain traits (the rooster is still the lookout who sounds the alarm but now never oversleeps) is familiar enough, but in this case we see that the cosmic order of the gods is predicated on nothing more than soap-opera drama of lust and retribution. The cock folds himself into that divine plan when he reports that he had entered the cycle of mortal existence long ago as a punishment by Apollo for an unspecified crime (16). As he recounts his existential journey from disembodied spirit to Euphorbus (who helped Hector kill Patroclus at Troy) to Pythagoras to Aspasia (the concubine and advisor to Pericles) to Crates the Cynic and, after many intervening steps, to Mycillus' rooster, the cock does away with a host of other pretensions too. Ajax was not so impressive, Helen's beauty had faded long before the Trojan War, and Patroclus was merely an average warrior (17). Of more immediate interest to Mycillus, the famous Pythagorean prohibition against eating beans was nothing more than a publicity stunt (18). By this time, the game is up for Mycillus, who begins to laugh at the stupidity of all those who had believed the philosopher's hokum (18–19).²⁷

Lucian's text concludes with the philosophical truism that a simple life is superior to the greed and anxieties of the rich. But that message must be evaluated in terms of the speaker. The Pythagorean cock has shown himself to be nothing more than a huckster until he finally learned through experience (rather than theory) to value an unprepossessing lifestyle. Pythagoreanism is no more believable than a talking rooster, and whatever Mycillus learns through their conversation is the product of basic but careful observation of human society. Furthermore, the gods are no nobler than the shameless philosopher or the greedy cobbler, and so the animal voice that seems to derive from a Golden Age is just the rationalizing trick of a satirist eager to debunk the lies and fictions that distract us from paying better attention to the pragmatic realities of life.²⁸ Whereas Plutarch had used an animal voice to test the boundaries of anthropocentric philosophy, Lucian uses the same narrative pattern to call into question earlier Greek tradition at points where it admitted tales of superhuman or supernatural experience. The satirical humor of Lucian's attack on that tradition also comes to subsume his own text and its bestial narrator. His absurdist approach scours away the nonsense, leaving a realist foundation for human culture. *Do away with that fantasy and rid the world of charlatans like Pythagoras. Realize that virtue is to be framed in terms of the world as we know it. Animals don't talk, metempsychosis is silly, and the gods are as corrupt as we are!*

6. Conclusions

I have argued that many speaking animals in Greek literature emerge from a utopian system of thinking that idealizes a pristine Golden Age past in contrast to a degraded present, and I conclude by pushing this idea in three ways. First, an ancient *skolion* or drinking song taps into the same anxiety about communication but without any historical model. The song, preserved by Athenaeus, includes these lines: "If only we could see what sort of person each is, split open his chest and examine his mind (*noos*), then close him back up and know with an undecieving mind (*phrên*) that he's your friend" (15.694d–e)²⁹ The sentiment attests to the frustration that results from expecting communication—whether among humans or between humans and non-humans—to be free from deception or misunderstanding. Most of the examples above deal with a similar issue by positing a lost world that can be accessed through special means (much like cutting open your friend's chest

²⁷ Lucian takes aim at Pythagoras on various occasions. The supernatural tales about him—from his many reincarnations to the legend that his thigh was made of gold—made him an easy target for the satirist's pen. For more on Lucian's engagement with Pythagoras, see (Marcovich 1988, pp. 174–77).

²⁸ This is part of a Lucianic pattern of destabilizing canonical figures that Andrade presents in terms of an ethnic interchange between Greece and Syria (Andrade 2013, pp. 269–70).

²⁹ Euripides has characters express this same idea at *Electra* 367–90, *Hippolytus* 925–27, and *Medea* 516–19.

in hopes of truly knowing him). This *skolion* achieves a similar effect to those speaking animals but without drawing upon contrasting time frames or emphasizing the role of language (though the failure of human language is implicit in the *skolion*'s message).

Secondly, the speaking animals need not have been animals at all, since Greek literature knows various speaking plants and, more rarely, inanimate objects that can serve the same narrative function. An apt example can be heard from the speaking prow of the Argo (Apollonius, *Argonautica* 1.526–27), Jason's ship on his quest to find the Golden Fleece. Athena outfitted the ship with this timber, which came from the sacred whispering oak of Zeus's oracular shrine at Dodona. Plutarch knows a legend that the sanctuary at Dodona had been established by Deucalion and Pyrrha, the only survivors of the Greek flood narrative (*Life of Pyrrhus*, 1). Dodona thus has a close connection with the antediluvian past, and the oracle continues to provide access to the divine world which has been lost in the flood. Beyond this, sailing is often presented as the technology that marks the end of the Golden Age, and the Argo is regularly depicted as the first ship ever to sail the seas ((Jackson 1997); (Romm 1996, pp. 129–30). On this tradition, then, the cutting of timber to build the first ship, which renders the sea a means of connecting rather than separating people, stands for the ambivalent legacy of technology, and the speaking prow of the Argo serves much the same function as Achilles' talking horse. Animals may provide the most obvious and common medium through which Greek writers ventriloquized Golden Age voices, and the Greek imaginary included a complex set of associations that made particular animals apt choices at particular moments, but other options were available.

Finally, whereas I have presented the evidence for speaking animals mostly in synchronic terms, I end with a comment about the impact of historical change. Homer, Hesiod and Archilochus all composed in a world that did not yet know much about writing or rational philosophy. Plutarch and Lucian, by contrast, worked in the highly literate and cosmopolitan stability of the Roman Empire. Obviously a host of factors shape the cultural developments between the early and later boundaries of the classical world, yet one in particular seems relevant to this topic. Whereas our earliest Greek sources depict divine forces behind everything from diseases to weather, early classical thinkers (especially the so-called pre-Socratic philosophers and Hippocratic medical writers) proposed new theories of causation that emphasized natural processes over divine interventions (Holms 2010). If the gods bring plague (*Iliad* 1) and storms (*Odyssey* 5), then animal bodies can serve as conduits for communications from the divine realm, such that a horse or the prow of a ship can suddenly become loquacious. As natural sciences began to challenge the idea of divine causation, animals increasingly came to be understood through the observation and systemization we find in Aristotle, who, for example, drew a distinction between animal voice (*phonê*) and language (*logos*, *Politics* 1253a).³⁰ Although this suggestion requires further analysis, it is reasonable to suspect that Plutarch and Lucian present human voices in animal bodies (in contrast to the speaking animals in Homer, Hesiod and Archilochus), because they lived in an era when updated perspectives on authoritative traditions put a new spin on the idea that animals might speak with a voice from the Golden Age. Plutarch elsewhere engaged with naturalistic examples of actual animal communication, especially among birds, but although these cases are critical to debates about the rational capacities of animals, they are wholly different from the idea of a talking pig (*On the Cleverness of Animals*, 972f–973e). Thus, Circe's animals and a reincarnated Pythagoras speak in more overtly human ways. The gods no longer choose to speak through animal bodies. Instead, authors use animals who speak as humans as literary stylizations to advance new and varied humanistic ideas.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest, though he does occasionally talk to animals.

³⁰ (Ax 1978, 1986) study these and related Aristotelian terms in detail.

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**Nonhuman Companions in Animal
Narratology, or Horses, Dogs, and Apes**



Article

Literary Autozoographies: Contextualizing Species Life in German Animal Autobiography

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Abstract: What does it mean to take animal autobiography seriously and how can we account for the representation of life-narrating animals? The article investigates animal autobiographies as ‘literary autozoographies’, drawing attention to both the generic contexts and the epistemological premises of these texts. Adopting a double-bind approach stemming from autobiographical research as well as cultural animal studies, the article focuses on early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies from the German-speaking tradition. These texts are discussed exemplarily in relation to the parameters of fictional autobiographies, before they are contextualized with historical discourses regarding horses in natural history and so-called ‘horse-science’. Due to the fact that the poetics and aesthetics of the genre are modeled on the templates of factual autobiographies, the article argues that literary autozoographies can be read as fictional autobiographies as well as meta-auto/biographical discourse undermining autobiographical conventions. Furthermore, it shows that literary autozoography and zoology share a common historical and ideological epistemology accounting for the representation of animals in both fields. Literary autozoographies thus participate in the negotiation and production of species-specific knowledge. Reading *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* (1804), *Life of a Job Horse* (1807) and *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* (1819) alongside equine-centric discourses around 1800, the article demonstrates in what ways these texts can be regarded as part of a regime of knowledge attributing emotions and cognitive capacities to horses, while simultaneously arguing for humane treatment on the basis of interspecies homologies.

Keywords: animal autobiography; fictional autobiography; meta-autobiography; life writing; contextualist narratology; cultural and literary animal studies; poetics of knowledge; zoology; natural history; equine autozoography; horse-science

1. Introduction

Drawing on forms and models ranging from animal¹ satire, parables, epics and fables to picaresque novels and factual auto/biographies², life-narrating animals have been part of Western literary history for at least two hundred years ([2], pp. 1–2). While critics have traditionally read these texts as social satires and parodies, recent scholarship has probed the historical and discursive contexts [3–9] as well as the theoretical, narratological and ethical implications [10–13] of how and

¹ Since the article focuses on texts written at a time when terms such as ‘nonhuman animals’ and ‘human animals’ were hardly ever used, I will here be using ‘animals’ and ‘humans’ respectively to underscore the historical meaning of this (anthropological and anthropocentric) differentiation.

² “Auto/biography, or a/b. This acronym signals the interrelatedness of autobiographical narrative and biography.” It “also designates a mode of the autobiographical that inserts biography/ies within an autobiography, or the converse, a personal narrative within a biography” ([1], p. 184, emphasis in the original).

why animals have been and are still given narrative voice and authority.³ This article first discusses early nineteenth-century German equine autobiographies with a focus on their affiliations with and parallels to the aesthetics of (factual and fictional) autobiographies.⁴ Second, it approaches these texts with a cultural-historical perspective interested in the history and “poetology of knowledge” [17],⁵ in this case, the history and poetics of zoological and literary discourse. Instead of a contextual reading which applies the “disappearing animal trick” ([18], p. 24) and transforms animals into stand-ins or mouthpieces for satirical ends or human (minority) concerns, the article examines the epistemological and discursive contexts framing and constructing a specific species (here: the horse) and, as a consequence, the animal-autobiographical act. In this regard, the article encourages further research into animal autobiographical writing from non-English traditions, furthering the perspective of contextualist (animal studies) narratology. Animal autobiographies, I argue, not only gain momentum and draw inspiration from the tradition of autobiography, but also reflect and engage with specific (historical) zoological discourses.⁶ Therefore, animal autobiography actively partakes in the production of species-specific knowledge.⁷ Underscoring the interrelatedness of animal autobiographies, conventional autobiographies, and zoology, my research addresses the animal-autobiographical genre as ‘literary autozoographies’, a term denoting literary texts which (1) make use of a homodiegetic or (pseudo-)autodiegetic animal narrator (first-person point of view; animal narrator = animal protagonist; most often, these animals are domestic animals, such as dogs, cats, and horses);⁸ (2) present an animal protagonist who, intradiegetically, neither metamorphoses nor speaks to human protagonists in human tongues (in contrast to the tradition of fables, parables and fairy tales); (3) retrospectively (and comprehensively) narrate an animal’s life (up until its anticipated death); therefore, (4) adopt, assimilate, transform (and inevitably undermine) the poetics and aesthetics of conventional autobiography; and (5) interact with zoological discourses and thus participate in the construction of (popular) zoological knowledge of animal species.

Literary autozoographies are ‘literary’ insofar as they—to various degrees—exhibit “stylistic or narrative variations defamiliariz[ing] conventionally understood referents and prompt reinterpretive transformations of a conventional feeling or concept” ([24], p. 123). Read as fictional accounts

³ For an overview of recent work on animal autobiographical writing, see ([11], pp. 2–4). Tess Cosslett provides an excellent introduction into the discursive and structural elements of British animal autobiographical writing up until 1914 ([9], pp. 63–92). Margo DeMello’s volume gives insight into historical as well as contemporary means and functions of speaking for and on behalf of animals [14].

⁴ In the following, I use ‘conventional’ and ‘factual’ autobiographies/autobiographical discourse interchangeably for (human) autobiographies which traditionally claim “to be non-fictional (factual)” [15]. This, however, is not to say that the propositions made in conventional autobiographies can be considered inherently factual. According to Philippe Lejeune’s influential definition, factual autobiographies are “[r]etrospective prose narrative[s] written by a real person concerning his own existence, where the focus is his individual life, in particular the story of his personality” ([16], p. 4). Similarly, the terms ‘pseudo-/quasi-autobiography’ and ‘fictional autobiography’ are used interchangeably in this article.

⁵ All following translations from the German (and, in part four, the French) are mine. For the sake of brevity, I only provide the translated, not the original quotes.

⁶ In the following discussion, the term ‘zoological discourse(s)’ denotes general and species-specific statements in eighteenth and early nineteenth-century natural history accounts as well as in popular zoology and specialist literature (‘horse-science’). While zoology was only institutionalized as a German academic discipline at the turn of the eighteenth century, the term ‘zoology’ was used in the fields of medicine, theology and natural history at least since the seventeenth century (in fact, Aristotle in his *Historia animalium* already paved the way for a systematic engagement with forms of (animal) life in the 4th century) with the definition “animal science” or “the study of animals” ([19], p. 506). In this article, I use several descriptions of horses from natural history and horse-science published around 1800.

⁷ Beckoning to a Foucauldian concept of discourse analysis, the term ‘discourse’ here refers to a “system of thinking and arguing which is abstracted from a text [...] and which is characterized, first, by an *object of speech*, second, by *regularities of speech*, third, by *interdiscursive relations* to other discourses” ([20], p. 406, emphasis in the original).

⁸ Although I am not categorically differentiating between literary autozoographies referring to ‘real’, extratextual domestic/companion animals, and those without a ‘real’ counterpart, inquiring into the material, biographical side of autozoographical animals can give insights into a text’s commemorative function and zoopoetical foundation [8,21,22]. Moreover, those texts narrating the lives of ‘real’ animals represent what Frank Zipfel calls narratology’s “borderline cases”, i.e., “texts in which actual events are narrated with the help of fictional narration” ([23], p. 168). For David Herman’s distinction between “nonfictional animal autobiography” and “fictional animal autobiography”, see ([11], pp. 7–14). Early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies as discussed in this article belong to the latter category.

simulating autodiegetic discourse, literary autozoographies may unsettle conventional (anthropocentric) perceptions of socio-cultural practices and world views. Insofar as these texts feature an animal narrator, literary autozoographies clearly indicate their fictional status ([25]; [26], p. 108), yet simultaneously insist on their factuality. This productive tension implicitly challenges and questions the generic ideal of an ‘autobiographical truth’, while it may also illuminate the inherent anthropocentrism (in the history) of auto/biography.

At the same time, literary autozoographies interrelate with species-specific discourses and thus play an important role in the production of zoological knowledge. The representation of life-narrating animals, I argue, is deeply entrenched in the epistemological field of Western culture and specific historical periods. A literary animal in general, an autobiographical animal in particular never stands apart from its contexts ([27], pp. 228–32). For Foucault, an “epistemological field, the *episteme* in which knowledge, envisaged apart from all criteria having reference to its rational value or to its objective forms, grounds its positivity and thereby manifests a history which is not that of its growing perfection, but rather that of its conditions of possibility” ([28], p. x, emphasis in the original). It turns out, as I will show in part four of my analysis, that natural history and literary autozoographies depart from the same epistemological premises, enabling both genres to speak about and for domestic animals in surprisingly liberal ways. Zoological and autozoographical discourses turn out to be two sides of one and the same coin. The neologism ‘literary autozoography’ thus emphasizes the fact that the poetics of animal autobiography and its representation of animal narrator-protagonists engage in a complex dialogue with *autobiographical* as well as *zoographical* genres.⁹

The term ‘autozoography’¹⁰ acknowledges the distinction between “bare life/political existence, *zōē/bios*, exclusion/inclusion” ([32], p. 8), as outlined by Giorgio Agamben, yet is more interested in how humans (as a self-declared *zoon logon echon*) speak about and try to construct animals as those without *logos* (*zoon alogon*). It proposes to focus on the epistemological grounds of ascribing lives and selves to animals in pseudo-autobiographical narrations by investigating their links to and relations with *zoo(n)logical* discourses in and beyond natural history and zoology. Thus, the neologism tries to highlight the fact that the narrated *bios*, i.e., the events and subjective experiences presented in animal life writing, is based on epistemologically and culturally contingent assessments of animals and what might be considered their selves (*autos*).¹¹ The texts discussed as ‘literary autozoographies’ in this article present animal narrator-protagonists as self-aware beings able to distinguish themselves from (non)human others. However, these ascriptions of the self continuously oscillate between the poles of agency vs. submission, anthropomorphism vs. realism/naturalism, defamiliarizing vs. confirmative perspective etc. In this, as David Herman observes, they are part of “a multiplicity of discourse practices that involve speaking in behalf of another being who is assumed, inferred, or hypothesized to have a perspective on and interest in situations and events” ([11], p. 6). Like any literary text featuring animals, literary autozoographies are steeped in knowledge, socio-cultural practices and discursive currents of the time in which they have been and still are composed and published ([27]).¹² However, in the context of German literary autozoographies, here exemplified by early nineteenth-century narratives,¹³

⁹ The term ‘zoography’ was less common but used interchangeably with ‘zoology’ or ‘natural history’ in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century works dedicated to the description of animal species (cp., e.g., [29,30]).

¹⁰ For a philosophical and rhetorical approach to autozoographies via Derrida, see [31].

¹¹ Moreover, autobiographical research has developed a number of new genre concepts substituting *bios* for terms suitable to the authors of and subjects constructed in particular autobiographies. Domna C. Stanton, for example, discusses women’s autobiographies as “autogynographies” ([33], see also ([1], pp. 185–89)).

¹² Since literary autozoographies have not been part of German literary canons, many of these texts have been either left unnoticed in archives, dismissed as trivial from the academic syllabus, or filed as ‘mere’ children’s literature. My research corpus stretching from 1799 up until 2016 encompasses approximately forty texts meeting the definition criteria of literary autozoographies given above. Most of these texts are not addressed to children and offer insight into (historical) assumptions about and modes of fictional constructions of animals still awaiting critical investigation.

¹³ Due to the spatial limitations of this article I cannot elaborate on the transformations the genre has undergone since the nineteenth century. Suffice it to say, that most German contemporary literary autozoographies still rely on factual, non-experimental autobiographies as role models. Yet the enforcement of an autobiographical illusion (and, in turn, critique)

paradigmatic patterns with regard to formal and thematic characteristics can be deduced. Drawing on Martin Löschnigg's work on British fictional autobiographies [37–40], and Ansgar Nünning's concept of meta-autobiographies ([41], see also [42]), part two and three of the article discuss German equine autozoographies [43–46], published at the beginning of the nineteenth century, with regard to the parameters of (pseudo-)autobiographies as well as to their affiliations with meta-autobiographical discourse. I argue that German literary autozoography responds to, integrates, and adapts conventional autobiographical discourse in order to frame and authenticate autozoographical accounts. In doing so, however, it simultaneously subverts generic categories of factual autobiography which “advances claims of referential truthfulness” ([47], emphasis in the original). Depicting animals as the narrators of their lives undermines traditional concepts, such as ‘autobiographical truth’, referentiality, identity, and a congruent, representational relation between life and life-writing. In this regard, literary autozoographies draw the readers’ attention to the fact that autobiography “does not mean a life that is de-scribed but a life that is *scripted*” ([48], p. 17), emphasis in the original). Autobiographical selves, be they human or nonhuman, are constructed entities, the architecture of which can never be exchanged for the ‘real’ former self. Hence, “[t]he autobiographical act is never merely a repetition of the past; it is always a repetition with a difference” ([49], p. 73). Fact and fiction are not mutually exclusive when it comes to autobiography but rather interdependent.¹⁴ Reading literary autozoographies thus offers insights not only into per- and receptions as well as fictional transformations of factual autobiographies, but also into the poetics of a fictional genre commenting on the ‘all too human’ status of conventional autobiography and its generic shortcomings.

The fourth part of the article shows how a cultural animal studies approach [50] which contextualizes and historicizes ([27], pp. 229–32) literary autozoographies helps to pin these texts down into the situated, species-specific knowledge of their respective times. In this regard, autozoographical research contributes to a “context-sensitive cultural narratology” ([51], p. 363). Taking early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies, and particularly *Life of a Job Horse (Lebensgeschichte eines Miethpferdes)* [43] (1807), as cases in point, I analyze how natural history, ‘horse-science and equine autozoographies configured, popularized and, in the case of equine autozoographies, fictionalized assumed equine emotions and minds. As a consequence, German equine autozoographies materialize as mediums participating in an ‘equine epistemology’ around 1800.

2. Literary Autozoographies and/as Fictional Autobiographies

Texts such as *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante (Lebensgeschichte der Mecklenburgischen Stute Amante)* [44,45] (1804), *Life of a Job Horse (Lebensgeschichte eines Miethpferdes)* [43] (1807) or *Life of a Worn-Out Hack (Lebensgeschichte eines ausgedienten Fiacker-Pferdes)* [46] (1819) neither appear *ex nihilo* nor do they produce entirely new literary forms.¹⁵ In fact, German animal autobiographical writing did (and still does) not only emulate the aesthetics of factual autobiographies, as will be shown below, but also emerged at a time of growing demand for and popularity of life narratives. In the foreword to his *Biographies of Remarkable Beings from the Animal Kingdom (Biographien merkwürdiger Geschöpfe aus dem Thierreiche)*, published in 1787, the author, Johann Jacob Ebert, professor of mathematics and natural philosophy in Wittenberg, notes that “it has become fashionable for quite a while [...] to print life stories, or: biographies, to use the language of the new authors, of remarkable and unremarkable persons. [...] Yet since people have delivered biographies of all kinds of human beings ad nauseam, and with the result

has been dropped for a discourse mocking the *conditio humana*, putting emphasis on the mode of defamiliarization and, first and foremost, giving (implicit) advice on proper treatment of the autozoographical species in question (cp., e.g., [34,35]). In this respect, German literary autozoographies have become part of and contributors to “the field of advice manuals” ([36], p. 110).

¹⁴ In this regard, literary autozoography, as David Herman observes, “piggybacks on the hybrid generic status of autobiography itself” ([11], p. 7).

¹⁵ These texts also respond and contribute to the post-Sternian tradition of imitators of *The Life and Adventures of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* (1759–67). Due to the focus of this article, however, I will not elaborate on this or any other intertextual generic and aesthetic influence apart from that of factual autobiographies.

that authors intending to write biographies have a hard time finding any subject matter at all, I came up with the idea to foray into the wide, densely populated animal kingdom to search for new heroes of my biographical endeavors" ([52], pp. 3–4). With the choice of his "remarkable" subjects, among them the (literary) donkey Rothfuß [53], and the nameless sheep chosen to be one of the first travelers in the hot-air balloon of the brothers Montgolfier ([54], p. 461), Ebert mocks his contemporaries' craze for life narratives, but also takes a stance in the controversy between assimilationist and differentialist views ([55], pp. 1–11). While differentialists assume that mankind is different from (other) animals in all possible ways, assimilationists emphasize the (morphological, physiological, and, since the mid-nineteenth century, evolutionary) similarities observable in humans and animals. Ebert delineates his animal protagonists as emotional and rational beings and seeks to redefine knowledge of and human approaches to specific animals.¹⁶ During the second half of the eighteenth century, German-speaking countries witnessed a "secularization and anthropologization" ([56], p. 55); see also [57–59]) of the autobiographical genre. Considered remarkable and instructive were spiritual and edifying confessions as well as instructive autobiographies written by (white, privileged, and influential) men. Hence, Johann Gottfried Herder could already differentiate between "devotional" and "human philosophical confessions" ([60], p. xxii) like Augustine's and Rousseau's *Confessions* respectively, and "biographies which remarkable persons [...] write about themselves for others" ([60], p. xxx). Yet autobiography did not only secularize and, at least partly, democratize its (writing) subjects, but like other popular, established factual genres, also brought forth fictional counterparts—literary autozoography, as I argue, being one of them.

Martin Löschnigg asserts that novels and fictional narratives left their mark on autobiographies and vice versa ([37], p. 317–18). The relation between factual and fictional autobiographies, Löschnigg argues, "is in fact one of mutual influence rather than of one-sided influence or mere co-existence" ([38], p. 403). Löschnigg demonstrates how texts like Daniel Defoe's *The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders* (1722) and Charles Dickens' *The Personal History of David Copperfield* (1849/50) work "on the basis of the parameters of 'realistic' autodiegetic narratives" ([37], p. 315). To be able to make readers believe that they are confronted with an autobiographical account, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century pseudo-autobiographical poetics imitate factual, 'authentic' autobiographies.

Löschnigg extracts three parameters characteristic of these fictional autobiographies or quasi-autobiographical first-person novels. First, these texts stage "the specific experientiality of quasi-autobiographical narratives" ([37], p. 4). In her concept of a "natural narratology", Monika Fludernik defines experientiality as the key element constituting narrativity. As "the quasi-mimetic evocation of 'real-life experience'" ([61], p. 98), experientiality in fictional autobiographies is suggested by explicit descriptions of the feelings, thoughts and subjective states of the experiencing character rendered by the fictive autobiographer. As Löschnigg points out, Defoe, for example, delivers a high degree of quasi-autobiographical experientiality by "a continuity of individual experience and eventful narration as well as by underscoring the specificity of experience" ([37], p. 5).

Second, fictional autobiographies enforce the "illusion of autobiographical authenticity" ([37], p. 4) and use what Löschnigg calls "'formal mimesis'" ([37], p. 4) or "'autobiographical modelling'" ([37], p. 57). Imitating the linear narrative progression characteristic of conventional autobiographies, underscoring biographical cornerstones of the protagonist's life, and justifying the origin, composition, and function of the narrative in forewords or metatextual references, nineteenth-century fictional autobiographies seek to give the impression of an authentic autobiographical account. Furthermore, fictional autobiographies use "discursive elements" suggesting autobiographical authenticity by "anthropomorphizing, or rather, 'biographically modeling' the narrator, by foregrounding the experiential limitations of the narrator, and by emphasizing the medial situation of the act of narration" ([37], p. 91).

¹⁶ For Ebert's (and the Count du Buffon's) exemplary re-assessment of the donkey, see ([52], pp. 8–14).

Third, pseudo-autobiographical texts exhibit a “rhetoric of memory” ([37], p. 124). Through the interplay between narrating and experiencing self and “the emphasis on memory as the constitutive moment of the discourse”, fictional autobiographies “create an illusion of reference” ([37], p. 4). Fictional autobiographies mimic how factual autobiographies relate the first-person narrator to its former, narrated self by integrating the narrator’s perspective into the course of events and commenting on the process and the quality of remembering and reproducing the past.

In German-speaking equine autozoographies published in the early nineteenth century, the three parameters Löschnigg identifies for fictional autobiographies appear as constitutive elements of the narratives. Equine autozoographies published around 1800¹⁷ imitate factual autobiographies by presenting in a chronological order the short but tragic lives of the horses as a retrospective first-person narrative. The chapters progress from the horses’ birth, their positive childhood memories, the start of their training and (mostly negative) experiences of being schooled and (ab)used by humans, to decisive learning stages, illnesses, changes of locations and owners. These changes follow a negative teleological pattern. With the progression of the narrative, the horses descend in social rank and lose their spirit as well as their economic value. The texts close with the merging of the narrator and the protagonist; the old, weary horses anticipate and welcome death, the alleged approach of which had instigated their narration in the first place.

To be sure, the defamiliarizing perspectives of the horses are imbued by satirical concerns. Digressions on human affairs, and episodes (re)producing human dialogues in the dramatic, showing mode [65] make evident what Herman calls a speaking-for act of “butting in” in which “a speaker voices an utterance of which he or she is not only author but also the principal” ([11], p. 2). “Butting in” often means “engaging in a violation of negative politeness requirements [...] whereby one fails to respect another’s desire not to be intruded upon, threatening solidarity” ([11], p. 5). In *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* (1819), for example, the (human) editor tries to invoke the character of “this horse the story of which you have in front of you” ([46], foreword), but also alludes to his concern for “really comical scenes” which the horse was able to witness and narrate, likening the story to a “*chronique scandaleuse*” ([46], foreword, emphasis in the original). As an omnipresent and ineluctable participant in everyday life around 1800, the equine point of view could be staged as a privileged perspective for varied, rare and, most importantly, secret information. This ‘omniscient’ point of view motivates the autobiographical fiction in *Life of a Worn-Out Hack* as it presents the equine narrator Abälard¹⁸ able to overhear and oversee confidential, piquant conversations and scenes which he addresses as “rich anecdotes [...] which would make the psychologist envious in many respects as there was hardly an hour in which I lacked food for thought” ([46], p. 84). These renditions of conversations and confidentialities, however, have no impact on the life and experiences of Abälard but rather serve as a means to “amuse” ([46], foreword) the reader, as the editor announces.

Similarly, in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante*¹⁹, the author Christian Ehrenfried von Tennecker (1770–1839), senior horse veterinarian of the Kingdom of Saxony, already strains the metadiegetic frame

¹⁷ It seems worth noting that equine autozoographies concerned with speaking for horses to ensure better treatment seem not to have been written in Germany between 1819 and 1919 even though Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty* (1877) was promoted by German animal welfare associations around 1900 [62]. It might be assumed that the plight of horses became less of an issue with the establishment of societies for the prevention of cruelty to animals in mid-nineteenth century Germany. Laws against animal cruelty had been issued and discussed ever since, yet the situation for horses became increasingly troubling with the start of WWI which is when Gustav Rau published *Altgold* [63], the literary autozoography of a horse witnessing the battles of WWI, see also [64].

¹⁸ It remains unclear whether Abälard’s name was given to him by the human character Héloïse (!) because he was made a gelding, or due to the fact that the texts want to playfully re-enact the historical narrative of the scholastic philosopher Peter Abelard (1079–1142), reconfigured in Rousseau’s *Julie, ou la nouvelle Héloïse* (1761).

¹⁹ Much could be said about the nationalist tendencies of German equine autozoographies, implicitly arguing for the maintenance of national breeds (such as “the real Mecklenburg race” ([44], p. 5) promoted by Amante) and against the crossbreeding with English thoroughbreds. Suffice it to say at this point that around 1800 the degeneration of German horses was linked to an “anglomania” producing “bad progeny” unfit for tasks “our German horses” had to fulfill ([66], pp. 20, 21). For a similar discussion on the Finnhorse and national identity, see [67].

by casting (dead) Valentin Trichter (1685–1750), stable foreman at the University of Göttingen and author of equine medical-anatomic treatises, as the editor of Amante’s story “narrated by herself” ([44], front page). Moreover, the horse’s discourse is riddled with lampooning digressions on inexperienced but theoretically overambitious veterinarians and horse trainers (e.g., ([44], pp. 123–26; [45], pp. 55–57)), passages discrediting the professors of the Berlin veterinary school ([44], pp. 110–15, 121–22), and forays into the proper medical treatment of and advice literature on horses ([45], pp. 123–25). In this respect, the author of the book clearly makes himself heard as the horse’s “butting-in” ventriloquist, not least when he is himself cited as an expert on horsemanship by the equine narrator ([44], p. 39; [45], p. 125), or when he makes an appearance in the story as the proprietor of an all but successful “humane horse trade” ([45], p. 83).

2.1. *Experientiality*

Despite these ‘all-too-human’ passages beckoning to the traditions of picaresque novels and it-narratives ([3], p. 739; [6]), experientiality, narrative strategies enforcing “autobiographical authenticity”, and a “rhetoric of memory” serve as guidelines for the autozoographical genre. Experientiality is a key narrative feature of the texts. They present animals as feeling, reasoning (and critical) subjects whose individual experiences hardly differ from those known to and intersubjectively shared by humans.²⁰ This is why literary autozoography “taps into readers’ familiarity with experience through [...] the embodiment of cognitive faculties, the understanding of intentional action, the perception of temporality, and the emotional evaluation of experience” [68]. It appears that reading literary autozoographies as ‘real’ renditions of an animal’s thoughts and feelings, or finding some accounts more ‘realistic’ than others, means finding oneself entrapped by a cognitive illusion ([13], p. 488).²¹ There is no such thing as *knowing* animal (and, admittedly, also human) minds and feelings, nor is there any chance to evade anthropomorphizing animals, if they are made narrating (or even writing)²² subjects of their lives, be it in German, English or, in fact, any other language. Rendering animal consciousness and feelings in linguistic terms is always subject to an *epistemological* anthropocentrism ([71]; see also ([72], p. 178)). Our grasp and perception of the world (and the world of others) will remain socio-culturally and, first and foremost, anthropologically determined. Yet, beyond an *ontological* anthropocentrism which privileges humans to animals for religious, moral, or biological reasons, a number of literary autozoographies attempt to provide a means for the reader to *imagine* (no matter how inadequately) what it might be like to observe and assess the world from a “more-than-human” [73] perspective. Besides, granting animals subjective states as well as cognitive and emotional lives akin to humans serves as a foundation to enable empathy in the first place.

Experientiality in fictional autobiographies suggests autobiographical truth supposedly able to account for more than just the bare facts of life—it thus points to an autobiographical narrator capable of relating specific events as experienced ‘first-hand’, i.e., in all their subjectively perceived facets. As we learn from the equine narrator in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante*: “I left my childhood home sadly and, despondently, I passed the boundary stone” ([44], p. 26). In an attempt to verify the narrative as an accurate, truthful portrayal, the text makes sure to highlight the subjective state of the character in relation to the events described. As a means to underscore the relation between animal narrator and animal protagonist as ‘autobiographical truth’, and in order to allow for the reader’s empathy with the horses, experientiality in equine autozoographies is visible especially in those

²⁰ See part four of this article for a discussion on the historical contexts in which these emotional and cognitive attributions became valid in the course of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century.

²¹ Marco Caracciolo weighs Thomas Nagel’s dictum of animal minds as inconceivable against J.M. Coetzee’s Elisabeth Costello’s contention of imagination as a means to transgress species boundaries, and finds Costello lacking the means of verifying her claims ([13], p. 490). However, he considers animal first-person narratives as important ways to make readers aware of humans’ incapability “to grasp—to fully grasp, at least—nonhuman consciousness and its many instantiations across the animal world” ([13], pp. 500–1), resulting in a respect for animals as being different, not like us.

²² Cp., for example E.T.A. Hoffmann’s *Life of the Tomcat Murr* (1819/21) [69] or Emmerich Ranzoni’s *Zoddel* (1879) [70].

passages describing negative formative experiences. As Suzanne Keen has pointed out “*empathetic responses to fictional characters and situations occur more readily for negative feeling states, whether or not a match in details of experience exists*” ([74], p. 71), emphasis in the original). Thus, Amante recounts the “heavy inflammation of her hooves” resulting in “an opening of the sole cutting off the entire horn capsule” ([44], p. 131). She adds that “it is indescribable to relate the pain I suffered” ([44], p. 136), referencing the ‘topos of the unspeakable’ while also negotiating the fact that horses indeed most often suffer in silence [75]. The text thus intertwines ‘subjective’ experiences with ‘objective’ presentations of attested equine behavior to both render the story as credible as possible and make it suitable for empathetic responses.

In a similar vein, chapter eighteen of *Life of a Worn-Out Hack*, entitled “Horrible Tortures Rejuvenate and Beautify Me” ([46], p. 154) combines the description of what is done to Abalård with an indication of how the gruesome procedures—Abalård calls them “tortures” ([46], p. 155)—affected the horse-protagonist at the time it happened: “First, [...] my tail [...] was cut off and notched most painfully[...].—O gracious Nature! I sighed more than once during the agonizing operation [...]; then my ears were mutilated, the dental crowns were filed sharp, some were even torn off, [...] and finally the cavities above my eyes indicating my advanced age were pierced with an awl and then blown up with a quill” ([46], pp. 154–55). The telling mode [62] delineating the surgical intervention is interrupted by an exclamatory interjection of the sighing equine protagonist. This exclamation serves to render the horse’s experiences as vividly as possible, while it also gives the impression of the narrator’s specific knowledge of the protagonist’s subjective experience represented here as ‘direct speech’, a beseeching sigh expressing anguish and despair. The narrator thus equates his identity with that of the protagonist and at the same time underscores ‘truth’ and ‘reliability’ of the pseudo-autobiographical discourse. A similar account of these ‘equine facelifts’ which were common practice throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth-century [76,77] can be found in *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* ([44], pp. 35–39).²³ Historically speaking, the representation of these practices and their impact on the horses serves both as a means to disparage these procedures and present them as an offense against Nature, as well as to distribute knowledge about the various ways in which horse dealers tried to deceive potential purchasers ([44], p. 37). Finally, it also enables readers to feel *for* (sympathy) and *with* (empathy) [79] the animals as victimized individuals sharing corporeality and the capacity to suffer with human beings.

2.2. Formal Mimesis and the Illusion of Autobiographical Authenticity

As an emulation of factual autobiographical discourse which encourages “the illusion of the referentiality of a narrator’s discourse to an extratextual person and his/her life” ([37], p. 89), ‘formal mimesis’, is a crucial characteristic of nineteenth-century literary autozoographies.²⁴ In fact, many of these texts not only mimic life (and traditional autobiographies) by adhering to a linear-chronological order of events, but even mirror the shortness of the narrated time, i.e., the animals’ life span, by compiling a rather brief text with a short narrating time.

Similar to fictional autobiographies, paratexts are decisive for the strategic illusion of an ‘autozoographical authenticity’. In this respect, front covers, forewords, dedications, and epilogues are key discursive elements. Early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies label themselves analogous to fictional and factual life narratives (cp., e.g., [80,81]) and also “suggest authenticity by means of a fictive editor” ([37], p. 58). As Philippe Lejeune has noted, the basis of an “autobiographical pact” between the autobiographer and the reader, giving credence to the narrative as a truthful account,

²³ Cp. also *Memoirs of Dick, the Little Pony* ([78], p. 31).

²⁴ As Löschnigg points out, the suggestion of autobiographical authenticity is prevalent in fictional autobiographies until the end of the nineteenth century ([37], p. 57). I have made similar observations with regard to German literary autozoographies. In twentieth and twenty-first century texts, for example, most authors no longer use paratexts in order to apostrophize the texts as factual narratives. Rather, they openly admit to the fictional status of the texts and comment on the function of the narratives as social critique, guidebook, or a means to commemorate a dead companion animal.

is the congruency between author, narrator, and protagonist often already indicated on the cover of the book ([16], p. 12). In order to present literary autozoographies as ‘real’ autobiographical narratives originally told by the horses, book covers of early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies try to suggest an ‘autozoographical pact’. Since “the onomastic difference between a fictive narrator and an empirical author signals fictionality” ([37], p. 90), *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, stages itself as the story of an equine life “Re-Narrated by Ambrosius Speckmann, Famous Horse Lender of Göttingen” ([43], front page, my emphasis). *Life of a Job Horse* and *Life of the Mecklenburg Mare Amante* even try to re-enforce an “autozoographical pact” by providing etchings of the animals’ full-body portraits (cp., [43–45], front page).

In the foreword, the fictive editors of nineteenth-century literary autozoographies address at least two questions: (1) How did the editor meet the animal in question or how did he or she obtain or record the narrative? (2) Why should readers take an interest in the story of an animal’s life? Thus, these forewords, dedications and introductions comment on the origin, the form and the intended function(s) of the texts. In *Life of a Job Horse*, the editor and horse lender Ambrosius Speckmann uses the peritextual dedication to “my former very much appreciated patrons and clients” ([43], dedication) to conjure up the “golden times when the dear gentlemen still came running to me, asking whether the English horse was still available” ([43], dedication). It is only later in the narrative that the reader finds out that this “English horse” is identical with the eponymous (chestnut) horse.²⁵ Speckmann also makes sure to comment on the function of the text and to allude to the circumstances of how he got the story ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’. He bemoans that his clients have abandoned the English horse who used to be everybody’s favorite but now “had to pay tribute to Nature”; today, Speckmann complains, “no one asks for him anymore, no one thinks of him” ([43], dedication). Speckmann thus takes the (fictive) clients of the story as warrantors for the existence of the horse whose character he finds legendary: “Since, as you know, you cannot easily find as good a horse as this” ([43], dedication).

Addressing the patrons and clients as acquaintances of the horse,²⁶ Speckmann tries to give the text an air of authenticity and hold other (fictive) people accountable for the veracity of the horse’s life. According to the editor, the “complete and true biography of the beloved horse” ([43], dedication) has two trajectories. First, the text is meant to “make up the injustice he [the horse, F.M.] had to endure, and which was afflicted on him—alas! by me as well” ([43], dedication). Speckmann claims to have realized that he might have treated the horse not “as befitted his merits” ([43], dedication). Hence, he considers his book a compensation for his misdeeds, stylizing the text as “a memorial” ([32], dedication) meant to keep the virtues of the horse alive. Second, Speckmann claims that the text represents the horse’s “wishes which he had expressed in the last days” ([43], dedication). It remains unclear whether, in the logic of the story, the horse was given human language just before his death,²⁷ or whether the horse is still alive and has (in some way or other) expressed the wish to be commemorated in a first-person biography. The latter seems more likely since in the last chapter of the text, the horse declares himself to

²⁵ The English chestnut horse does not get an individual name throughout the entire story—in fact, it remains unclear whether the horse is male or female; the terms “the chestnut (horse)” (German: *der Fuchs*), “English (horse)” (German: *der Engländer*) as well as Speckmann’s use of the personal pronoun “he”, however, suggest the horse is male. Anonymity is rather unusual for autozoographical animals, yet here it highlights the fact that the text presents this horse, first and foremost, as a representative of its species, referring the reader to all the other horses observing similar events and experiencing similar exploitation. This tension between animal individuality and its portrayal as a representative can be considered an inherent characteristic of literary autozoographies (see also ([9], pp. 39, 87)) but also indicates the dilemma experienced by many a human autobiographer trying to excel his or her contemporaries but ultimately unable to venture beyond anthropological premises.

²⁶ The address to the reader is a common feature of German literary autozoographies, suggesting ‘autozoographical authenticity’ on the one hand, and a species-specific reading audience on the other. In contrast to *Life of a Job Horse*, most autozoographical animals address a young readership belonging to the animals’ own species.

²⁷ In the introduction to *Life of a Worn-Out Hack*, the editor explains that he could write down the horse’s story because the dying animal became endowed with human speech, asking him “to become my biographer” ([46], p. 6). Within the diegesis, however, the horse protagonist remains mute.

be “sick”, “old and stiff” ([43], p. 143) but still alive, looking forward to death as a welcoming prospect “after all those hardships” ([43], p. 143).

Moreover, the text presses for authenticity of the horse’s story by separating the original narrative from the written work the author-editor Speckmann now presents to the public: The text “might be written in a bad style—because this is my fault”, Speckmann explains, finding himself “an old chatty philistine who might have said more than is appropriate in printed books” ([43], dedication). Speckmann denounces his writing as amateurish and excessive and thereby differentiates between what has been reported to him by the horse and what he has actually delivered in the written account of this report. Yet Speckmann’s presence is not limited to the peritext. As a character of the story, he reappears at the end of the text verifying his connection to the horse and accounting for his personal integrity. Therefore, the equine narrator affirms Speckmann’s editorial statements: “Mr. Speckmann—he should not blush when he re-narrates what I am compelled to tell as a matter of truth—was a clever man who knew how to obtain an advantage” ([43], p. 107). The narrative discursively recalls the ‘conversation’ between Speckmann and the horse to give narrative credence to the editorial assertions in the foreword. The text does not present itself as Sewellian “Translation from the Original Equine” ([82], front page) but as a transcript literally ‘straight from the horse’s mouth’.

2.3. Rhetoric of Memory

The third parameter Löschnigg identifies as characteristic of (fictional) autodiegetic discourse is the thematization and/or problematization of the process of remembering. Furthermore, these accounts typically endeavor to provide a balanced alteration between the extradiegetic narrator and the focalizer, i.e., the (internal) perspective of the experiencing character (cp., [37], pp. 128–32). In the course of the narrative, both perspectives gradually converge but the process of mediating between the two remains a structural feature of fictional autobiographies trying to suggest autobiographical authenticity. Early nineteenth-century German-speaking equine autozoographies simulate this (quasi-)autobiographical emphasis not only by making memory and remembering the subject of discussion, but also by foreshadowing future events (*prolepsis*) and foregrounding the act of narration.

The equine narrator Abälard, for example, remembers the carefree days of his childhood, explicates the act of remembering and simultaneously links the memory to a yet untold future: “[T]he years of my youth passed innocently [...]. O, ye golden days of youth! the memory of you exacerbated all the agonies which fate would be imposing on me by degrading conditions” ([46], p. 7). The text makes sure to present the chestnut as a remembering, narrating self, distinct from the youthful character of the story. As it correlates the narrating and the experiencing character, the text emulates traditional autobiographical discourse. Similarly, in *Life of a Job Horse*, the equine narrator begins his story by remarking “how pleasurable and at the same time bitter the memory of happy times [is]” ([43], p. 2). After a life of hardships, the equine narrator both relates himself to his young counterpart living a joyous and yet unburdened life and also comments on the ambivalent effects of memory in general.

Life of a Worm-Out Hack also anticipates potential reservations of its readers and tries to contextualize and explain what might otherwise appear as an unrealistic ‘omniscient’ account. Before the equine narrator relates a story which, in the logic of the narrated events, he could not have witnessed, Abälard remarks: “I had no idea about that which would happen now, didn’t know anything about it at that time. What I have told my readers in the last two chapters, I have only learned a couple of months later in Vienna, as I will be mentioning in due time. I just didn’t want to cut off the continuous thread of the story” ([46], p. 30). As Löschnigg notes, this “rhetoric of memory” has to be regarded as an “essential feature of (quasi-)autobiographical first-person narrations *per se*” ([37], p. 320). Literary autozoographies mimic the autobiographical alternation between narrating and experiencing self by foregrounding the process of remembering and narrating.

In terms of this rhetoric of memory as well as in matters of experientiality, formal mimesis and the illusion of autobiographical authenticity, literary autozoographies rely on structures and tropes of conventional autobiographical discourse. As a means to authenticate the narration, however, this

mimetic copying of forms and contents cannot help but challenge autobiography and the pitfalls of its generic conventions.

3. Literary Autozoographies and/as Meta-Autobiographical Discourse

As the discussion above has shown, literary autozoographies can be read as and along the lines of fictional autobiographies. Insofar as it assimilates and imitates autobiographical conventions, the autozoographical genre reflects but also contests the poetics of autobiography. In this respect, literary autozoographies can be regarded as meta-auto/biographical discourse. According to Ansgar Nünning, meta-autobiographies “not only picture the problems of autobiographical form but also critically reflect its epistemological premises” ([41], p. 29), see also [83]). Reflecting and foregrounding ‘autos’, ‘bios’ and ‘graphein’ alike, “the literary knowledge of meta-autobiographies can be found in that they expose the conventions of traditional autobiographies, uncover their aporias, and question the referentiality-based knowledge of this allegedly non-fictional genre” ([41], p. 29). While Nünning regards the genre as a contemporary phenomenon,²⁸ I would suggest that autozoographical discourse in its reliance on and reference to factual autobiographies can be seen as meta-auto/biographical discourse *per se*. These texts do not only replicate common (and, with regard to the nineteenth century, rarely publicly discussed and questioned) means of invoking autobiographical authenticity but, in doing so, simultaneously belittle those attempts. Insisting on the authenticity of an obviously fictive autozoographical discourse, the texts expose and dismiss conventional demands of factual auto/biographies as possible frauds and self-deceptions. When *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, promises to deliver “the complete and true biography” ([43], dedication) of the chestnut horse, it invokes conventional demands of factual auto/biographies for an objective and truthful account of a life—a demand which can hardly be fulfilled in the *autobiographical* account of a horse.²⁹ Hence, by implication, literary autozoographies underscore that auto/biographies can never live up to their own (and their readers’) idealistic expectations: the totality of autobiography is impeded by the limitations set by memory; the authenticity of the texts can be distorted by subjective, obscure self-perceptions and is also impossible to be gauged and verified by the reader. Likewise, total extensiveness of a life in biographies is unattainable due to the biographer’s incomplete access to the protagonist’s every moment and experience. Moreover, biographies can hardly be impartial and objective; biographers inscribe themselves aesthetically and (un)intentionally into the narrative, depending on their stance towards the protagonist and his or her accomplishments: “There is no such thing as biographical objectivity” ([84], p. 290), as Wolfgang Hildesheimer, author of the biography *Mozart* (1977), put it. Biographers, Hildesheimer acknowledges, invest themselves in the lives and the stories they tell—even if they pledge not to do so.

In their blatant fictionality and simultaneous insistence on truth and reliability, literary autozoographies question and deride claims of referentiality, factuality and authenticity in conventional auto/biographies. Even though literary autozoographies can be conceived as “unnatural narratives” [25], insofar as they give narrative voice to animals, they mimic traditional autobiographical forms and themes, and, consequently, remind us of the absurdity and unattainability of a ‘truthful’, un-fictional, un-inventive account of life narratives. Autozoographies and autobiographical selves are constructed, discursively conceived—sometimes in even euphemizing or contorted ways. Despite the fact that autobiographies can be classified as factual narratives [15], they can dispense neither with their debts to and the influence of fiction nor with the literary, ‘world-making’ elements they share with fictional

²⁸ Nonetheless, Nünning acknowledges, for example, Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* as a “pioneer of self-reflexive, metafictional and meta-autobiographical writing” ([41], p. 33).

²⁹ Even granted that the horse, in the logic of the text, is able to relate his life to editor-protagonist Speckmann, it becomes apparent that Speckmann cannot give ‘first-hand’ evidence concerning the horse’s life before the chestnut comes into his possession. Thus, he has to rely on what he is related to him about that time by the horse. Whether this subjective account is ‘true’ is impossible to judge for both Speckmann and the readers.

narratives ([37], p. 317–18; [38], p. 403)—just as the autobiographical discourse of a horse, a dog, or a cat—albeit the fact that some of these animals have actually lived—remains, as a “possible world” [85], in the realm of fiction, i.e., a world which is formed and contrived (Latin: *fingere*) by language.

Furthermore, the discourse of literary autozoographies illuminates that factual can hardly be separated from fictional autobiographies or first-person novels in semantic, syntactical or pragmatic terms ([11], pp. 3–4; [37], p. 13). The same tropes and rhetorics are constitutive for both genres, yet only come to light in noticeably fictional discourses like literary autozoographies. Literary autozoography thus foregrounds the mechanics and artifice of life narratives at work when recreating and verifying a ‘real’ life. From a historical perspective then, nineteenth-century literary autozoographies appropriate and reflect conventional autobiographical forms and rhetorics but also expose its factual counterpart’s confidence in and reliance on ‘autobiographical truth’ as rather presumptuous and naïve. In this respect, they may be seen as “memory and critique of the autobiographical genre” ([41], p. 32).

4. Literary Autozoographies and/as Zoology

As a response to the “cultural turn” in literary studies, scholars have come to examine the discursive and epistemological role of literature in socio-cultural systems, sharing the assumption that “literary texts can articulate a collectively experienced reality, restructure this reality paradigmatically and exert a significant influence on a culture’s symbolic meanings” ([86], p. 80). Interested in the cultural and epistemological dimensions of literary poetics, and literature more generally, some of these approaches explore not only “in what ways literary texts pick up, reflect, modify and re-conceptualize scientific and cultural knowledge” ([87], p. 2), but also how literature and science regulate, produce, and poeticize systems of knowledge [17,88,89]. Drawing on a broad set of theoretical–methodical tools ranging from discourse analysis and ‘the history of epistemology’ to deconstruction, and actor-network-theory, cultural and literary animal studies investigate ‘what animals mean’ in literature by historically contextualizing animal representations with the *episteme* and the (species-specific) discourse at the time of their textual emergence [27,50,90,91]. Literature can represent, negotiate, and (re)define knowledge on animals. An analysis of the epistemological, discursive co(n)texts of literary animals thus means consulting writings ranging from philosophy and zoology to popular science, encyclopedias and weeklies ([27], p. 229; [92], p. 94; [93], p. 41).

In the following, I link the aforementioned equine autozoographies, *Life of a Job Horse* (1807) in particular, to the epistemological discourse on horses in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Germany. It will become apparent that the literary representation of the horse as both a narrating as well as an experiencing agent can only be grasped in its entire historical complexity when considering how natural history and the emergent ‘horse-science’ spoke about and imagined horses. In this respect, *Life of a Job Horse* becomes palpable as an endorsement and extension of zoology’s discursive framing and construction of horses as feeling, reasoning, articulate subjects, who therefore require human compassion and empathy. At the same time, the text presents itself as a medium not only unsettling anthropological difference, but also foregrounding the limits of human knowledge.

4.1. A Kingdom for a Horse. Representing Horses in Zoology and Equine Autozoographies

As Lubomír Doležel notes “fiction has been extremely liberal in the way it has constructed animals” with the result that “in the worlds of animal stories, fairytales, fables, and so on, they become full-fledged agents, on their own or alongside persons” ([94], pp. 58–59). Did the emergence of equine autozoographies at the beginning of the nineteenth century then only boil down to a new fictional genre simply more liberal than others insofar as it granted voice, identity and (e)quality of life to animals?

Pascal Eitler maintains that life-narrating animal stories which present “animals as persons” ([36], p. 107) were part of a “physiologization and psychologization” ([92], p. 113) of animals, resulting in an “emotionalization and moralization of human-animal relationships” ([36], p. 103), a process which began at the end of the eighteenth and gained momentum in the course of the nineteenth century. Amidst growing suspicion towards Cartesian dogmas of animals as automatons, not at least in

the light of findings in physiological research and comparative anatomy, it became increasingly difficult, at times impossible to differentiate between human *feelings* on the one hand, and animal *sentiments* on the other. While reason was still considered humankind's ultimate dominion, feelings seemed to be prevalent and observable in both humans and animals. Supported by animal protection movements,³⁰ (literary) animals were propagated not only as narrators and defenders of their lives but also as feeling, suffering, and willful subjects. As such, literary autozoographies were part of what Eitler describes as a "regime of feelings" ([96], p. 212) enforced during the second half of the nineteenth century; a regime attributing not merely sentiments but distinct emotional lives to animals, while, in turn, demanding humans to treat animals in acknowledgment of and with respect toward these feelings. With their realistic accounts of cruelty towards animals, these narratives could "develop and deepen empathy and compassion for an animal as a person and the feelings it was supposed to have" ([36], p. 109). In early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies, however, the animals do not only possess a broad scope of emotional capacities, but also exhibit different sorts of cognitive capabilities. They remember their lives dating back to their births; they are astonished ([44], p. 44), they believe ([44], p. 47), think ([45], p. 53), extrapolate ([44], p. 20), learn ([43], p. 110), are convinced ([43], p. 4) demonstrate insight ([46], p. 75), make a point ([46], p. 85) etc.

In her article on animal autobiography in general, and on Charlotte Tucker's *Rambles of a Rat* (1857) in particular, Julie A. Smith argues that "[a]nimal autobiography sought to represent animal minds as established at least in part by scientific fact" ([3], p. 729) in order to demand humane treatment. Looking at how nineteenth-century natural history constructed animal minds, Smith discovers that "literary authors transformed the animals of natural history into fictional characters, adopt[ing] its foundational assumption that animals had cognitive capacities as well as lives, that is, coherent existence through time" ([3], p. 740). Popularization of natural history, Smith claims, enabled authors to find out about and be influenced by 'scientific' representations of animal consciousness ([3], p. 725–7). Nonetheless, it has to be kept in mind, as Simon Flynn rightfully concedes, "that natural history itself does not present the 'truth' of a particular animal, but is merely another discursive framework with its own force, history and regulations" ([97], p. 430). In fact, I would argue that the discursive parallels in literary autozoographies and natural history are indeed so striking *because* they have emanated from and simultaneously catered to a commonly shared epistemological field which made possible and regulated the unfolding of a web of interdependencies and dialogues between what was being promoted as 'fact' (historical writing and 'science') and what was considered as 'fiction' (literature). Smith focuses on general discourses on animal minds in natural history and animal autobiography respectively, and regards the anecdote (e.g., of animal 'sagacity') as most pertinent to animal representation in and the aesthetics of animal autobiographies ([3], pp. 738–41). While it is true that anecdotal form and knowledge is not uncommon in German nineteenth-century literary autozoographies (compare, e.g., ([43], pp. 63–64) to ([98], pp. 278–79, 281)), I would argue that these texts predominantly rely on and share natural history's mode of description and characterization with regard to a particular species (not of animals or rather "the animal", as Derrida reminds us ([99], pp. 415–16), in general).

If one considers the emotional and cognitive attributes of horses in equine autozoographies around 1800, it might be tempting to dismiss these representations as mere anthropomorphism for satirical ends. When compared to historical zoological discourses, however, equine representations in literary autozoographies become tangible as figurations conceived analogous to zoological theses about the capabilities of horses. In natural history and so called 'horse-science' around 1800, horses are presented as special in various sorts of ways. They feel, think, remember, 'speak', and thus deserve proper treatment and respect (see also [100]). By creating possible worlds of equine perceptions,

³⁰ The first German society for the prevention of cruelty to animals was founded in Stuttgart in 1837. Dresden followed suit in 1839, Hamburg in 1841, Berlin in 1841, Munich in 1842, Vienna in 1846 [95].

emotions and minds, equine autozoographies thus contributed to discourses on horses as discussed in natural history and horse-science and therefore partook in the construction of an 'equine epistemology'.

4.1.1. Feeling Like a Horse. De-/Ascribing Equine Emotions in Zoology and Literary Autozoographies

In late eighteenth-century Germany, the horse had become essential to and omnipresent in everyday (working) life [101,102]. As the anonymous author of the book *Horse Pleasure (Die Pferdelust)* wrote in 1792: "How suitable, useful and necessary is this wonderful animal for all classes and estates of mankind" ([103], p. 13). Realizing the need for well-behaved, efficient 'horse power', writers flooded the German book-market with guidelines and manuals on how to best deal with and train horses, giving shape to what they called "horse-science" (*Pferdewissenschaft*) (cp., [104–108]). This so-called 'science' comprised "a bundle of literary and practical knowledge" ([102], p. 210) which catered to and was also popularized by vets, stud managers, riding instructors and self-declared horse-lovers (cp., [109–111]). In his *Handbook of Horse-Science (Handbuch der Pferdewissenschaft)* (1775), stable and stud farm master Johann Gottfried Prizelius proclaimed that horse-science consists of "an exact knowledge of horses, the necessary information on breeding as well as the acquaintance with the means of determining and training the aged foals for work befitting their proportions and strength" ([104], p. 13). To sum up, Prizelius writes, a good horse scientist knows "how to do everything that is necessary to sustain and accommodate a horse up until its death" ([104], p. 13). Similar to equine autozoographies around 1800 then, a number of writings in horse-science followed the life of a (representative, fictive) horse from birth to death, commenting on how to provide the best care and training according to the horse's specific use in human societies. Yet while equine autozoographies exemplified how mistreatment, inexperience and abuse of the horse result in the untimely demise of the animals, writers of horse-science gave advice on ideal treatment horses in order to gain most profit from them. Therefore, literary autozoographies, I suggest, can themselves be regarded as guidebooks *ex negativo*, describing how *not* to treat and work with horses in order to sustain them. In this regard, the texts complement the overall ideological agenda of horse-science.

Yet it was not only the economic value of the horse which led the influential *Krünitz Encyclopedia* to publish an 800-page volume on the horse, but also its superlative status as "one of the most distinguished domestic animals" ([112], p. 1). The superior rank of the horse was an undisputed fact in eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century natural history, horse-science and encyclopedic literature. Hence, in the chronology of natural history accounts delivered by the anti-classifying "describers" ([3], p. 234; [113]), the report on 'the horse' usually came first in the order of domestic animals to be portrayed. The horse, George-Louis Leclerc de Buffon says in the translation of his widely read *Histoire naturelle*, is "[t]he noblest conquest ever made by man over the brute creation" ([114], p. 93)³¹. According to Buffon, the horse distinguishes itself, first and foremost, by its courage and spiritedness which he considered not inferior, but similar to that of the human warrior: "Equally intrepid as his master, the horse sees danger, and encounters death with bravery; inspired at the clash of arms, he loves it, and pursues the enemy with the same ardour and resolution" ([114], pp. 93–94). Apart from the fact that Buffon naturalizes the use of the horse in warfare as the horse's 'inherent' proclivity to combat, he is far from hesitant to describe horses as having and exhibiting positive emotions: The horse *loves* the sounds of warfare, and it "feels pleasure also in the chace [*sic*], and in tournaments" ([114], p. 94).

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's naturalist friend, the philosopher Eduard d'Alton, was convinced that horses can feel both love and hatred. In his *Natural History of the Horse (Naturgeschichte des Pferdes)* (1810), he remarks: "Horses remain true to themselves in their love and in their hatred" ([117], p. 28). This is why, according to d'Alton, humans should take care not to offend a horse. To those who treat

³¹ The German translation of the first volume was published in 1750 by Albrecht von Haller. A second (critical) translation was issued in 1785. For Buffon's influence and popularization see ([115], pp. 139–41; [116], pp. 63–65).

them well—be it humans or conspecifics—horses are “gentle and compliant” ([117], p. 29), yet they “are capable of bloody vengeance” ([117], p. 28) directed towards those who mistreat them. In a similar vein, the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers (Dikzionnär für Pferdeliebhaber, Pferdehändler, Bereiter, Kur- und Hufschmiede)* (1806) argues that “there are various characters among these animals with some of them prone to virtues and some to vices, just like humans” ([118], p. 114)³². The observation of horses and their interactions with humans and conspecifics led natural historians to grasp ‘equine semiotics’ analogous to human conduct and emotionality. The behavior of horses could be construed and interpreted along the lines of what was observable in humans and human societies, calling for a comparative vocabulary. Friedrich Georg Sebald, senior horse veterinarian of the Bavarian army, thus considered the horse as individual as any human being. Every horse, Sebald maintains in his *Complete Natural History of the Horse (Vollständige Naturgeschichte des Pferdes)* (1815), has “something idiosyncratic about it and distinguishes itself from other horses; this is a horse’s individual character” ([98], p. 272). Those willing to pay attention to these characters, Sebald suggests, can find out that horses feel as diverse and subjectively as humans. He writes: “Observing horses, one finds they have joy, sadness, fear, happiness, glumness, wrath, love and so on and so forth” ([98], 254).

As should have become apparent, natural historians around 1800 were convinced that horses possessed a complex emotional life which was similar to, rather than different from human experiences. Knowing about the emotional states, the vices and the virtues of horses, how to be able to discern them, and how to deal with them in accordance with their individual character, was considered key to an efficient upbringing and training. As Sebald proclaims: “It is certain that upbringing exerts a great influence on the characters of horses. A loving education, kindness, leniency and patience will make them affectionate, gentle, docile and obedient. Rigor, violence and maltreatment will make them stubborn, insidious, wicked” ([98], p. 294). Thus, ascribing (human) emotions to horses went hand in hand with the production of (readers’) feelings of sympathy and compassion as well as the request for a considerate, caring upbringing and training of horses.

Comparing these findings in zoology to *Life of a Job Horse*, exemplary of emotionality in equine autozoographies around 1800, the text presents itself as an epistemological echo of zoological assumptions. The equine protagonist feels “love for” but also “fear of” ([43], p. 13) his second master, Lord Tormington, and as a result intervenes as soon as he finds Tormington in danger. When Tormington, a little later in the narrative, forces the horse to gallop so hard that he stumbles and crashes into a ditch, it is again “fear for” his master but also “fear of punishment” ([43], p. 24) which guides his experiences. Yet instead of taking revenge for the thrashing he receives after the fall, as might be presumed with regard to d’Alton’s conviction quoted above, the chestnut horse “counters the rage [...] and the relentless beatings” of his master “with patience” ([43], p. 24). The submission and selfless obedience of the horse to human demands was common sense in natural history. Buffon considered the horse “a creature which renounces his very being for the service of man [...]: he [the horse, F.M.] gives himself up without reserve, refuses nothing, exerts himself beyond his strength, and often dies sooner than disobey” ([114], p. 94). Since he conceives horses as a self-less species, able to relinquish themselves to a (non)human other, Buffon implicitly admits to the self-awareness of horses. Active self-renunciation is only feasible if an individual can be considered conscious and aware of his or her self to start with. Simultaneously, according to natural history, horses cannot help but obey; they are forced to do as told no matter what the task. That this is nothing but a form of slavery is commonly acknowledged: “The slavery of the horse”, Buffon writes, “is [...] universal” ([114], p. 94).

In sum, natural history and equine autozoographies delineated horses as feeling, self-aware agents of a life and simultaneously tried to evoke empathy with and better treatment of horses. As the animals never seriously oppose human force, it is up to human consideration (and reason) to take

³² The four volumes of the book were translated into German between 1797 and 1806. They had originally been published in French as *Dictionnaire raisonné d’hippiatrique, cavalerie, manège, et maréchallerie* (1775) by the veterinarian and anatomist Philippe-Etienne Lafosse.

responsibility for a horse and its well-being. To take good care of and not overwork horses was seen as crucial to this responsibility. Equine autozoographies presented the animal protagonists as suffering characters, but also articulated these sufferings as experiences very much alike those of humans. In this respect, the texts tried to make readers aware of the implications of handling horses incorrectly and inflicting violence on them. Commenting on the crash due to Tormington's relentless gallop, the English chestnut declares: "I suffered badly from the crash—since a horse, dear reading gentlemen, has feelings, too" ([43], pp. 23–34). The chestnut addresses readers (and riders) as potential (ab)users of horses, and thus affirms his sensibility but also implicitly asks for a consideration of these equine experiences more generally.³³ Equine autozoographies thus participated in the epistemological construction of horses by fictionalizing and promoting supposed equine feelings and demands in analogy to the characterization of horses in zoological discourses. Apparently, the classical episteme in early nineteenth-century German-speaking countries allowed for horses, as a considerably sensible species, to emerge as feeling individuals with dynamic emotional lives. Compared to the accounts of natural history, however, equine autozoographies used their 'licence' to fictionalize as a means to expand and enrich zoological discourses on horses, transforming equine objects of knowledge into subjective protagonists, plots and life narratives (cp., [3], pp. 739–41). *Life of a Job Horse*, for example, reflects and rephrases the notion of horses as patient, obedient servants by representing a horse which is subservient (and thus exploited) but also more compassionate, indeed, more humane than his owners and (ab)users. When the English chestnut is lent to a drunken student trying to make his way home, the horse presents itself as naturally endowed with a compassionate character "feeling pity for the poor person" ([43], p. 116) swaying on his back. Therefore, the horse "proceeded as carefully and cautiously as possible so that he [the student, F.M.] would not fall down" (ibid.). The horse's feeling even goes beyond mere pity for his intoxicated rider. When the young man eventually falls down despite the horse's efforts and remains stuck in the stirrup, the horse reconfirms his loyalty and sympathy: "If I had been insidious or only less compassionate, I could have walked away, dragging him behind me. Yet I was too considerate for that. I stayed put and waited for someone to come by to help us out even though it was very late. My drunken rider fell asleep and I, out of pure boredom, chewed on some grass which I could reach from where I was standing. We remained in this position until the break of dawn" ([43], pp. 116–17).³⁴ Despite the ill-treatment he already had to endure from humans, the horse does not abandon its benign, patient disposition but rather lavishes its kindness even on those who are strangers to him or treat him as a mere means of transport. *Life of a Job Horse* thus potentiates the analogy between human and equine feelings discussed in natural history by representing the horse as an exemplary feeling and sympathetic character and thus invites human sympathy with the equine protagonist. Furthermore, the unrebelling and indulgent composure of the horse is also contextualized with his benign upbringing and training. Referring to his youth and education, the chestnut portrays his keeper Wilson "under whose care I grew up and welcomed the saddle" ([43], p. 2) as an exemplary horse- and stableman. Wilson provided "the best food", "cleaned and adorned" (ibid.) the horse, and, according to the equine narrator, can also be considered a role model for a humane training of horses: "To let powers and abilities develop themselves on their own terms; to only give

³³ The high degree of sensibility in horses was acknowledged in both natural history and horse-science, demanding, for example, the rider to handle the bridle and the spurs accordingly (cp., e.g., ([114], p. 105; [119], p. 151)).

³⁴ A similar anecdote referenced as "The Horse Which Took Care of His Drunken Master" (*Das für seinen betrunkenen Herrn besorgte Pferd*) was published in *Touching Stories from the Animal Kingdom (Rührende Erzählungen aus der Thierwelt)* in 1796 ([120], pp. 103–4). The heterodiegetically narrated anecdote, however, features a drunken farmer who—stuck in the stirrup—is rescued by his horse grabbing, after several unsuccessful trials, the farmer's coat and pulling him up so high that he can free himself. The farmer then cherishes and keeps the horse up until his/her death. Hence, not only the rescue operation but also the end of the story differs when compared to the chestnut's life narrative (not to speak of the narrative point of view). *Life of a Job Horse* seems to be interested in rendering the story more plausible with the horse waiting for help to arrive instead of helping out himself. Moreover, it demonstrates what happens to a horse whose service is not appreciated by the lessees feeling irresponsible for the well-being and fate of the animal. While the anecdote, similar to horse-science and "animal psychology" (*Thierseelenkunde*), spells out how horses should be treated in acknowledgement of their deeds and feats, *Life of a Job Horse* gives advice *ex negativo*, foregrounding the unjustified suffering the horse has to endure.

a little help if needed, to encourage here, tame the wild fire there—that was his art which he applied and the principle he followed and which I recommend to any educator as good and useful” ([43], p. 7). The horse’s advice here mirrors Sebald’s statement concerning the implications of a benign upbringing assuring that the horse turns out “affectionate, gentle, docile and obedient” ([98], p. 294). The fact that the chestnut, even in his late years and after all his bad experiences is not “insidious” but truly “compassionate” ([43], pp. 116) is thus rendered plausible by his beneficent upbringing. Analogous to the instructions in horse-science, the text thus argues for a reasonable, benevolent nurturing and training of horses, and, again, exhibits its shared epistemological base with zoological discourses.

That the representation of equine feelings in *Life of a Job Horse* is part of a “regime of feelings” also becomes evident at the end of the narrative. Looking ahead to its death “calmly and with serenity”, ([43], p. 143), the equine narrator turns to the reader one last time: “Farewell, dear reader! Extend your compassion to me at least when leaving through this story” ([43], p. 143). The exit of the narrator is combined with a specific appeal for the readers’ emotional investment. As both a subservient and useful, a feeling and compassionate being, the horse in turn asks for an empathetic reading of, or rather post-reading reflection on, his life narrative and the sufferings he had to endure. By implication, the story thus makes a case for a kinder and more benevolent treatment. As is well known, Kant had warned of a form of human brutalization (*Verrohung*) in the process of inflicting violence on animals. Harming animals would thus “weaken a natural endowment which is very useful for the morality in relation to other human beings” ([121], p. 443). *Life of a Job Horse* rather seems to argue for a reasonable treatment of horses not least for the sake of the horses themselves. It represents the horse as an exemplary servant and emotional being feeling and, first and foremost, working even better, if treated with consideration and compassion. Ultimately, and historically speaking, the representation of equine emotions in natural history and equine autozoographies thus sought to revise and ameliorate but also to substantiate and optimize human access to and use of horses. In early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies and natural history then, feelings allegedly located in horses and those to be evoked in humans were firmly intertwined. By means of observation and analogy, natural history was certain that horses and humans feel in similar ways and therefore deserve similar treatment. Equine autozoographies popularized and enforced this paradigm by developing emboldened forms of equine emotionality. In addition, as will be shown in the following, the texts also catered to natural history’s stance on the cognitive capacities of the species.

4.1.2. Thinking Like a Horse. De-/Ascribing Equine Minds in Zoology and Literary Autozoographies

How come horses always find their way back home? Why do they seem to ‘know’ when something bad is about to happen? Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural history usually had two answers for these questions. While a number of authors believed that God had endowed animals with mental hindsight, others, as Julie A. Smith writes, argued “that mental states apparently identical in animals and humans were really very different. One was the operation of instinct, the other of reason” ([3], p. 735). The horse, however, posed problems to these simple distinctions and matter-of-fact explanations. Given its behavior and impressive capabilities, some of its conduct appeared too clever to be merely instinct-driven—it seemed intelligent. In his *Dictionnaire raisonné d’équitation* (1833) the influential stable master François Baucher declared: “The horse has perceptions as well as sensations; it can compare and remember—it, therefore, has *intelligence*” ([122], p. 178), emphasis in the original), emphasis in the original).³⁵ Based on this assessment, Baucher developed a training method seeking to avoid aversive stimuli obstructing the learning process of the horse, while endorsing positive experiences in training ([124], pp. x–xi).

Georg Friedrich Sebald, aforementioned horse veterinarian, prefigured Baucher’s views. In his *Complete Natural History of the Horse*, he praises the species as evincing “imagination, attention, memory,

³⁵ For Baucher’s influence on contemporary horsemanship, see [123].

willpower and judgement" ([98], p. 241). Giving a number of anecdotal proofs for his hypotheses, Sebald concludes that "horses, and animals in general, cannot be mere machines, as Descartes would have it"; rather, "one can often find equine behavior that is very much like the conduct of clever human beings" ([98], p. 268). Buffon considered the horse a conscious being insofar as it "knows how to check his natural fiery temper" ([114], p. 94, my emphasis). He also regarded the neighing of horses as a communicative act, since he could differentiate "five kinds of neighing relative to different passions" ([114], p. 164) in horses. Christian Ehrenfried von Tennecker agreed since he believed the facial expressions, body posture, and conduct of horses to be "a language which is very well comprehensible for horse experts and vets" ([125], p. 297). The *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* describes horses as "very clever and easy to teach in comparison to other domestic animals" but admits that "among the various individuals of this species, there are so many differences in mental capacities because some horses are as stupid among their own kind as some humans among other humans" ([119], p. 77). Similar to the emotions ascribed to horses discussed in the former section of this article, human beings and their mental capacities served as templates of and points of reference for the discursive construction of equine minds in zoological discourse. As the behavior of some horses could be interpreted along the lines of an intelligent human being and in analogy to a form of language, it logically followed that the horse had to be endowed with similar cognitive and communicative abilities.

In its statement, the *Dictionary*, however, dwells on and reaffirms the differentialist conception of animals and humans, helping many a natural historian to resurrect the dividing line between equine and human intelligence. While some horses were seen as clever and could even be called rational, e.g., insofar as they seemed to be able to subdue their instincts when influenced and improved upon by human training,³⁶ humans, it seemed, could act not only *rationally* (allegedly without exterior influence) but also *reasonably*. Reason, yet again, represented the crossroads of equine and human homologies. Horses could be clever and 'teachable'; they might even show behavior which could be called rational. Reason, however, was reserved for mankind. Still, rationality, was apparently no longer considered an anthropological prerogative. This is why Sebald can assert that "due to their capacity to judge, horses can observe all conditions of an object, compare them and draw certain conclusions from it" ([98], p. 254). Sebald calls this sense of judgement "rationality which haughty humankind usually denies to animals" and is convinced that "horses, to a certain extent, have this rationality, too" ([98], p. 254). Even though some natural historians thus acknowledged the mental faculties of horses and were even willing to concede a degree of rationality to them, the line got drawn with the knockout argument of reason. It comes as no surprise that even Sebald adheres to this dogma, confirming that "instinct in animals is what is called reason in man" ([98], p. 269).

Yet the line between rationality and reason, between what was considered animal instinct on the one hand and human reason on the other hand could become obscure at times. As Julie A. Smith has shown, British nineteenth-century accounts in natural history tried to keep the categories of animal instincts and human rationality apart, but often "entail[ed] slippage" with literary autozoographies "blur[ring] the difference" ([3], p. 736) even further. Similarly, natural history's accounts of equine mental capacities found it hard to make a distinction. In its entry on "Horse", the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* concedes that "[t]he analogue of human reason, instinct, generally seems to work here in accordance with more limited principles, but the line can hardly ever be determined" ([118], p. 114). Sebald confirms this and adds "that instincts in some animals seem to surpass human reason" ([98], p. 229). Again, human and equine mental capacities are weighed against each other, with Sebald trying to draw a 'reasonable' line between the two. Yet, ultimately, the comparison exposes a lack of sufficient evidence for making a clear distinction by means of observation. German equine autozoographies undermine the supposed gulf between

³⁶ Buffon, for example, believed that human "art" has improved the "talents and natural qualities" ([114], p. 94) of domestic horses.

human and animal cognition even more considerably. They represent horses as a species not only with extraordinary memories but also with the capacity to communicate, reflect, judge and act according to these judgments.

Memory in equine autozoographies even tends to encompass the animals' own births. The English chestnut knows how much his keeper was annoyed by the fact that the horse's mother did not give birth at the assumed hour, making the keeper wait until "finally, on the day after the third night I was born at noon" ([43], pp. 4–5). Of course, this information could have been conveyed to the horse by someone else; however, the narrative suggests that the horse has no difficulties in conjuring up those long-ago events from direct memory. Mecklenburg Mare Amante also finds it easy to recall her birth: "My birth happened without any veterinary help [...] My mother licked me, my ward ushered me to the udder, rich with milk [...] Do I have to say more to prove I was happy?" ([44], pp. 3–4). Not only does Amante remember the event of her birth, but also the sensations she experienced during the following minutes and hours. This extraordinary memory is echoed by horse-science admiring "the memory, and, first and foremost, the spatial memory" ([126], p. 13) of horses. Old, dulled job horses, the *Dictionary for Horse-Lovers, Horse Dealers, Horse Trainers and Farriers* advises, should be handled with precision so that "the horse might remember his youth when he was treated much better" ([118], p. 21). Maltreatment of the horse, in turn, would "leave deep impressions in his memory" ([127], p. 68). The emphasis put on processes of memory in equine autozoographies is clearly reminiscent of the texts' attempt to render the "illusion of autobiographical authenticity" ([37], p. 4), as indicated in part two of this article; yet at the same time it serves to promote the belief in what was considered horses' astonishing power to remember.

Mulling over certain observations and even themselves is a common activity for horses in equine autozoographies. Amante, for example, is forced to think about her appearance after she had been given a negative assessment first, a positive one shortly after: "I started doubting myself and wanted to investigate and be acquainted with myself in order to be convinced of what there was to be found about me" ([44], p. 28). This introspection, this "reflecting upon" ([44], p. 29) herself, leads her to the conclusion that her vices might result in her being "misjudged and despised" ([44], p. 33). As aforementioned, natural history was equally liberal in granting horses the ability to judge and draw conclusions.

The fact that literary autozoographies represent horses as self-conscious, proud, and, at times, even vain creatures falls in line with the accounts of natural history as well. Buffon had already described the horse as a "spirited and haughty animal" ([114], p. 93). Sebald went even further: "Horses love cleanliness, ornaments, finery and such things. The horse is certainly one of the neatest animals. It stays put and finds itself agreeable when being washed and cleaned; it even invites his keeper to do it" ([98], p. 289). Horses, according to Sebald, can judge, reflect on, and compare themselves to others as well as to their former selves; they also examine and cherish themselves. It comes as no surprise then that the chestnut horse indulges in "self-praise" ([43], p. 6) or that Amante thinks her hooves "outstanding", her propositions "agreeable", while she rejects being called unduly "vain" ([44], p. 21). Equine autozoographies and natural history articulated and disseminated the alleged mental abilities of horses and, hence, at times, undermined the dividing line between human superiority justified by reason and a higher degree of rationality on the one hand, as opposed to animal instincts and their inferior rationality or cleverness on the other hand. As an example for this, the following passage in *Life of a Job Horse* not only unsettles and subverts the distinctiveness of these categories but also represents equine agency in opposition to human (in)disposition. The passage presents the horse and Lord Tormington on their way from London to Tormington's country estate, when they are ambushed by robbers trying to force Tormington to hand over his purse. Tormington finds himself "so shocked" ([43], p. 12) that the horse can feel the rider shake on his back; Tormington then instantly draws his purse. Meanwhile, the chestnut conceives of "the best means" to intervene and rescue Tormington "with [...] cleverness" ([43], p. 13): "During the preparations for the handover, I moved a little towards one of the robbers, although the other had got hold of my reins. [...] And now, calculating the space and the distance precisely, I kicked out and hit the second robber so hard

against the right leg that he cried out loud and fell from the horse on the left-hand side [...]. Now it was time to finish what I had started by making an escape. I was already preparing for this when I felt the whip and the spurs of my master which he applied either by instinct or by virtue of returning consideration" ([43], p. 13).

Since his master seems to have "lost his head", trembling and apparently abandoning any "consideration" (read: rational faculty and reason), the horse initiates and executes a counter-attack. In this instance, the text depicts the chestnut as capable of intentionality, planning and spatial imagination; the horse appears as the prime rational agent in this human-animal constellation. Furthermore, the horse muses whether it was the return of Tormington's rational powers or rather his "instinct" that made him set spurs to the horse. The text exposes this human-made distinction as arbitrary and aporetic by turning the conventional categories of animal instincts and human reason upside down. For the observer, it is impossible to tell whether human or animal (nonverbal) behavior is the consequence of either so-called instinct, supposedly devoid of reflection and reasoning, or of so-called rationality and reason, supposedly devoid of affects and reflexes. Equine autozoographies like *Life of a Job Horse* thus advocate equine intelligence and rationality, while simultaneously (and most likely inadvertently) foregrounding the ultimate impossibility of humans to distinguish between reason and instinct on the basis of nonverbal behavior. Ultimate access to and insights about other (nonhuman) minds is epistemologically limited, if not unavailable.

5. Conclusions

This article has investigated the affiliations between literary autozoographies, fictional autobiographies and zoological discourse. Akin to fictional (human) autobiographies, early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies rely on narrative strategies mimicking autodiegetic discourse in order to pass as authentic life narratives. Copying factual autobiographies, the fictional texts can be read as meta-auto/biographical discourse uncovering autobiography's tropes and rhetorics and exposing its claims of factuality and truthfulness as limited and questionable.

The comparison between zoology's discursive engagements with equine minds and feelings and the representations in equine autozoographies has shown that the ascription of emotional and cognitive capabilities to horses is a shared representational phenomenon linked to what the early nineteenth century regarded as interspecies homology. As a result of this comparative contextualization, life-narrating horses can be recognized as reflections and imaginative, interpretative negotiations of the epistemological field shared with zoology's descriptive, matter-of-fact discourse. While zoology tried to promote the capabilities of horses objectively from a third-person perspective, equine autozoographies made (and encouraged) an imaginative leap to present and acknowledge the perception and experiences of horses 'first-hand'. Creating equine feelings and minds 'in their own image', authors of natural history, horse-science and equine autozoographies (unintentionally) subverted the conventional lines between what were considered exclusively human spheres (reason, language) and the supposedly inferior animal kingdom (instinct, speechlessness), finding horses not different from, but very similar to human beings.

As the discussion has shown, early nineteenth-century equine autozoographies were part of an episteme around 1800 in which it had become feasible in and beyond zoology to grant individuality, agency and emotional and mental capabilities to horses. The texts reflect, negotiate and popularize epistemological (and ideological) discourses on 'the' horse, participating in a broader discussion about what horses can and cannot do, what horses should be endowed with and how they should be dealt with. Reading animal narratives and literary autozoographies alongside zoological discourses thus allows fresh perspectives not only on the poetics and aesthetics of a literary text but also on how much zoology and 'scientific' texts rely on literary devices and narrative forms ([27], pp. 231–32). In this respect, historical research on literary autozoographies is meant to encourage animal studies scholarship to think about the role of literature in the epistemology, aesthetics and poetics of zoology in general, of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century natural history in particular. Ever since

the Enlightenment, natural historians set out to follow but in fact did not practice the Aristotelian division between history and poetry, description and invention, the 'real' and the 'possible' [113,128]. Despite its rhetorical insistence on what Foucault described as a "purification" ([28], p. 131) during the classical age—an effort to get rid of what was considered the excessive, fabulous "whole of animal semantics" ([28], p. 129)—natural history relied on narrative techniques, anecdotal evidence, literary styles, and creative practices. Thus, animal descriptions in natural history cannot be severed from literary animals in general, literary autozoographies in particular, and vice versa. The narration and creation of 'The Lives (and Characters) of Animals' was part of both natural history and literary autozoographies.³⁷ As I hope this article has shown, a comparative approach to literary autozoographies from the perspective afforded both by scholarship on autobiography and by cultural animal studies may open innovative ways of (re)discovering and (re)examining life-narrating animals, literary and natural history alike.

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³⁷ It is no co-incidence that some nineteenth-century natural history books and articles entitled themselves analogous to literary autozoographies (cp., for the German-speaking tradition, e.g., [129–133]). Natural history and literary autozoographies were both interested in a "holistic approach to animal lives" ([3], p. 734), insofar as they—albeit in different ways—tried to describe the habits, needs, and supposed capabilities of a species in a most comprehensive way. Both genres thus acknowledged that animals were experiencing and appreciating their lives; lives which could best be understood if carefully observed and portrayed.

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Article

Narrating Animal Trauma in Bulgakov and Tolstoy

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Abstract: Following the recent “animal turn” in literary studies, which has inspired scholars to revisit traditional human-centered interpretations of texts narrated by animals, this article focuses on the convergence of animal studies and trauma theory. It offers new animal-centered close readings of Tolstoy’s *Strider* and Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*, paying attention to animal pain rather than seeing it, and the text as a whole, as an allegory of human society. Like many other authors of literary fiction featuring animal narrators, Tolstoy and Bulgakov employ a kind of empathic ventriloquism to narrate animal pain, an important project which, however, given the status of both the animal and trauma outside human language, and thus susceptible to being distorted by it, produces inauthentic discourse (animal-like, rather than animal narration); therefore, these authors get closest to animal pain, not through sophisticated narration, but through the use of ellipses and onomatopoeia. Ultimately, any narratological difficulty with animal focalization is minor compared to the ethical imperative of anti-speciesist animal-standpoint criticism, and the goal is to reconceive the status of animals in literature so as to change their ontological place in the world, urging that this critical work and animal rights advocacy be continued in the classroom.

Keywords: animal narrators; animal studies; human-animal studies; speaking animals; Tolstoy; Bulgakov; trauma theory; Russian literature

But a full-grown horse or dog is beyond comparison a more rational, as well as a more conversable animal, than an infant of a day or a week or even a month, old. But suppose they were otherwise, what would it avail? The question is not, Can they *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*? Jeremy Bentham ([1], p. 7).

1. Introduction

Following the recent “animal turn” in literary studies, which has inspired scholars to revisit traditional human-centered interpretations of texts narrated by animals, such as Theodore Ziolkowski’s catalogue of “talking dogs” [2], this article focuses on nonhuman animals as “a limit case for theories of difference, otherness, and power”: the convergence of animal studies and trauma theory, both of which “raise questions about how one can give testimony to an experience that cannot be spoken or that may be distorted by speaking it” ([3], pp. 3–4). More specifically, it offers new animal-centered close readings of Leo Tolstoy’s *Strider: The Story of a Horse* and Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog*, paying particular attention to animal pain rather than seeing it, and the text as a whole, as an allegory of human society. The present purpose is to reorient ostensibly animal-centered but actually human-centric interpretations so as to demonstrate what texts such as *Strider* and *The Heart of a Dog* reveal about animal narrators and animals in general, ultimately urging that this critical work and animal rights advocacy be continued in the classroom.

Tolstoy’s *Strider* and Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog* have been read as social and political commentaries, and even critics who have focused on the first-person animal narrators in these short novels, through

philological, historical, political, and narratological lenses, have seen the animal experience as representative of human concerns [4–8]. With a few exceptions [9,10], critical readings tend to be human-centric even as the texts themselves center on the animal in pain. In *Strider*, the point of view shifts from omniscient narration to first-person testimony once the titular gelding begins to speak, revealing how his traumatic experiences (separation from his mother and castration) made him both self-aware and capable of narrating his life. In *The Heart of a Dog*, where a mongrel named Sharik is surgically transformed into a human being, the first-person canine perspective shifts to omniscient narration once Sharik becomes Comrade Sharikov (through the implantation of human testes and pituitary gland), but ultimately returns to Sharik once again, after this surgery has been reversed. Like many other authors of literary fiction featuring animal narrators, Tolstoy and Bulgakov employ a kind of empathic ventriloquism to narrate animal pain, an important project which, however, given the status of both the animal and trauma outside human language, and thus susceptible to being distorted by it, produces discourse that may not be authentic (animal-like, rather than animal narration) but is, nonetheless, our best shot at addressing the animal in pain.

If a lion could talk, and if we had the means to understand him, to paraphrase Ludwig Wittgenstein's famous proposition, is a much debated question in animal studies [11].¹ Kari Weil has written on the ways primate research, conducted by Sue Savage-Rumbaugh at the Great Ape Trust in Iowa, brings us closer to interspecies communication, but she also warns against attempts "to teach apes to sign in order to have them tell humans what they want" ([3], pp. 3, 5–6). Added to animals' historically inferior ontological status and perceived voicelessness is the narratological problem associated with focalizing an animal's perspective. As William Nelles points out, "first-person or homodiegetic examples . . . pose the problem of assigning human language to animals, who by definition cannot speak" [12]. Gerard Genette does, however, suggest the possibility of animal focalization by leaving the term 'personnages' somewhat ambiguous in a footnote to the definition of the "homodiegetic" type of narrative, where "the narrator is present as a character in the story he tells": "This term [personnages] is used here for lack of a more neutral or more extensive term which would not unduly connote, as this one does, the 'humanness' of the narrative agent, even though in fiction nothing prevents us from entrusting that role to an animal . . . or indeed to an 'inanimate' object" ([13], pp. 244–45, note 74). While many narratologists have understood this as a dismissal of animal narration, the large number of fictional texts with animal focalizers justifies their study [12]. Such objections to animal narration and the difficulties involved are, furthermore, minor compared to the ethical imperative of forging anti-speciesist approaches to reading and treating animals.

While heeding the animal in pain, my goal is not merely to reinforce the violence already inflicted by the critics' scalpels. Arguing against aestheticizing violence and cruelty to animals, Josephine Donovan criticizes interpretations in which the "circumstantial realities of the animals themselves are largely ignored so that the perceived pathos of their condition may be used to illustrate the mental state or moral condition of the humans. "In short," she claims, "the moral reality of the animals' suffering is overridden in the interest of creating an aesthetic effect" ([14], p. 206). This is especially evident in analyses of metaphors and other figurative language, which "may thus be seen as a form of parasitical exploitation or metaphysical cannibalism of one entity (the vehicle) for the benefit of the other (the tenor)" ([14], p. 207). In the following pages, I will explore, in more depth, "the unrepresentable" ([15], p. 573) discourse of animal trauma and the empathic ventriloquism invented by human authors to vocalize, and focalize, nonhuman animal perspectives. To demonstrate that it is, indeed, possible to avoid aestheticizing animal violence and cannibalizing their experience for

¹ Constantine Sandis sets out to criticize (mis)readings from the animal perspective which ignore the philosophical context of Wittgenstein's remark, "Wenn ein Löwe sprechen könnte, wir könnten ihn nicht verstehen" ("If a lion could talk, we could not understand him"); however, he also notes that along with "Elizabeth Anscombe's commonly accepted translation of 'können...nicht' as 'could not', which implies it is impossible, . . . there are actually three different [interpretive] translations" that leave the possibility of animal communication open ([11], pp. 1–3).

human gain, I engage in what Donovan calls “animal-standpoint criticism.” This approach is grounded in the view that “animals are seats of consciousness—subjects, not objects; that they are individuals with stories/biographies of their own, not undifferentiated masses; that they dislike pain, enjoy pleasure; that they want to live and thrive; that in short they have identifiable desires and needs, many of which we human animals share with them” ([14], p. 204).

2. The Elephant in the Room

By interpreting animal pain allegorically, literary scholars may not have actively promoted animal suffering, but they have not helped to alleviate it either. Buttressed by documented findings in ethology and animal science, animal narratology can make a doubly powerful claim for empathy. That animals experience pain has, indeed, been proven empirically. One such experiment is Francis C. Colpaert’s study on animals and pain medication in the 1980s. Colpaert injected rats with bacteria that induce arthritis and offered them a choice of bad-tasting analgesic and sweet, sugary-tasting liquid; these arthritic rats, the experiment indicated, were choosing the painkiller not for its taste [16]. The structures of their neurological systems provide more evidence for animal pain as well as consciousness. The brains of mammals have “a neocortex, the cauliflower-like portion of the brain that features ridges and in-foldings,” which makes them capable of consciously experiencing pain ([17], pp. 74–75). In *Animal Liberation*, Peter Singer argues that other species have “[n]early all the external signs that lead us to infer pain in other humans,” including such behaviors as “writhing, facial contortions, moaning, yelping or other forms of calling, attempts to avoid the source of pain, [and] appearance of fear at the prospect of its repetition” ([1], p. 11). Similarities in nervous systems along with physiological responses (variations in blood pressure, perspiration, and heart rate) yield further evidence that animals can feel pain, and although humans possess a more developed cerebral cortex, animals’ diencephalon, significantly developed in mammals and birds, enables them to experience impulses, emotions, and feelings. Animals’ capacity for pain serves, moreover, the same evolutionary function as humans’: to prevent injury thereby also enhancing a species’ chances at survival, all of which leads Singer to conclude that animals must also have a similar subjective experience of pain ([1], p. 11).

Additionally, recent research has shown that contrary to “cortico-centrism,” or the speciesist claim that an organism must have a neocortex to “possess a humanlike capacity for pain,” even fish can exhibit the presence of consciousness due to the medial pallium, which performs a similar function to that of the human amygdala and helps drive memory, decision making, and emotions, including responses to various stimuli from stress to joy ([17], pp. 74–75, 89). Studies of largemouth bass populations show they become hook-shy after being hooked and released, indicating that repeat-hooking is motivated by hunger and should not be taken as evidence of an absence of pain ([17], p. 76). Studies of rainbow trout show, similarly, that they “are equipped to respond to different types of potentially painful events: mechanical injury (like cutting or stabbing), burning, and chemical damage (from acid),” and that their negative reactions were reduced by the use of morphine ([17], pp. 78–79).

Prior to considering whether the animal’s suffering is posited merely for “an aesthetic effect” ([14], p. 206), or as a vehicle for speciesist, human-centric critique, we must acknowledge the presence of not one but two elephants in the room: that animals are capable of consciously experiencing pain, and that pain is utterly subjective, notoriously impossible to locate, and ultimately unnarratable and unrepresentable. Whereas in the case of human trauma, as Cathy Caruth argues, what is initially incomprehensible can potentially be narrated belatedly, with the delay allowing “*history* to arise where *immediate understanding* may not” ([18], p. 11, original emphasis), in the case of animals, there may not be a belated history, at least not one we can understand given the limitations of human language. As Weil has shown, both animal studies and trauma studies draw attention to “the violence done to animals and their habitats” and to “the difficulty of assessing how animals experience that violence,” and hence “raise questions about how one can give testimony to an experience that cannot be spoken or that may be distorted by speaking it” ([3], p. 4). In the case of prey animals especially, expressing

suffering may be precarious. Prey animals, such as horses, mask their pain more than predators and can be “incredibly uncomplaining”; those that do show pain, through “contorted positions” and moaning, “do this only when they’re alone” ([19], p. 181).² As we will see shortly, this makes Strider’s autobiographical account—given to several other horses and indirectly to many more human readers—at once less plausible and more poignant.

3. What Tolstoy’s Gelding Can Tell Us about Animal Trauma

Perhaps the most striking representation of “the unrepresentable” is the ellipsis in the middle of Leo Tolstoy’s short novel *Strider: The Story of a Horse* (*Kholstomer*, 1886), at the moment when the eponymous stallion is transformed into a “piebald gelding” ([20], pp. 79, 83). Over the course of five nights, the aging Strider tells the other horses in the moonlit paddock about his unfortunate coloration, abandonment by his mother, unrequited first love, and subsequent castration:

Then the general threatened to thrash everyone and said that I must be castrated. The head keeper promised to carry out his orders. Then they all quieted down and left. I didn’t understand a thing, but I could see that they were planning to do something to me.

...

“The day after that I stopped neighing for ever and I became what I am now. In my eyes the whole world had changed. Nothing held any joy for me, I withdrew into myself and abandoned myself to reflection. At first everything revolted me. I even stopped drinking, eating and walking, and playing with my companions was out of the question. Sometimes I had the urge to jib, canter and neigh, but immediately I would ask myself the terrifying questions: why? for *what*? And my last ounce of strength drained away ([20], p. 84, original emphasis).

In the original Russian, the ellipsis is even more pronounced, receiving two full lines of dots ([21], p. 111):

.....
.....

Signaling a moment of emotional intensity, a double-line ellipsis occurs only one other time, at the start of Chapter X, which switches perspectives (from first-person to omniscient) to narrate the visit of Strider’s old owner, Serpukhovskoi, whom the gelding recognizes immediately, but who, having abandoned him in the past, now also tragically fails to reciprocate ([21], p. 123). This use of punctuation seems deliberate; a single-line ellipsis is used three times in two earlier chapters to demarcate animal speech, or a different section within animal speech: right before the chapter in which Strider begins to speak, right before the actual moment of his speaking, and right before he begins his autobiography proper after introducing himself ([21], pp. 106–7).

This unnarrated, and arguably unnarratable, violence makes Strider both inquisitive (he “abandoned [him]self to reflection”) and remarkably astute, as he starts to question the notion of private property, especially when applied by humans to (their) animals: “I understood full well what he said about flogging and Christianity, but I didn’t have the least idea what the words *mine*, *my foal* meant ... I found it impossible to understand how and why I could be called a man’s property. The words *my horse*, referring to me, a living creature, struck me as strange, just as if someone had said *my earth*, *my air*, *my water*” ([20], p. 86, original emphasis). The Russian formalist Viktor

² At one point Grandin describes the castration of bulls by a veterinarian using “a rubber band procedure, wrapping a tight band around the bull’s testicles and leaving it there for several days,” a procedure considered “less traumatic than surgery, although there are individual differences in how cattle react to it”: “Some bulls are perfectly normal, while others repeatedly stamp their feet. I interpret foot stamping as a sign of discomfort but not overwhelming pain. A few bulls, though, act as if they’re in agony. They lie down on the ground in strange, contorted positions and they moan—but they do this only when they’re alone” ([19], p. 181).

Shklovsky gave Tolstoy's story as an example of defamiliarization (*ostranenie*) in his seminal essay "Art as Technique" (1917), noting that "it is the horse's point of view (rather than a person's) that makes the content of the story seem unfamiliar" ([6], p. 21); this technique, moreover, in the words of Hugh McLean, "became a favourite, almost patented [one] of Tolstoy's art" and so "compels the reader to see human beings and their behaviour in new ways" ([20], p. xviii). Yet by focusing on the use of defamiliarization, critics of *Strider* have inevitably downplayed the literality of the animal's pain. A telling example of Soviet-era criticism can be found in E. Zhezlova's note on *Kholstomer* in the 1958 collected works edition, where there is not a single reference to the narrator's being a horse; rather, he is a "creature [*sushchestvo*] close to nature" (which could apply to humans and nonhumans alike), and "the story is about his 'fate' and 'thoughts'" (placed in quotation marks presumably to indicate their uncertain status), which also exposes "the mercenary world of property owners" and poses "the most important social questions" ([21], pp. 489–90, my translation).³ The brief description humanizes the gelding by erasing his animal difference.

By reading Tolstoy's story from the perspective of animal studies, on the other hand, we notice that there is more here than "a horse's perspective on human life", or a satire on "all the folly, decay, moral emptiness, and socioeconomic parasitism of the representatives of the ruling class in imperial Russia," as *Strider's* Soviet critics insisted ([8], p. 546). The ellipsis in the text marks the point of intersection of animal studies and a theory of trauma as both "problematize representation and attempt to define its limits—discourses of the sublime, the sacred, the apocalyptic, and the other in all its guises" ([15], p. 573). We come to see more than the somewhat arbitrary problem that animal focalization poses for narratology, being, in Genette's typology, a type of first-person or homodiegetic focalization, which thus "assign[s] human language to animals, who by definition cannot speak" [12]. We arrive, in effect, at the animal's inability to narrate her pain, as animal discourse, like that of trauma, is also the "discourse of the unrepresentable, of the event or object that destabilizes language and demands a vocabulary and syntax in some sense incommensurable with what went before" ([15], p. 573).

Shifting the conversation toward "the themes of sex, love, and motherhood in this story about a castrated horse," along with the implications of thwarted sexual desire, Ronald D. LeBlanc offers an insightful and much needed analysis of that which is elided in the text and has been ignored by critics who read the story as an allegory about the landed gentry [8,22]; he sees in the gelding's selfless service to others following his castration "the expression of an ascetic desire on the part of the author to be unburdened of what he saw as the affliction of sexual lust and thus to be freed to pursue a more spiritual, less carnal existence on earth, a position that Tolstoy would later promulgate as part of his championing of a noncarnal, Christian brand of love" ([8], pp. 546–47). LeBlanc's treatment of "the piebald gelding" is more sympathetic than that of Aleksandr Etkind, for example, who sees the castration as ultimately beneficial for the horse and "an appropriate cure" for the "ailment" that is lust, because "if *Kholstomer* had not been castrated, it is unlikely he would have come to the moral insight that he does" ([8], pp. 556–57). LeBlanc's reading is still largely human-centered, positing that *Strider* be seen, at least in part, as Tolstoy's own (human) autobiography.

Andrea Rossing McDowell takes an animal studies approach which similarly draws on Tolstoy's biography, linking the author's vegetarianism and pacifism with his other, more frequently explored principles, including "his opposition to serfdom, the role of women in society, the devolution of sexual mores, and the destruction of rural life through modernization" ([9], p. 1). She insists that "The First Step" (1891), Tolstoy's famous essay which "aligns the consumption of meat with moral vices," is especially revealing of his attitude toward animals, contrary to other Tolstoy scholars who continue to "minimize the connection between his vegetarianism and his compassion for the animal world" ([9], p. 2). By foregrounding the animal's trauma, both the physical pain of castration and the

³ Quotations from Russian are transliterated according to a simplified version of the Library of Congress' ALA-LC Romanization Tables, omitting ligatures.

accompanying emotions of abandonment and alienation due to his piebald coloration and gelding status, McDowell turns the conversation toward the animal: “This extreme *personalization* of the animal tragedy makes Tolstoy’s tale doubly successful as an allegory of human society and a literal injunction to treat non-human species with greater consideration” ([9], p. 10). She concludes, however, not unlike Etkind, by recognizing the paradox of Strider’s castration, or “‘ideal’ celibacy”: “The initial trauma represents an act of power and abomination that ravages the victim’s sense of self and precludes immortality through progeny; conversely, it frees the sufferer from ‘animal’ desires of the flesh, thereby encouraging more virtuous contemplations” ([9], p. 11). In this respect, the story supports Tolstoy’s own grappling with celibacy and Christianity ([8], p. 557) and perhaps explains why, having started the story in the 1860s, he would not finish it for another 20 years.

There is, admittedly, some value to biographical criticism. In an often-quoted anecdote reported by Tolstoy’s fellow writer Ivan Turgenev, the latter recalls seeing Tolstoy “by a bony, mangy old nag, stroking its back and whispering gently into its ear, while the horse listened with evident interest” ([10], pp. 45–46): “I was absolutely spellbound by what I heard,” Turgenev reports. “Not only did he himself enter into the inner condition of this unfortunate creature, but he brought me into it as well. I couldn’t restrain myself and said to him: ‘Listen, Lev Nikolaevich, you really must have been a horse once yourself.’ One could not find a better rendering of the inner condition of a horse” ([8], p. 545). Moreover, the “description of Strider’s death may derive from an actual visit Tolstoy paid to a slaughterhouse at about this time” ([10], p. 44). But this also brings us to a critical impasse: animal focalization, rendered by any human, even one possibly reincarnated as a horse, is still the product of human imagination and empathy, reported through human language “giv[ing] testimony to an experience that cannot be spoken” and likely “distort[ing it] by speaking” ([3], p. 4). I would argue, however, that the creative impulse to give voice to the so-called dumb beasts, by making them narrators of their own literary fiction, is still less damaging than literary criticism’s tradition of allegorizing their experiences—thus, in the words of Philip Armstrong, “reduc[ing] the animal to a blank screen for the projection of human meaning” ([14], p. 203).

4. Rescuing Bulgakov’s Mongrel from Under the Critic’s Scalpel

Mikhail Bulgakov’s *Heart of a Dog* (*Sobach’e Serdtse*, 1925) is the story of a radical transplant, Professor Preobrazhensky’s unprecedented rejuvenation experiment which transforms a sympathetic mongrel into a despicable “new Soviet man,” who drinks, spits, curses, and plays the balalaika. This “wonderfully angry novel,” in the words of Andrey Kurkov, makes us wonder about the relationship between Bulgakov and Stalin ([23], p. ix). Employing “comic absurdity” to allegorize the Bolshevik Revolution, the story’s “fantastic realism” gave it appeal as political satire while also allowing Bulgakov to avoid prosecution, though not censorship, by the ruling Proletariat it criticized. Although initially accepted for publication, the manuscript was confiscated in 1926 and published in Germany only in 1968; in the Soviet Union, it did not appear in print until 1987 ([24], p. 491, note 1).

Since the novel’s publication, Bulgakov’s dog has received wide critical attention, linking the Professor’s scalpel with larger social transformation movements of the 1920s, and rejuvenation with revolution. Brett A. Berliner, whose essay catalogs relevant literature on rejuvenation, claims the surgery is “a symbolic means to address the central issue in the Soviet Union: the wholesale transformation of society and people,” about which Bulgakov “was distinctly pessimistic” ([4], p. 109). According to Michael Glenny, “The ‘dog’ of the story is the Russian people, brutalized and exploited for centuries—treated, in fact, like animals instead of human beings,” and the message is that “the Russian intelligentsia, which made the Revolution, is henceforth doomed to live with—and eventually to be ruled by—the crude, unstable and potentially brutal race of hominids—*homo sovieticus*—which it has called into being” ([23], pp. xiii–xiv). In her 1984 biography of Bulgakov, Ellendea Proffer similarly sees the story as an allegory of the revolutionary transformation of society and a cautionary tale about

science meddling with nature ([5], pp. 123–33).⁴ LeBlanc analyzes the use of food imagery and eating metaphors in Bulgakov's satire to make a larger claim about the author's political project: "What the people of Russia need is a moral, spiritual, and cultural leadership that, in addition to providing them literally with their daily bread, is capable of feeding them spiritual food as well, thus nurturing and preserving within them lasting cultural values" ([25], p. 67). The value of political readings cannot be overstated, nor can that of animal focalizers who serve as powerful spokespersons for otherwise unpublishable critique. Yet, such readings tend to be concerned less with the wellbeing of the individual mongrel than with that of the suffering, disenfranchised "people of Russia" whom he comes to represent.

Some have criticized political interpretations for being reductive and turning multifaceted characters into allegorical symbols. The Professor, Diana L. Burgin maintains, is one such "complex literary character—a potentially tragic hero ... who serves as an autobiographical spokesman for [Bulgakov's] political and social satire and as a tragic, Romantic hero in the Frankenstein tradition" ([26], p. 494). The subtitle, not included in Glenn's translation, is "A Monstrous Story" (*Chudovishchnaia istoriia*), which clearly alludes to *Frankenstein*, as does the Professor's surname, Preobrazhensky, which connotes transformative, mystical power. Others have offered valuable analyses of Bulgakov's use of language. Building on Katerina Clark's "promethean linguistics," Eric Laursen reads *The Heart of a Dog* in the context of the 1920s belief in the power of language as "the ultimate vehicle for the kind of transformation sought by revolution"; as such, the novel represents the post-revolutionary "struggle for cultured speech" through pure, "civilizing" language, "an integral component of Bolshevik campaigns to promote 'culturedness' in 1923–1924" ([24], pp. 492–93). Susanne Fusso similarly homes in on Bulgakov's "skeptic[ism] about the possibility of instant, irreversible metamorphosis through the magical power of language" and argues that in the novel's materialistic universe, "verbal transformations remain figures of speech and physical transformations are difficult, slow, and incomplete" ([7], pp. 387, 393). Interestingly, Sharik's transformation into a "new Soviet man" evokes a series of Russian figurative expressions involving the word dog (*sobaka*), such as "a dog's happiness" (*sobach'e schast'e*, the original title of the work), "a dog's life" (*sobach'ia zhizn'*), and an idiom attested by Vladimir Dal', the great Russian lexicographer: "Don't beat the dog, for even she used to be human, having been transformed into a dog due to gluttony" (*Ne bei sobaki, i ona byla chelovekom, obrashchena v psa za prozhorlivost'*) ([7], p. 391, my translation). The preponderance of canine figures, not to mention the Aesopian idiom which straddles the human/animal divide, sheds light onto why Bulgakov may have chosen a dog as his narrator as well as the subject of the experiment. Even in these alternative approaches, however, stressing that Sharik is more human than the human Comrade Sharikov whose organs he inherits, the focus is on humanity at the expense of the animal.

"Imagine your dog walking by the mirror in the hallway and screeching to a halt the way we do when something unusual catches our eye," primatologist Frans de Waal muses in *The Inner Ape*. "We would be shocked! The dog cocks his head and checks out his image in the mirror, shaking his head to unfold a folded ear or removing a twig stuck in his fur. Dogs never do this, but it's exactly the sort of attention apes pay to themselves" ([27], p. 184). Waal's point here is to dispel myths about apes and bridge the divide between humans and other primates; it is not (expressly) to dismiss dogs' reflections or, for that matter, their power to reflect. Curiously, we find the mongrel in Bulgakov's short novel doing just that, reflecting on his dogness while checking out his reflection in the mirror:

I am handsome. Perhaps I'm really a dog prince, living incognito, mused the dog as he watched the shaggy, coffee-coloured dog with the smug expression strolling about in the

⁴ It is worth noting that Bulgakov was trained as a doctor and had practiced medicine before turning to literature. While from his portrayal of Sharik, the pet, we might infer the novelist's benevolent and empathetic attitude, in the chapter describing the operation, informed no doubt by his own practical experience, Bulgakov, in Susanne Fusso's words, "spares no detail of spurting blood or oozing tissue" as he "emphasizes the intense physicality of surgery" ([7], p. 391). The latter, arguably, tells us more about his attitude toward the brutality of science—and the Bolshevik revolution—than toward animals.

mirrored distance. I wouldn't be surprised if my grandmother didn't have an affair with a labrador. Now that I look at my muzzle, I see there's a white patch on it. I wonder how it got there. Philip Philipovich is a man of great taste—he wouldn't just pick up any stray mongrel ([23], p. 41).

The dog's sophisticated narration, one of the novel's satirical (and absurd?) elements, places him in the company of other "talking dogs" in Ziolkowski's famous "literary cynology," alongside Miguel de Cervantes' "The Colloquy of the Dogs" and Nikolai Gogol's "The Diary of a Madman" ([2], pp. 95, 115). But is Waal right, is this not "the sort of attention" dogs pay to themselves but, rather, behavior more suitable to Sharik's primate counterpart?

Helena Goscolo argues that the first-person dog narration is used to produce a comic effect, make the reader like the dog, and elevate Preobrazhensky ([28], p. 286). Yvonne Howell, who reads *The Heart of a Dog* in the context of the Russian eugenics movement, suggests that comic absurdity is created by mixing nonhuman narration with human knowledge: "When Bulgakov adopts the dog's perspective for extended passages of the narration, he does not limit himself to what the dog might know. Instead, for comic effect, he endows his canine character with rather sophisticated medical knowledge . . . , sharp class consciousness . . . , and surprising worldliness" ([29], p. 551). Another critic charges that the dog's "seemingly first-person narrative" is, in fact, "contaminated by the voice of an omniscient third-person narrator" ([7], p. 389). Although embedded in Glenny's English translation without any distinguishing punctuation, this mirror passage is enclosed in quotation marks in the original Russian, thereby marking off the dog's interiority ([23], p. 539). Glenny's choice to omit quotations, on the other hand, effectively extends the canine perspective beyond that which Sharik narrates and into the surrounding third-person omniscient narration, as in the description of the radiator preceding this passage, which is given from the dog's perspective (the dog's eyes being level with the radiator), even if the dog is not the homodiegetic focalizer: "Clearly the country was not yet in a total state of ruin. In spite of it the great accordion-shaped radiators under the windows filled with heat twice a day and warmth flowed in waves through the whole apartment. The dog had obviously drawn the winning ticket in the dogs' lottery" ([23], p. 41). It is this contamination of narrative discourse that leads Fusso to conclude that Bulgakov's is "a kind of ventriloquism" and "a dog-like narration," rather than "a dog's narration":

Even S[h]arik's first-person narration, however, is invaded by bits of information that could be known only to the omniscient narrator, thus disturbing the illusion that the dog is speaking. S[h]arik lets fall certain facts that he could not possibly know at this point . . . The inevitable conclusion is that the opening narration is actually in one voice, but a voice that shifts between an objective presentation and an imitation of a dog's-eye view—a kind of ventriloquism. Bulgakov lays bare the convention of representing a character's inner life. The narrator indeed transforms himself into a dog, but it is an imperfect transformation. Gaps and incongruities are left in order to signal that this transformation too remains on the level of figurative language. This is not a dog's narration but a dog-like narration ([7], pp. 389–90).

Another example of this mixed or "contaminated" voice is found just as the dog crosses the threshold into Preobrazhensky's apartment, which serves also as the Professor's clinic and operating room. This threshold is marked by a plaque that bears the Professor's title, including the letter Φ the street-smart Russian dog, who taught himself to read, cannot decipher, as this letter is used predominantly in non-Slavic words: "P-R-O- 'Pro . . . ', but after that there was a funny tall thing with a cross bar which he did not know. Surely he's not a proletarian? Thought Sharik with amazement . . . He can't be. He lifted up his nose, sniffed the fur coat, and said firmly to himself: No, this doesn't smell proletarian" ([23], p. 13). The question is set off by quotation marks in the original Russian, which, again, emphasizes the dog's direct speech, yet in both cases the point of view is clearly canine even though it is not focalized through the first person ([30], p. 524). This point of

view is, at the same time, “contaminated” insofar as Sharik is able to demonstrate a more-than-canine awareness of class difference between *professors* and *proletarians*, despite their similarly sounding names; through his physiological transformation, as Sharikov, he also loses his alleged ties to aristocracy (the aforementioned Labrador romance) and joins the very class he despises. Along with class consciousness, Laursen notes that the dog’s control over the written word and his ability to analyze the world are strong outside the Professor’s apartment, but get leashed as soon as he is collared: inside the apartment, the dog’s “control of narration is completely relinquished. He is not only given the new name Sharik but is also permanently renamed at the narrative level, as the ‘I’ becomes a ‘he’” ([24], p. 497). “With his collar, the dog gains status but forfeits a true understanding of the world around him . . . He is sedated, his point of view vanishes, and we learn that the dog has been chosen not as a noble pet but as a disposable scientific subject” ([24], p. 498).

The kind of empathic ventriloquism that is more valuable to animal-standpoint criticism is to be found, therefore, not in the “contaminated” or “dog-like narration,” and not even in the sophisticated “I” narrative, but in the opening line of the text: the onomatopoeia which approximates sounds actually made by a dog: “Ooow-ow-ooow-owow!”—“U-u-u-u-u-u-gu-gu-gugu-uu!” in the original ([23], p. 3; [30], p. 519). This is followed by a verbal expression of pain:

Oh, look at me, I’m dying. There’s a snowstorm moaning a requiem for me in this doorway and I’m howling with it. I’m finished. Some bastard in a dirty white cap—the cook in the office canteen at the National Economic Council—spilled some boiling water and scalded my left side. Filthy swine—and a proletarian, too. Christ, it hurts! That boiling water scalded me right through to the bone. I can howl and howl, but what’s the use? ([23], p. 3).

Shorter instances of onomatopoeia meant to phonetically imitate howling—technically also an onomatopoeic word (the verb is *vyt’* in Russian, and the noun form, *voi*)—can be found in the subsequent narration, as well, often preceded or followed by ellipses in both the original and the translation: “. . . Oow-owowow . . .”; “. . . grrr . . . bow-wow . . .”; “Oowow, owow . . .” ([23], pp. 3, 7; [30], pp. 519, 521). Arguably, these strings of syllables which resemble dog noises get us closer to Sharik’s interiority than the accompanying sophisticated homodiegetic focalization. Whether dogs, or animals in general, know death is debatable, though the ethical treatment of animals evolves precisely from our shared mortality as well as bodily vulnerability, a view supported by Weil, Jacques Derrida, Donna Haraway, and Cora Diamond [31]. That animals feel pain is harder to deny, which takes us back to the ‘unrepresentability’ of trauma.

Animal sounds are among the most familiar onomatopoeic words.⁵ Of all the diverse sounds made by dogs, it is barking that “come[s] closest to speech sounds,” as it is produced analogously “by vibrations in the vocal folds and air flowing along folds and through the mouth cavity.” This structural similarity may be responsible for the multiple onomatopoeic renditions of dog barking using (human) phonemes: woofs, rufs, arfs, and bow-wows ([33], pp. 105–6). Recent research into dog barking has helped scientists distinguish between different barks, with lower sounds communicating a threat and higher-frequency sounds—an entreaty, request, or submissive gesture ([33], pp. 107–8). Added to this is the dog’s body language (rumps, heads, ears, legs, and tails), which is equally communicative, including, for example, urination used for marking ([33], pp. 112, 116). There seems to be little consensus in discussions of onomatopoeia on what to call the second term in the relation between the sound of a word and what it signifies, these being “variously referred to as sounds, sense, referent, and what is denoted”; the function of the first term, too, is variously described as “imitates, echoes, reflects, resembles, corresponds to, sounds like, expresses, reinforces, and has a natural or direct relation with” ([34], p. 555). In such definitions, the etymological meaning of the term, from the Greek ὄνομα for “name” and ποιέω for “I make,” seems to be lost to a more imitative sense,

⁵ For more on the onomatopoeic origins of language, such as Max Müller’s now discredited “bow-wow” theory which traces the origins of language to the imitation of natural sounds, see ([32], p. 117).

contrary to what we find, for instance, in Quintilian's *Institutio Oratoria*, "namely, the creation of a word *ex novo*" ([34], p. 556). When rendering animal noises, both meanings of onomatopoeia appear to be correct, for we are creating new or rearranging existent phonemes to resemble and sound like the animal, though whether, how, and to what exactly these correspond may never be ascertained. Still, as with ellipses in Tolstoy's *Strider*, the phonetic echoes and fragmentary verbalizations, not the humanizing social critique of the National Economic Council, bring us closer to the experience of animal pain qua animal.

One might argue that relegating animal "speech" to onomatopoeia is an essentially logocentric move, one which privileges human-centric semiotics and reinforces the hierarchy between human language and animal vocalization. Yet, it is also a reasonably anthropomorphic gesture that recognizes the capacity of nonhuman animals to communicate while respecting their difference. In his discussion of the use of onomatopoeia in Lucretius' *De rerum natura*, Benjamin E. Stevens notes that "[a]nimal vocalizations are indeed not words because animals are physiologically inarticulate, but also . . . because, semiotically, animals cannot denote or name"; in other words, animals have neither the proper physiological equipment to form words, nor the semiotic ability to use symbols, necessary for voluntary signification using arbitrary signs ([35], p. 544, note 40). Whereas animal vocalizations of emotions, "in direct response to an immediate stimulus," are "indexical and symptomatic" (based on contiguity and proximity), human responses are intentional, symbolic, capable of denoting things. Despite these differences, "the two kinds of signification . . . are nonetheless equally 'natural,' in an Epicurean sense, to the inherent semiotic abilities of their respective groups: humans signify symbolically, animals only indexically or symptomatically" ([35], p. 530). Haraway has convincingly argued that the traditional line between human and nonhuman worlds has now been "thoroughly breached" given our discovery of similarities in "language, tool use, social behaviour, [and] mental events" ([36], pp. 151–52). To acknowledge that both have semiotic abilities, but that these abilities are different, is a way to bring animal difference into semiotics. Sharik's onomatopoeia can be considered seriously, as an expression of a painful emotion, even if automatic and immediate. To judge the talking dog on its human speech, on the contrary, is to erase this animal difference. The technique of empathic ventriloquism (etymologically, from the Latin 'venter', belly and 'loqui', speak) seems at its best, then, when the narrator does not speak but bow-wows, releases the animal sounds straight from his belly, his physical being. If animal focalization is inauthentic, and animal trauma ultimately unnarratable, onomatopoeia is, perhaps, the next best thing.

5. Conclusions: Teaching Animals, a Pedagogical Imperative

In her book on decoding animal behavior, Temple Grandin relates a famous story told by New Zealand animal psychologist and ethologist Ron Kilgour about transporting a pet lion on an airplane. "Someone thought the lion might like to have a pillow for the trip, the same way people do, so they gave him one, and the lion ate it and died. The point was: don't be anthropomorphic. It's dangerous to the animal. But when I read this story," Grandin writes, "I said to myself, 'Well, no, he doesn't want a pillow, he wants something soft of lie on, like leaves and grass.' I wasn't looking at the lion as a person, but as a lion" ([19], p. 15). Animal narration in *Strider* and *The Heart of a Dog* is not anthropocentric in any objectionable way, but their empathic ventriloquism is anthropomorphic because these authors' human worldviews inadvertently condition their understanding and representation of the animal's *Umwelt* (the sensory world as it is experienced by a particular animal, as ethologist Jakob von Uexküll has called it) ([3], p. 8; [17], p. 25; [37], p. 7).

Even if Tolstoy's and Bulgakov's animal narrators are empirically unprovable feats of ventriloquism, and animal consciousness is inaccessible given the limitations of human language and imagination, we should not take that as an excuse not to care. In a recent book provocatively titled *Being a Beast*, Charles Foster writes: "The universe I occupy is a creature of my head . . . But we need to keep trying. If we give up with humans, we're wretched misanthropes. If we give up with the natural world we're wretched bypass builders or badger baiters or self-referential urbanites" ([38], pp. 14–15).

After recounting his attempts to see and feel like an animal, Foster adds, “our [human] capacity for vicariousness is infinite. Empathize enough with a swift and you’ll either become one or (which may be the same thing) you’ll be able to rejoice so much with the screeching race around the church tower that you won’t mind not being one yourself” ([38], p. 216). Similarly, when talking about dogs, Alexandra Horowitz suggests that it is not enough for humans to imagine or think about being “excellent smellers,” smell being a canine specialty; this exercise must be “paired with an understanding of how profound the difference in *umwelt* is between us and another animal.” We can achieve this “by ‘acting into’ the *umwelt* of another animal, trying to embody the animal—mindful of the constraints our sensory system places on our ability to truly do so” ([33], p. 23). Whether Tolstoy really was a horse in a former life, he and Bulgakov bring their readers one step closer to the animal’s ‘unrepresentable’ *Umwelt*.

By way of conclusion, I urge that we include animals, such as Tolstoy’s Strider and Bulgakov’s Sharik, in university curricula in order to raise questions of inequality and social justice associated with animal welfare and also to help students develop empathy for animals, both human and nonhuman. The “animal question,” as Weil has argued, is, after all, “an extension of those debates over identity and difference that have embroiled academic theory over the past quarter century,” and by attempting to bring into theory nonhuman animals, whose voices cannot be (readily) integrated and who cannot—without much more theoretical work and a fundamental reconfiguration of poststructuralism’s insistence on language—be transformed from objects into subjects, we can see that they are, in fact, “a limit case for theories of difference, otherness, and power” ([3], p. 3). “Like trauma studies,” Weil explains, “animal studies thus stretches to the limit questions of language, of epistemology, and of ethics that have been raised in various ways by women’s studies or postcolonial studies: how to understand and give voice to others or to experiences that seem impervious to our means of understanding; how to attend to difference without appropriating or distorting it; how to hear and acknowledge what it may not be possible to say” ([3], p. 4). When questioned as to the whereabouts of Comrade Sharikov, and facing accusations of murdering Sharik’s human incarnation, the Professor broaches the difficult ontological distinction which drives the novel’s plot: “‘Because he talked?’ asked Philip Philipovich. ‘That doesn’t mean he was a man’” ([23], p. 125). Ironically, it is precisely through speech, his effective use of homodiegetic focalization, that Bulgakov’s dog is humanized, though the canine perspective is simulated better through onomatopoeic animal vocalization than sophisticated human language. The ellipsis that marks Strider’s transition from a stallion to a gelding serves a similar function: it gives a voice to that which is ‘unrepresentable.’

At the end of the day, “The question is not, Can [a full-grown horse and dog] *reason*? nor Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?” as Jeremy Bentham reminds us in the passage which opens with a hope that has yet to be realized: “The day may come when the rest of the animal creation may acquire those rights which never could have been withholden from them but by the hand of tyranny” ([1], pp. 7, 203–4). It is their status as the ultimate other that makes teaching animals a pedagogical imperative, one meant to challenge readers to exercise their analytical skills more rigorously than when deciphering the motives of human characters which may be only partially elucidated in literary fiction, the reading of which has recently been linked with developing empathy [39]. This is also what Elizabeth Costello, the titular character of J. M. Coetzee’s 2003 novel, calls “sympathy,” our ability to “think ourselves into the being of another,” a faculty that is mastered by novelists, who have to think themselves into the existence of fictional characters, but can be practiced by anyone and extended to “any being with whom [we] share the substrate of life” ([40], p. 80). Teaching animals can invite literary scholars and students to interrogate the human/nonhuman boundary and to recognize the animal traits in themselves as well as the human traits in the animals they read (about), so as to reconsider what may already be deeply entrenched but not ineradicable notions of human exceptionalism. My overall goal, as is Donovan’s ([14], p. 214), is to encourage scholars to reconceive the status of animals in literature so as to change their ontological place in the world. This can be done by recalibrating ethical decision-making to treat animals not as Immanuel Kant suggested in his *Lecture on Ethics* (1779),

“merely as means to an end” ([41], p. 56), and not as “helpers” or “property of man,” views as old as *Genesis* which are frequently claimed as “natural rights” but are, in Singer’s words, “ideological camouflages for [our] self-serving practices” ([1], p. 186)—but as sentient beings worthy of love, respect, and equal protection before the law.

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Article

Unreliability and the Animal Narrator in Richard Adams's *The Plague Dogs*

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Abstract: Richard Adams's talking animal story *The Plague Dogs* (1978), with its deeply genre-atypical mode of narration, offers a multiplicity of avenues to explore the literary animal as animal. The story draws much of its power from the psychological complexity and related unreliability of both canine narrators, two research lab escapees gone feral. Both the terrier Snitter and the black mongrel Rowf are mentally ill and experience a highly subjective, part-fantastic world. In episodes of zero focalization, a sarcastic voice comments on the plot from the off, aggressively attacking a thoroughly anthropocentric superstructure the protagonists themselves are oblivious of, and presenting all that is normally constructed as "rational" in the implied reader's world as a carnivalesque farce. Combining these equally unreliable narratives, *The Plague Dogs* creates a unique mixture of what Phelan (2007) calls "estranging" and "bonding" unreliability and brings to light the devastating consequences of anthropocentrism. *The Plague Dogs* not only defamiliarizes a genre usually committed to conventional means of storytelling, but the dominant Western conception of the status of animals in the world, showing that once we start to read the animal as animal, this sets into motion an avalanche of other concepts in need of re-reading, among them the very ones making up the fundamental pillars of Western societies' anthropocentric self-conception.

Keywords: *The Plague Dogs*; Richard Adams; narratology; anthropocentrism; unreliability; talking animal stories; discourse analysis; non-human focalizer; *Pincher Martin*

1. Introduction

In 1972, British author Richard Adams made top of the bestseller lists with his talking animal story *Watership Down* (1972), a light-hearted rabbit Odyssey that has since become a classic. His second talking animal story, *The Plague Dogs* (1978) [1], in contrast, attracted little public notice and even less scholarly attention¹—despite the fact that Adams himself considers it his best novel [6]. This lack of interest might be due to the novel's far-reaching aspirations and weighty ideological agenda:

¹ As yet, there are hardly any academic studies specifically dealing with Adams's dog novel. To my knowledge, David Collado Rodriguez's review "Beyond Satire: Richard Adams's *The Plague Dogs*" (1988) provides the only existing overview of all major topics and motifs of the story. *The Plague Dogs* also finds mention in articles primarily dealing with resistance to animal experimentation, especially ones published shortly after Adams's book. In a briefing on the topic "A New Militancy in England," for example, Nicholas Wade lists *The Plague Dogs* as a major example of support to the animal rights movement by "public figures" ([2], p. 279), while a brief in *The Hastings Center Report* remarks on the way novels such as *The Plague Dogs* alienate proponents of animal research ([3], p. 3). *The Plague Dogs* also tends to be mentioned in passing in works on animals in literature, such as Theodore Ziolkowski's *Varieties of Literary Problematics* ([4], p. 95), or in works on fantasy, e.g., in Colin Manlove's *The Fantasy Literature of England* ([5], p. 61). Manlove, however, discusses *The Plague Dogs* under the premise that "two [bubonic plague] infected dogs escape a research station and become a danger to human society" ([5], p. 61), while, in fact, the entire point of Adams's tale is that the dogs are not infected at all, cannot be infected, because the lab was properly secured and additionally instinct warned them to keep off ([1], p. 30). Human society and its media hysteria becomes a danger to the dogs, not the other way round.

The Plague Dogs is a stylistically complex and deeply disturbing story addressing animal rights and animal subjectivity—an openly political text that, unlike most other talking animal stories, does not invite the reader into a suspenseful yet beautiful secondary world of talking animals, but lays open the injustices and cruelties animals have to face in a thoroughly anthropocentric world.

The main plotline of *The Plague Dogs* can be told in a few words. Two dogs, the terrier Snitter and the black mongrel Rowf, escape an animal research lab and aimlessly wander the inhospitable wilderness of the English Lake District national park. A media hype blossoms around a newspaper's fabricated allegation that the research station escapees are infected with bubonic plague. This triggers a snowball effect of scientists fighting to shift the blame, politicians struggling to keep face, and newspapers trying to raise circulation by further blowing up the story, which finally ends in a witch hunt for the innocent dogs. At the very second of their imminent deaths, however, the two dogs are miraculously saved by caring humans.

The story makes use of complex symbolism, combining elements from Carl Gustav Jung's archetypes of the collective unconscious [7] and Joseph Campbell's stages of a hero's quest as proposed in *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* [8]. In addition to this, much of the complexity and intensity of *The Plague Dogs* derives from the novel's unusual narrative mode. *The Plague Dogs* is, in Theodore Ziolkowski's words, a "cynomorphic" ([4], p. 95) novel, as in parts it is narrated "from the dog's point of view" ([4], p. 95). The story is told from a multiplicity of perspectives, most notably Snitter's, but also Rowf's, the scientists', the newspaper journalist's, etc. Yet every single one in this cacophony of focalizers is unreliable—the unreliability even extends to the voice of the heterodiegetic narrator, who keeps together all strands of narration. As a result, *The Plague Dogs* creates a unique mixture of what James Phelan (2007) calls "estranging" ([9], p. 223) and "bonding" ([9], p. 223) unreliability. This article aims to show how the unreliable narration of *The Plague Dogs* defamiliarizes a writing tradition usually committed to conventional means of storytelling, and in doing so calls into question the dominant Western conception of the status of animals in the world. Once we start to read the animal protagonist as animal, as *The Plague Dogs* forces its readers to do, this sets into motion an avalanche of other concepts in need of re-reading, among them the very ones that justify Western societies' anthropocentric self-conception and the according subjugation and exploitation of other species.

2. Adapting a Non-Human Perspective toward Unreliability

As yet, unreliability was hardly, if ever, discussed with respect to animal stories, yet it is an immensely useful tool to deconstruct stereotypical portrayals of literary animals and to force the reader to take animal narrators seriously. Originally proposed by Wayne C. Booth in his 1961 publication *The Rhetoric of Fiction* as a form of narration in which the narrator's "judgement is suspect" ([10], p. 174), unreliability was approached by a number of scholars who brought different conceptual backgrounds and perspectives to the discussion. This is no place to rehearse this complex theoretical discussion: for an up-to-date summary of the different positions and their contestants the reader may refer to Shen (2014) [11]. I will only briefly sketch the theoretical dimensions of unreliability that are most central to my line of argument.

Unreliability can roughly be defined as a feature of narratorial discourse in which the narrator "offers an account of some event, person, thought, thing, or other object in the narrative world that deviates from the account the implied author would offer" ([12], p. 49). Phelan (2005) identifies six kinds of unreliability: "misreporting, misreading, misevaluating—or what I will call misregarding—and underreporting, underreading, and underregarding" ([12], p. 51). As Shen points out, unreliability can occur either as a "clash between story and discourse" ([11], p. 898)—if the narrator misreports story elements—or as a clash "between the narrator's explicit discourse and the author's implicit discourse" ([11], p. 898)—if the narrator misreads, i.e., misinterprets, or misregards story elements. Phelan introduces a typology to analyze narratorial unreliability with a focus on its effect on the implied reader or "authorial audience" ([9], p. 223). Starting from the observation that different types of unreliable narration have distinctly different effects on the implied reader, Phelan differentiates unreliability

into two groups. Unreliable narration can either “[underline] or [increase] the distance between the narrator and the authorial audience” ([9], p. 223), or, to the contrary, “[reduce] the distance between the narrator and the authorial audience” ([9], pp. 223–24). Phelan calls the former type of unreliability “estranging unreliability” ([9], p. 223), and the latter one “bonding unreliability” ([9], p. 223). Focussing on the latter, Phelan uses an exemplary discussion of Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita* to identify and discuss six subtypes of bonding unreliability: (1) “literally unreliable but metaphorically reliable” ([9], p. 226); (2) “playful comparison between implied author and narrator” ([9], p. 228); (3) “naive defamiliarization” ([9], p. 229); (4) “sincere but misguided self-deprecation” ([9], p. 229); (5) “partial progress toward the norm” ([9], p. 231); and (6) “bonding through optimistic comparison” ([9], p. 232).

Unfortunately, unreliable narration has as yet predominantly been discussed in context with what Phelan calls “character narration” ([12], p. 1), i.e., the narration of what Gérard Genette calls a “homodiegetic” ([13], p. 159) narrator, i.e., a narrator who is part of the world of the story’s protagonists ([13], p. 159). *The Plague Dogs*, however, is a story predominantly told by a narrator that Genette would describe as “heterodiegetic” ([13], p. 159), one that is hovering outside the protagonists’ world ([13], p. 159). What is more, to unravel unreliability in *The Plague Dogs* one needs to look beyond the unreliability of the primary narrator to the unreliability of the focalizers and the canine protagonists who tell stories-inside-the-story. This creates a multi-layered net of unreliabilities that build and depend upon one another, while simultaneously being contradictory to the point of undermining even another narrative strand’s allegedly reliable elements. I will move through this net in a rough bottom-up approach, starting at the dogs’ unreliable perception of the world, before scrutinizing the heterodiegetic narrator. Finally, I will turn my attention to the controversial ending of *The Plague Dogs*, which leaves the reader a stranded victim of competing unreliabilities.

The story draws much of its power from the psychological complexity of the canine main protagonists and central focalizers, two research lab escapees gone feral. In consequence of the exceedingly cruel and completely pointless experiments conducted on them in the lab, both Snitter and Rowf are mentally ill and deeply traumatized.² Snitter has undergone brain surgery that aimed at “bring[ing] about a confusion of the subjective and objective in the animal’s mind” ([1], p. 227), and can no longer clearly distinguish between outside phenomena and his imagination. Rowf was subjected to survival conditioning experiments and repeatedly immersed into a tank of water until near-drowning, in order to, in the language of the scientists, identify “a point where the additional endurance induced by the dog’s expectation of removal [from the tank] is counterbalanced by the limits of its physical capacity” ([1], p. 4). He shows typical symptoms of what in human psychology would be referred to as a post-traumatic stress disorder, is distrustful, unpredictably aggressive, and—for obvious reasons—mortally afraid of water. But not only their psychological disorders make the characters experience the world in a different way than the implied reader would—their animality does, too. Unlike the protagonists of many other talking animal stories, the animal heroes of *The Plague Dogs* are not metaphorical placeholders substituted for a human experience, although it is of course possible to read them in this way too, e.g., when endorsing the story’s Jungian discourse.³ Yet, for the reading of the story I propose in this article, it is central to read the canine protagonists as, indeed, dogs, and as such as distinctively non-human focalizers. Snitter, for example, experiences “something out of the ordinary” as “some small alteration to the familiar as slight but disturbing as the discovery

² This article cannot and will not contribute to the general debate on animal consciousness and the complex and ongoing discussion in how far other species are able to experience mental as well as physical suffering, and develop psychological trauma. Nonetheless I use (human) psychological vocabulary for a reason here. The implied author of *The Plague Dogs* clearly indicates that, in his eyes, dogs are conscious beings who are capable of suffering mental disorders just as humans do, and he creates his canine characters accordingly. Just as he renders the dogs’ communication as direct speech in a human language, he translates their mental sufferings into dimensions the human reader can relate to, i.e., into human psychological disorders.

³ See for example, Collado Rodriguez’s discussion of the psychological dimension of *The Plague Dogs* ([14], p. 53).

of a stranger's urine against one's own garden fence" ([1], p. 21), and his world—as is typical for canines ([15], p. 80)—is primarily an olfactory and auditory, not a visual one.

The two dogs, baffled by human technologies and biased by an inherited sense of inferiority ([16], p. 70), frequently misinterpret and misregard natural phenomena or human behaviour. Snitter, chasing sheep, interprets an infuriated shepherd as “apparently yelling encouragement” ([1], p. 65), and his action as an act of “help” ([1], p. 96) that the human, for reasons the terrier cannot fathom, emphatically rejects. In this example, one can see that Phelan's terminology might be in need of adjustment when applied to animal focalizers. In the character-character-interaction between Snitter and the shepherd, Snitter's misinterpretation is not so much a consequence of narratorial unreliability as of narratorial otherness. His narration is based on a canine, not a human norm—and, with regard to the canine norm, he might not be misinterpreting the situation at all. Here, a species-related difference in stimulus interpretation creates a narratorial gap that in turn causes the (human) reader to classify Snitter's account as unreliable.

At another point Snitter, now as intradiegetic narrator of a story-inside-the-story, nostalgically reminisces about his past blissful time as a bachelor's pet:

A long time ago, when there were towns—when there was a real world—I used to live with my master in his house. ... in the morning a boy used to come and stuff a lot of folded paper through a hole in the middle of the street-door downstairs. ... I used to go down and pick the paper up in my mouth and carry it upstairs and wake my master. ... and then we always played a kind of game with this wodge of paper. He used to open it up very wide. ... and spread it out in front of him while he sat up in bed, and I used to creep up the bed and poke my nose underneath. Then he used to pretend to be cross and pat it and I used to take it away and wait a bit and then poke it under somewhere else. I know it sounds silly, but I always thought how nice it was of him to get that boy to bring a fresh lot of paper every day, just so that we could play this game. ([1], pp. 177–78)

At a first glance, Snitter's autodiegetic account looks like the form of unreliable narration most characteristic to talking animal stories, an exclusively bonding form of “naive defamiliarization” ([9], p. 229), endearing the innocently mistaken dog to the implied reader. Yet there is also a much darker note to this story-inside-the-story. The beginning of Snitter's narrative, a common variation of “once upon a time,” clearly denotes his story as a fairy tale, and thus calls into question the authenticity of all that comes after. The canine narrator does not only displace the idea of an intact inter-species friendship into the past, but into myth, into an idealized world that has dissolved into nothingness at the moment scientific rationalism severed the animal-human bond.

What remains for Snitter and Rowf is a belief in human omnipotence coupled with deep feelings of canine inferiority. They believe that humans terra-form the landscape ([1], p. 47), control the weather ([1], p. 312), put the sun in the sky and lightened it like a light bulb ([1], p. 48), and regularly mine the moon to turn its brightness into car headlights ([1], p. 257). Again, the dogs' naive defamiliarization is a bonding form of unreliability. More so, their observations are also metaphorically reliable. “[Humans] run the world for themselves” ([1], p. 284), Rowf concludes bleakly, “they don't care what they do to us; they just make use of us for their own convenience” ([1], p. 257). And, being omnipotent, they “could alter this [world] if they wanted” ([1], p. 257), yet they do not bother to. Although not as powerful as the dogs hold humans to be, there is certainly more than a grain of truth to Rowf's final conclusion. Animals, in turn, are there “to have things done to them by men” ([1], p. 47), in Rowf's assessment. Accordingly, he considers his escape from the lab as mutiny from his duty ([1], p. 97; see also [16], p. 71). Tellingly, Rowf even sees his canine god as inferior to mortal humans. In another story-inside-the-story, Rowf tells the legend of the canine deity, the “Star Dog” ([1], p. 136). The deity may have created the world, but he can neither boast the humans' fingers and opposable thumbs ([1], p. 137) nor is his simple and trusting canine mind a match for his two-legged creations' blatant arrogance and disobedience ([1], p. 140). Instead of a typical talking animal world with a happy ending guaranteed—the world of Snitter's innocent newspaper fairy

tale—Rowf-as-narrator sketches a bleak world in which animals do not stand a chance against human preeminence. Rowf’s Star Dog, in fact, inadvertently created not a fantastic, but a realistic space.

In both Snitter’s newspaper story and Rowf’s Star Dog story, the unreliability of the canine narrators is unambiguously of the bonding type. “The story-teller wishes us to identify with Snitter and Rowf and their sufferings” ([14], p. 51), as Collado Rodriguez remarks, and accordingly “uses a device which had already proved very successful in *Watership Down*: the narrator shows the external world from a dog’s point of view” ([14], p. 51). This device is far from being unique to Adams’s writings. Instead, one can claim similar instances of bonding unreliability to be a stock element of talking animal stories. *The Plague Dogs*, however, goes far beyond this type of narratorial unreliability. Typical talking animal story narration interplays with both the madness of the central focalizer Snitter and the erratic behaviour of the heterodiegetic narrator.

3. Narrating without a Safety Net: A Canine Pincher Martin

Most often, the narrator guides the reader’s perception through the eyes of the terrier Snitter. Snitter is incapable of coping with the guilt of having caused the death of his master, and, additionally, has undergone experimental brain surgery that causes him to blur sensual perception with images conjured by his mind’s eye. As an effect, his perception continually jumps between flashbacks of past—or imagined?—happiness, a nightmarish reality, and a surreal world constructed by his own imagination. Snitter has vivid hallucinations of his former master, who appears to him in reflections, or in dreams ([1], pp. 81, 165, 295, 356). Although Snitter is aware that these appearances are illusions, he cannot help but run after the familiar figure, hoping against hope that his master might really have miraculously reappeared.

Snitter starts to unconsciously reflect on these hallucinations in an encounter with a mysterious ghost dog. Awakened by a dog’s bark and heading out into the night to search for its source, Snitter finds a “terrier bitch. . . whose appearance recalled others from the days of his old life with his master” ([1], p. 288). She turns out to be watching over the long-decayed corpse of her master, oblivious of his death. Although he is sure that she is another individual, he also immediately grasps her metaphorical dimension. In a Snitter-typical fit of madness he imagines a conversation with Rowf:

“Hullo, Snitter, are you all right?”

“Oh, yes, only there’s two of me now! I split my head in two and made another dog! Here she is! Wuff wuff! Ho ho!” ([1], p. 289)

For Snitter, there is no contradiction in the ghost terrier being both a different individual and a part of himself—and, metaphorically, there is not. As Collado Rodriguez notes, “Adams is deeply influenced by Carl [Gustav] Jung” ([14], p. 52). His theory of the collective unconscious frequently provides a symbolic red thread the plot follows. This is reflected, for example, in Adams’s frequent use of water, Jung’s central symbol for the unconscious ([7], p. 28), as the story’s guiding trope, or in the character of the tod, a messenger from an archetypal “ancestral force” ([14], p. 52). Yet Jung’s theory makes its possibly strongest appearance in Snitter’s encounter with the ghost bitch. The female terrier is, in fact, his *anima*. She is an archetypal force, a reflection of his soul ([7], p. 35), both frightening and attracting him, part-demonic ([7], p. 36) and, crucially, of the opposite gender. Jung describes the anima as “numinos” ([7], p. 37), i.e., numinous, and as such as both magical and dangerous, concerned with the taboos the consciousness tries to avoid dealing with ([7], p. 37). On his nightly excursion Snitter confronts his own unconscious: a loyal dog stubbornly guarding a human corpse, incapable of letting go of the illusion that her master will return. Snitter sees her predicament, deeply pities her, and finally even calls in her face, “Your master—your master is dead! He’s dead!” ([1], p. 295). But the moment he starts to glimpse the truth—that it is *his* master he is talking about—Snitter panics. He draws back, suddenly seeing the ghost bitch as “a phantom, a nothing, a dried, empty husk of old grief suffered long ago” ([1], p. 295). When, seconds later, an apparition of his master appears, Snitter, none the wiser from his encounter with his anima, still denying reality, runs after him. In this

scene, there is a deeply tragic twist to Snitter’s unreliability. When Snitter appears to be unreliable, i.e., hallucinates, he is actually reliable—his hallucination is “literally unreliable but metaphorically reliable” ([9], p. 226), one of Phelan’s criteria of bonding unreliability. Yet, when Snitter dismisses the hallucination and undergoes, in Phelan’s terminology, a “partial progress toward the norm” ([9], p. 231), this does not establish a further bonding link, but estranges the reader, as in this moment Snitter bars his own progress towards realisation of his psychosis. In this scene, the two dimensions of bonding unreliability, Snitter’s being “literally unreliable but metaphorically reliable” ([9], p. 226) and undergoing “partial progress towards the norm” ([9], p. 231), are incompatible. When Snitter’s unreliability is bonding in one of these categories, this automatically violates the other one and has an estranging effect with regard to this category, thus facing the implied reader with an unresolved conflict of competing unreliabilities.

The implied reader’s awareness of Snitter’s unreliability develops gradually. Although Snitter’s mental illness never is in doubt, at first only his direct speech is unreliable, while he does not misreport to the reader or misinterpret story elements. When Snitter’s reliable accounts start to become interspersed with hallucinations, the heterodiegetic narrator explicitly warns the reader ([1], p. 123) and Snitter himself, too, immediately classifies several of his experiences as unreliable. However, Snitter finally starts to call into question, and accordingly renders the implied reader suspicious of, accounts not only he himself previously perceived as reliable, but which the heterodiegetic narrator classifies as reliable through other focalizers as well, such as a fox hunt in which Snitter witnesses the tod’s brutal death ([1], p. 390). At such moments, *The Plague Dogs* plays on an intertextual connection that runs through the story like a disturbing undercurrent, casting doubt onto the very nature of the dog focalizer’s unreliability. Scientist Stephen Powell compares Snitter’s mental condition to the one of William Golding’s Pincher Martin, protagonist of the eponymous novel:

Er—well, did you ever read a book called *Pincher Martin*, by a man named Golding? You know, the *Lord of the Flies* bloke? ... Well, the chap in it’s supposed to be dead... and in the next world, which is a sort of hellish limbo... He thinks he’s still alive and that he’s been washed up on a rock in the Atlantic, but actually it’s an illusion and the rock is only a mental projection—it’s the shape of a back tooth in his own head. The dog... might have illusions something like that. ([1], p. 227)

While Pincher Martin builds his perception of the imaginary island upon the image of a “tooth” ([17], p. 30), Snitter is preoccupied with the scar left by his brain operation. Repeatedly confusing his body with his environments, he perceives his surroundings as “both a product and the equivalent of his own mutilated mind” ([1], p. 123). When one of his companions tells him that they are crossing “Walna Scar” ([1], p. 124), a landmark in the Lake District, for Snitter this means that they are “walking across his own head” ([1], p. 124). Snitter’s misinterpretations of his environment reach their apex when he finds himself locked in a barn:

After the first shock of surprise it was plain enough to Snitter where he was, for after all he had known the place all his life, every feature of it. Once it had been brighter, tidier, cleaner, brisker-smelling. All the same he was, in fact, nowhere but where he had always been; only now he was actually seeing it for the first time. He was inside his own head. ([1], p. 211)

Snitter’s conviction again originates from an association of his scar and his environment—there is a “concave cleft running down the middle of the [barn] floor” ([1], p. 212). Analyzing his state of mind by an inspection of the barn, he finds plenty of equivalents between the dismal state of the place and the one of his mind, such as “cobwebs” in his “eyes”, ([1], p. 212), and “maggots and flies” ([1], p. 212) in his brain. The overall emptiness of the place convinces Snitter that “the whitecoats must have taken some of the inside of my head out” ([1], p. 213), and provides him with ample evidence to confirm his madness. He even starts some feeble efforts to clean up his mind by brushing off some

cobwebs ([1], p. 212). Although Snitter misreads his environment and thus bases his assumptions on false premises, every single one of his conclusions is correct. He may misinterpret his surroundings, but he does not misregard their implications. Snitter cannot explain what happened to him in the lab, but the surgery did indeed remove functions of his brain and muddle his senses. Snitter, thus, again proves to be metaphorically reliable, a central one of Phelan's categories of bonding unreliability.

Yet, there is an estranging element to Snitter's overall bonding unreliability. As an effect of his confusion between his mind and the outside world, Snitter holds himself responsible for the dismal state of the world as such, and is soon convinced that "everything bad comes out of [his] head" ([1], p. 185). He even starts to believe that, as the world is a fragment of his imagination, he can control it. In consequence, he relates story elements such as him "caus[ing] [a gate] to appear" ([1], p. 202) to ease their flight from a farm. "There isn't a world at all now except this wound in my head" ([1], pp. 185–86), he tells Rowf, "if I can die and stop it all, then I'll stay here and do that. But perhaps I've died already. Perhaps dying—perhaps even dying doesn't stop it" ([1], p. 186). Snitter's fears are a one-to-one reflection of the situation Golding's Pincher Martin is in: dead and caught in a nightmare created by his own subconscious. This intertextual link casts doubt onto the very nature of Snitter's unreliability. Pincher Martin is never more unreliable than when he appears to be reliable, and his wildest hallucinations are his most reliable moments. If Snitter is indeed a canine Pincher Martin, this would render unreliable the entire physical parameters of the story, such as its setting or its character cast. Do the dogs ever leave the research station or is the entire Lake District adventure just another hallucination of Snitter's? Does Rowf really survive his near-death experience in the first scene of the story? Snitter might be merely imagining the presence of his friend. In this light, other unreliable instances of Snitter's narration—such as his frequent perception that elements of the landscape are talking to him (e.g., [1], pp. 118, 232, 430), or his sudden doubts of parts of the narration previously perceived as reliable ([1], p. 390)—can be read in entirely different dimensions. All that happens may be nothing but a complex allegory unravelling itself in the canine narrator's mind.

The reader is left with two distinct and incompatible versions of Snitter: an "obvious" Snitter driven insane by human cruelty, yet fully aware of his own madness, and characterized by bonding unreliability throughout the story, and a Pincher-Martin-Snitter whose fits of madness might be the story's only moments of sanity. Snitter's unreliable narration may thus be bonding on an overt level, but it is covertly estranging. This estrangement does not derive from any form of misreading, misinterpreting or misevaluating that can be explicitly pinpointed in Snitter's narration, but from an unreliability inherent to the very mode of unreliable narration in *The Plague Dogs*, ultimately inducing the implied reader to mistrust virtually any narrative account of Snitter's, as the comparison to Pincher Martin and his utterly distorted world view continuously haunts the borders of the implied reader's vision. While the animal protagonists thus find themselves helpless and confused on the story level, unreliability serves to reflect this impression to the reader on the level of discourse. Utterly confused by the inability to classify which accounts of Snitter's indeed are the unreliable ones, the reader can share the dogs' mounting desperation in being unable to cope with a world whose basic parameters do not make sense to them.

There is a further and even more diffuse twist to the estranging Pincher Martin trope. At the very beginning of the novel, it is not "Pincher Martin" character Snitter who finds himself drowning and miraculously surviving, just as Golding's protagonist does. It is his companion Rowf. This scene indicates Rowf, not Snitter, as the story's "canine Pincher Martin." Throughout almost the entire story Rowf appears as a reliable observer, and shows little evidence of fits of apparent madness such as the ones haunting Pincher Martin and Snitter. Yet there are some instances that also call into question his perception of his surroundings. At one point, he relates to Snitter his conversation with a mouse ([1], p. 63)—while the dogs, in general, do not appear to have the ability to communicate with other species. The mouse only ever reappears as an imaginary friend of Snitter's, talking in the terrier's mind (e.g., [1], pp. 52, 413). Rowf also dreams up his ideal master ([1], pp. 141–42), only to finally find himself rescued by a man fitting his description to the letter, even voicing the very

words Rowf imagined his ideal master to speak ([1], pp. 142, 446). This third layer of unreliability adds another estranging element to the apparently bonding unreliability of the two dog characters. Both Rowf and Snitter might be far more unreliable than the implied reader can pinpoint, yet at no point in the story can the reader be sure about the nature or the extent of that unreliability. Such an entire lack of narrative stability is perhaps the most pervasive form of estranging unreliability there is. There always is a reliable element in *knowing* a narrator to be unreliable. Yet, if the implied author refuses this certainty to the reader, the only option left is speculation—and suspicion.

4. Undermining Anthropocentric Normativity: The Voice of the Heterodiegetic Narrator

An overt heterodiegetic narrator is generally a reliable voice that balances the accounts of unreliable focalizers and provides the reader with knowledge the characters do not have access to. In *The Plague Dogs*, however, episodes of zero focalization related by the voice of the overt heterodiegetic narrator do not reduce, but add to the “clash between story and discourse” ([11], p. 898) that renders Adams’s dog story so unusual to its genre. Collado Rodriguez classifies the narrator as “menippean” ([14], p. 52), i.e., satirical, and attributes to him “a restlessness based on his satirical purpose” ([14], p. 52). Indeed, the implied reader most often encounters the narrator as a sarcastic voice commenting on the plot from the off, unveiling, and aggressively attacking a thoroughly anthropocentric superstructure that the protagonists themselves are oblivious of. He is fiercely protective of the dogs, sometimes to the point of underreporting or misreporting story elements in their favour.

One central aim of the narrator’s satire is science, or more precisely the hypocrisy inherent to the rationalist ethos of science and to the respective discourse tradition. For example, the narrator describes an experiment on homing pigeons in the following terms:

One could draw the firm and valuable conclusions first, that birds whose faculties had been impaired were less swift and competent in getting home than birds whose faculties had not; and secondly, that in any given group, some succeeded in returning while others, who did not, presumably died. . . . Important evidence had been obtained in support of the theory that the birds possessed an instinct not really explicable in scientific terms. ([1], p. 28)

In this text passage, the narrator turns the discourse of science against itself. In its use of scientific register, the passage provides the illusion of rationality, but the final phrase unmasks the objective-descriptive enumeration of “valuable” scientific conclusions as an elaborate hoax. While scientific discourse creates sophisticated bubbles of rationalist rhetoric, it is incapable of narrating the story of the homing pigeons. The reader thus finds herself confronted with a clash of reason and instinct, of stereotypical human vs. stereotypical animal domains. Only instinct can tell the story, while reason is nothing but discourse caught in a vicious circle of continuous self-affirmation. The laughter triggered by the narrator’s satire is the very same laughter of the Bakhtinian carnival.⁴ An “ambivalent” ([18], p. 53) laughter directed towards a recipient so powerful as to be out of reach of direct criticism, but who can be parodied and even ridiculed in “the suspension of restrictions and hierarchies” ([19], p. 16) brought about by carnival celebrations. In the medieval practices Bakhtin derives his concept of the carnivalesque from, such a powerful entity parodied in carnivalesque laughter might have been the king, or God ([18], p. 54). In *The Plague Dogs*, the laughter targets the rationalist ethos of science that, in the ideological framework of contemporary Western cultures, often reaches quasi-religious dimensions. Similar passages attack other central pillars of modern

⁴ Bakhtin builds his concept of the carnivalesque upon the power-subverting practices of Medieval European and ancient Greek carnival festivities ([18], p. 47). As the metaphoric language of literature shares the symbolic power of carnival festivities, he sees these practices reflected in the genre of the novel ([18], p. 47). This link, arguably, is even stronger when the novel at hand is one that undermines power hierarchies in its very narrative structure, as does a novel granting a central voice and most of its narrative space to non-human protagonists. As Catherine Elick states, a Bakhtinian reading is therefore a particularly useful approach for “confronting the ideology undergirding species valuation” ([19], p. 3).

scientific ethos, such as scientific detachment ([1], p. 18), the allegedly noble nature of scientific curiosity as an end to itself ([1], p. 18) or “benefit for the human race” ([1], p. 128) as the ultimate justification for animal experimentation. With regard to all these, discourse turns into an empty shell, unable to tell the story of both human and animal protagonists, or sometimes telling a story that is not true. When the narrator exuberantly praises the lab’s head scientist as a “most ingenious paradox, noble in reason, express and admirable in action, his undemonstrative heart committed with the utmost detachment to the benefit of humanity. Something too much of this” ([1], p. 18), the reader can only glimpse the story in the flippant afterthought.

Throughout the novel, the heterodiegetic narrator champions the voice of literature over the voice of science. The reader gets to know the narrator as a highly educated, at times even lyrical storyteller who is able to draw inspiration from virtually the entirety of the Western intellectual canon. He quotes Shakespeare ([1], p. 455) and Dr. Johnson ([1], p. 169), casually refers to Freud ([1], p. 16) and to the muse Urania ([1], p. 200), or imitates the writing style of James Joyce ([1], p. 421). However, he does not only make use of these pretexts to transmit his own message, as would be the standard use of intertextual reference, but shows up the shortcomings of the discourse of “literature” in a similar way to his dismantling of the discourse of science. In the first scene of the story, for example, the narrator describes a tank fouled with urine and saliva in which at that very moment Rowf is fighting for his life. The surface is “a watery harlequin’s coat of tilting planes and lozenges in movement” ([1], p. 1), the “streaks of urine” are “gilded” ([1], p. 1), and bubbles of saliva are rocking “turgidly” ([1], p. 1). In this description, the implied reader realizes a gap not between narrator and implied author, but in the narrator’s discourse itself: a gap between the tenor and the vehicles of metaphors. The narrator’s language is the language of “literature,” but, as does the empty discourse of science, the high register and metaphorical complexity of literature does not unveil reality, but glosses over the sufferings of Rowf, who, pointedly, in this scene is refused both agency and a voice. In presenting as an epitome of beauty what is in fact a hideous reality, the narration reverses Phelan’s bonding unreliability category of “literally unreliable but metaphorically reliable” ([9], p. 226) narration. The narrator is literally reliable but *metaphorically* unreliable, and as intellectual convention has long taught the reader to consider the metaphorical level the apex of literary language, and to trust it above all others, this creates a substantial gap between narrator and reader.

The narrator thus places the reader in a paradoxical situation. On the one hand, the ‘literariness’ of the narratorial voice of *The Plague Dogs* demands the reader to be well-versed in the conventions of literary discourse, and challenges every lack of knowledge of the literary canon. When the narrator recounts the reunion between Snitter and his master, for example, it is the reader’s own task to notice the moment when the narrator stops relating the events, and instead leaves this to Shakespeare: “Forgive me—I make a broken delivery of the business on the sand-dunes at Drigg. I never heard of such another encounter: a sight which was to be seen, but cannot be spoken of. They looked as they had heard of a world ransomed, or one destroyed” ([1], p. 455; see also [20], 5.2,14–15). On the other hand, the narrator constantly undermines the conventions of literature, highlighting that literature too can become an instrument of anthropocentric hegemony, and even more tragically so than the rationalist story-deprived discourse of science. Literature indeed can and does tell stories, yet these stories might trick the reader into averting the eyes from the animal. Still, the narrator’s voice shows far more respect for the discourse of literature than for the one of science. The literary, so the narrator’s implicit indication, is a discourse that can indeed be compatible with “instinct.” In the environment of the literary, the animal might be capable not only of telling its own tale, but even of being listened to by a human audience—if the animal is granted a voice.

Collado Rodriguez describes the narrator as “a very playful and restless figure in the fashion of Tristram Shandy” ([14], p. 51). Yet while the narrator of *Tristram Shandy* is satirical, omnipresent, and “enthral[ling]” ([10], p. 8), i.e., in Phelan’s terminology, has a bonding effect on the reader, the narrator of *The Plague Dogs* is virtually erratic. This unpredictability often has an estranging effect. During long parts of the text the narrator fades away to a covert voice reporting the dogs’

journey, describing the landscape, or relating Snitter's thoughts to the reader. At unpredictable intervals, however, this voice suddenly turns overt, voicing sarcastic, impolite, or downright rude comments. The narrator interrupts an almost lyrical passage on Snitter howling to the moon to attack Mediterranean hunters shooting migratory birds as "hirsute swine[s]" ([1], p. 260), expresses disappointment that no one took the chance to murder a particularly unpleasant one of his characters ([1], p. 200), or directly targets the reader, threatening that there will be a "price to pay" ([1], p. 192) for the "unnatural" way of life of modern Western civilisation. Towards the end of the story the implied reader notices that the narrator previously purposefully withheld information to manipulate the reader's perspective on animal experimentation. The narrator waits for the final pages to disclose the motivation that drove one of the scientists to work in the lab: Mr. Powell searched for a cure for his young daughter, who is dying of cancer ([1], p. 449). At the point of this disclosure the implied reader, having been given an entirely animal-focused view on animal experimentation for more than four hundred pages of dense tragedy, will find herself stupefied by the very notion that there indeed *is* a different perspective—that there might be justifications for the practice the narrator has carefully taught the reader to abhor. Notably, the reader only learns about Mr. Powell's incentive after the scientist has changed his mind, and despite his daughter's illness, has decided to not only quit his job but even to illegally free an animal from the lab. In fact, the reader is only allowed to hear Mr. Powell's voice after he switched to the discourse the narrator presents as the correct one.

Most unreliable about the heterodiegetic narrator, however, is the narrative style. Style changes constantly, from prose to poetry ([1], p. 421), or from colloquial language to biblical language and back ([1], p. 317). In consequence the reader can never know which kind of narration she is to encounter in the next line. After the dogs killed their first sheep, for example, Snitter elapses into rhyme, as he sometimes does in his mad moments, and the narrator immediately joins in:

Incrimination and heady elation, cutting capers in the misty vapours, havoc and ravage hurrah for the savage life precarious, life so various, life nefarious and temerarious, pulling faces, fierce grimaces, leaving traces in rocky places, pieces and faeces all over the fleece is that a yow's shoulder they've left there to moulder stuck up on a boulder? Much to learn, Rowf, in the fern, of great concern, for this is the point of no return. Those who kill sheep should mind where they sleep... ([1], p. 76)

On the content level this narration is reliable, but not on the level of discourse. The reader is left at a loss whether the narrator is just reflecting Snitter's state of mind, or might be affected by the madness himself. Episodes casting doubt onto the narrator's sanity become more frequent towards the end of the narrative, when, at times, the narrator appears to be virtually rambling:

Along the estuary we go, black-and-white oyster-catchers flashing rapid, pointed wings... and an old heron flapping slowly away by himself. Can that be the tod [character killed in a fox hunt] I see, with Kiff [character killed in the lab], up on a cloud? No, I beg your pardon, must have got some hairspray in my eyes [as in a lab experiment on rabbits], but let's raise a cheer all the same. Never again, hide in a drain, ride in a train, died in the rain—it's not raining yet, anyway. ([1], p. 423)

The heterodiegetic narrator's fits of apparent madness, even more unpredictable than Snitter's ones, create the impression of a voice driven insane by the sufferings of the characters whose plight it reports. This voice, crucially, is human, not animal, yet it frequently focalizes through animal eyes and grants narrative space to the non-human. Shaping its discourse around the dogs and their perception of the world, the narrator's voice—unlike the empty discourse of science—proves to be able to tell the canine heroes' story. Moreover, its erratic unreliability intensifies the story, giving powerful expression to a form of animal suffering normally happening in silence and well outside the implied reader's line of vision. This suffering, once granted a voice, is so intense as to break the structural constraints of discourse. Unreliable narration in *The Plague Dogs* thus dismantles an uncomfortable

truth: traditional forms of narration can only uphold their alleged reliability by means of averting the reader's attention from non-human stories. The heterodiegetic narrator's unreliability in *The Plague Dogs* in consequence does not seek to estrange the implied reader from the narrator, but from the set of values which render this narration unreliable. Instead of undergoing a "partial progress towards the norm" ([9], p. 231) the narrator seeks to raise the reader's awareness of the problematic dimensions of the norm. In the end, the reader is left with only a single reliable set of facts: the dogs are suffering, and by means of accepting the shared values, and especially the evasive discourse of the society causing this suffering, the implied reader, too, bears her share of the blame.

5. The Reader Shipwrecked: Unravelling the Ending

When considered from the perspective of narratorial discourse, *The Plague Dogs* appears entirely open-ended. On the face of it, the story has a typical happy ending: in a miraculous rescue, two naturalists save the dogs from drowning, and the two long-suffering canine heroes can start a new life with Snitter's former master who suddenly turns out to be alive after all. This ending was under criticism for undermining the serious political intention of the story, e.g., by reviewer Naomi Wise, who censured it as "spurious" ([21], p. 54). But the moment a reading of the ending takes into account the complex interplay of narrative unreliabilities, the final scenes of *The Plague Dogs* can also be approached as yet another twist on the *Pincher Martin* trope. Pincher Martin believes that he finds himself miraculously rescued from drowning, while he, in fact *did* drown. Therefore, he is at his most unreliable when he appears to be reliable—only his hallucinations call into question his account of his island survival. *The Plague Dogs*, in addition to starting with Rowf drowning, ends when the dogs find themselves miraculously rescued from drowning again. However, they, in contrast to Pincher Martin, believe they are dead now. If this were a homodiegetic account by Snitter, or, as the plotline of *Pincher Martin*, a heterodiegetic internally focalized account of Snitter, and Snitter only, the reader could indeed come to the conclusion that Snitter is dead and dreams up a walk through a watery purgatory that finally ends in his accepting his death, and entering dog heaven at the side of his (equally dead) master.

But the heterodiegetic narrator balances Snitter's account and continually anchors it in reality. Several of the previous plotlines come together, and the narrator's zero focalisation allows different protagonists' views to throw light on the scene, while all of these views add up to one logical narrative. Indeed, if it had not been for the previous erratic behaviour of the heterodiegetic narrator and the recurrent *Pincher Martin* allusions, a reader probably would not doubt this ending for a second. But, taking into account both of these aspects, one can read the ending as a final twist to the story, and even to the *Pincher Martin*-trope. At the end of *Pincher Martin*, the implied reader learns for sure that she has fallen victim to an entirely distorted view on the story's reality. At the end of *The Plague Dogs*, in contrast, the reader is left at a total loss whether to consider the "happy ending" scene as reliable or unreliable. There are some unreliability markers, such as the one-to-one correspondence between Rowf's ideal master and naturalist Peter Scott, and the overall too-good-to-be-true quality of both the action and the characters' dialogue. This dialogue, in an additional twist, even projects unreliability beyond the text itself, and purposefully undermines not only the narrator's reliability, but even the one of the author. Ronald Lockley, fictional counterpart of a real and renowned naturalist, dismisses Richard Adams as "hopelessly sentimental" ([1], p. 440), thus attributing to him a bias that obviously cannot but colour the tenor of the entire narrative. Yet none of these puzzles of unreliability are resolved in any way comparable to Golding solving Pincher Martin's mystery by suddenly shifting the narratorial focus from the unreliable Pincher Martin to two reliable characters ([17], p. 202).

The Plague Dogs, in consequence, offers two distinct readings of its ending. If the heterogetic narrator is reliable, this is a happy ending, and a very genre-typical one as well. The plot line has shown that there are indeed bad humans out there, doing terrible things to animals in their ruthless anthropocentrism and egocentrism. The ending however blends this with hope: such humans can be overcome, as long as there are some fine specimens of humanity who are willing to fight for animals.

If the heterodiegetic narrator is unreliable, in contrast, the ending is a tragedy. The narrator gives up on what Rowf repeatedly classifies as “a bad world for animals” ([1], p. 23). Just like Snitter in the newspaper story, the narrator relates a fairy tale, something that in another world, once upon a time, might have taken place, but can never happen in reality. If one chooses this reading, one can even pinpoint the exact moment when the narrator gives up on the madness of the situation, and instead employs talking animal story stock elements. This is the moment Snitter drowns:

No feeling in the legs. Cold. Cold. Longing to rest, longing to stop, losing two gasps in every three for a lungful of air. The stinging, muzzle-slapping water, rocking up and down. This isn't a dream. It's real, real. We're going to die. ...Cold. Sinking. Bitter, choking dark. ([1], p. 438)

Collado Rodriguez calls this “the logical end of the novel” ([14], p. 52), describing the following happy ending as a “metafictional element” ([14], p. 53), a claim that I would second. Perhaps, one could best describe the ending as an escapist fantasy of a narrator who tries and ultimately fails to apply patterns that make sense to a world that does not. Such patterns are ubiquitous in the novel, most prominently in form of Carl Gustav Jung's theory of the collective unconscious, and Joseph Campbell's hero's journey that leads the heroes on a “flight... complicated by marvels of magical obstruction and evasion” ([8], p. 197). But these patterns reach their limits once the literary animal appears as animal. What happens to Joseph Campbell's hero if his final reward is denied to him because of his species? How does the Jungian unconscious function if there is no rationalistic Western human consciousness to balance the primitive, instinctive nature of the unconscious, but a canine one? The narrator does not seek to answer these questions, but pushes them until they become deeply disconcerting for the implied reader—only to abruptly revert to an easier mode of story-telling at the very moment the reader might be seriously considering the dimensions the answers might reach. This again calls to mind Phelan's category of “partial progress towards the norm” ([9], p. 231) as a bonding category. In the final scene of *The Plague Dogs*, the heterodiegetic narrator does the opposite: he seeks to undermine and, eventually, in the double-edged happy ending, to destroy the norm itself. This is estranging and unsettling, uncanny, even, but ultimately seeks to open readers' eyes to the issue at hand: the hopeless situation of animals in the madhouse of Western civilization. The world the story presents (our own world, satirically overdrawn, but metaphorically reliable) is so ludicrous that sanity does not stand a chance, and all well-worn patterns that seek to introduce some order to the chaos appear to exclude the animals who are the heroes of the story.

Escaping reality, indeed, might be the only coping mechanism for an animal narrator caught in the world of *The Plague Dogs*. Snitter does in his hallucinations. Rowf does in finally entering the magical world of Snitter's happy-pet fairy tale when he believes himself in dog heaven ([1], p. 452). The narrator does, too, if indeed he makes up a happy ending after the dogs drowned. Is the narrator a coward, then? “Yes” might be the implied reader's simple answer—and here we suddenly find ourselves looking through the eyes of Snitter, facing his anima on the moors, shouting the truth into her face, and never realizing that it is *his* truth, not hers. The reader is finally left to make her own decision if she wants to follow the narrator's solution of playing-ostrich, or if she dares to read the animal protagonists as animals, and in doing so to face the insanity underlying Western culture's tradition of anthropocentrism and self-deception.

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Article

“Against the Dog Only a Dog”: Talking Canines Civilizing Cynicism in Cervantes’ “coloquio de los perros” (With Tentative Remarks on the Discourse and Method of Animal Studies)

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Abstract: Deriving its designation from the Greek word for ‘dog’, cynicism is likely the only philosophical ‘interest group’ with a diachronically dependable affinity for various animals—particularly those of the canine kind. While dogs have met with differing value judgments, chiefly along a perceived human–animal divide, it is specifically discourses with cynical affinities that render problematic this transitional field. The Cervantine “coloquio de los perros” has received scholarly attention for its (caninely) picaresque themes, its “cynomorphic” (Ziolkowski) narratological technique, its socio-historically informative accounts relating to Early Modern Europe and the Iberian peninsula, including its ‘zoopoetically’ (Derrida) relevant portrayal of dogs (see e.g., Alves, Beusterien, Martín); nor did the dialog’s mention of cynical snarling go unnoticed. The essay at hand commences with a chapter on questions of method pertaining to ‘animal narration’: with recourse to Montaigne, Descartes, and Derrida, this first part serves to situate the ensuing close readings with respect to the field of Animal Studies. The analysis of the Cervantine texts synergizes thematic and narratological aspects at the discourse historical level; it commences with a brief synopsis of the respective novellas in part 2; Sections 3–5 supply a description of the rhetorical modes of crafting plausibility in the framework narrative (“The Deceitful Marriage”), of pertinent (*Scriptural*) intertexts for the “Colloquy”. Parts 6–7 demonstrate that the choice of canine interlocutors as narrating agencies—and specifically in their capacity as dogs—is discursively motivated: no other animal than this animal, and precisely as animal, would here serve the discursive purpose that is concurrently present with the literal plane; for this dialogic novella partakes of a (predominantly Stoicizing) tradition attempting to resocialize the Cynics, which commences already with the appearance of the Ancient arch-Cynic ‘Diogenes’ on the scene. At the discursive level, a diachronic contextualization evinces that the Cervantine text takes up and outperforms those rhetorical techniques of reintegration by melding Christian, Platonic, Stoicizing elements with such as are reminiscent of Diogenical ones. Reallocating Blumenberg’s reading of a notorious Goethean dictum, this essay submits the formula ‘against the Dog only a dog’ as a concise précis of the Cervantine method at the discursive level, attained to via a decidedly pluralized rhetorical sermocination featuring, at a literal level, specifically canine narrators in a dialogic setting.

Keywords: Cervantes; *Novelas ejemplares*; *El coloquio de los perros*; *Novela del casamiento engañoso*; *Siglo de Oro*; Early Modern Age; cynicism; Diogenes of Sinope; Montaigne; Derrida; Animal Studies; rhetoric; animal narration

1. *Cherchez La Bête (Humaine): With Respect to Animal Narration*

Diogenes [. . .] disait [. . .] C'est celui qui me traite et nourrit qui me sert,
et ceux qui entretiennent [les] bêtes se doivent dire plutôt les servir qu'en être servis.
(Montaigne 2009, p. 192, II.xii); cf. (Montaigne 1989, p. 338); (D. Laertius 2005, p. 77, VI.75)¹

natürlich nur tentativ
(Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 195)

This initial subchapter addresses questions of method. In so doing, it also serves to situate the essay's ensuing close readings of the Cervantine novellas with respect to the approach and discourse of Animal Studies. The following observations are tentative, their function heuristic.

It is commonly held that beings with a potential capacity for humane comportment and taking other perspectives are to deem self-evident a respectful conduct towards other beings: "'*Tat twam asi*', that is, 'this living [being] are you'" (Schopenhauer 1988, p. 295, III, §44; trans. dsm).² Usually, only the cynically minded might wish to display the candor (or insolence) of articulating the indirectly self-seeking nature that—from their particular point of view—is likely to be at the basis of statements such as "Do to others as you would have them do to you" (*Lk* 6:31; cf. *Mt* 7:12; *NIV*).

Quarantining the putative faculties of humanly conceivable metaphysical entities (the caring for which must, for reasons of competence, be delegated to the respective professional curators), the nominal 'human animal' may seem to manifest an exceptional (and, in this, perchance distinctive) proclivity for taking other perspectives.³ In the inventory of effectual techniques that is rhetoric, such 'perspective-taking' is advocated as a capacity for 'always also arguing on the other sides of any question'.⁴

¹ "Diogenes [. . .] said: [. . .] it is the man who keeps and feeds me who is my slave'. And those who keep animals should be said rather to serve them than to be served by them" (Montaigne 1989, p. 338, II.12). Such patterns of (perspectival) inversion—grounded in the apparently human potential for 'virtually taking another (including: an other's) point of view also'—have been particularly characteristic of cynically inflected discourses, from 'Diogenes' via (for instance) Machiavelli, to Nietzsche, and beyond. Since the condition of possibility for this notional process of inversion is an awareness as to contingency—that things might as well be (seen to be) otherwise—this tendency is constitutively not monodirectional; hence a perceived cynic such as Feuerbach might turn a characteristically cynical maxim into this: "The other is *per se* the mediator between me and the [. . .] species. Homo homini Deus est" (Feuerbach 1976, p. 189, I; trans. dsm); "the highest and first law ['must] be the love of [a hu]man [being] for [hu]man [kind] ['des Menschen zum Menschen']. Homo homini deus est – this is the supreme practical principle" (Feuerbach 1976, p. 318, II; trans. dsm). The style of the *Humanities* journal does not permit references in the abstract, hence the names of the authors were used therein; the respective references are (in order of appearance): (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 95); (Derrida 2002, p. 374); cf. (Alves 2014; Alves 2011), (Beusterien 2016, passim), (Martin 2012; Martin 2004, both passim); see (Blumenberg 2006a, p. 596). Moreover, the journal's style stipulates the repetition of author names in successive mentions, as well as the doubling of parentheses for formatting reasons; the respective changes (including errors potentially incurred in the converting process) pertain to the procedures of copy editing, and were beyond the author's influence; the reader's lenience with regard to the appearance of the layout is requested.

² Cf. Montaigne's observation: "Since animals are born, beget, feed, act, move, live, and die in a manner so close to our own" (Montaigne 1989, p. 345, II.12)—with these similarities serving (also) as a basis for, and with a view to, potentially taking other perspectives. Schopenhauer later reiterates the *Vedantic* "*Mahavakya*, i.e. the great word" (Schopenhauer 1988, p. 295, III, §44; trans. dsm) as an imperative: "'*Tat twam asi!*' ('This are you!')" (p. 483, IV, §66; trans. dsm)—while accentuating the conduct to result from this insight: "thus he will also not torture any animal" (p. 481, IV, §66; trans. dsm). Generally, see the ostentative self-evidence implied in assertions such as: "The capacity for moral conduct signifies an obligation to conduct [oneself] morally, especially also with respect to animals" (Benz-Schwarzburg 2015, p. 248; trans. dsm). Seeing that Animal Studies may seem to have a tendency to focus virtually all of their critical attention on Cartesian(izing) currents (while largely disregarding other philosophico-discursive strands, including the cynical), Schopenhauer's ethics might not have received the consideration it would appear to merit (in this particular field).

³ "Der Mensch ist ein extremer Standpunktwechsler" (Blumenberg 2006b, p. 879). Cf. and contrast Benz-Schwarzburg on de Waal's views concerning the human "capacity for cognitively taking the position of another" (Benz-Schwarzburg 2015, pp. 247–48; trans. dsm). See Dopico Black's reference to "Coetzeef[s]" putting the following words in "Costello[s]" mouth: "[t]here is no limit to the extent to which we can think ourselves into the being of another[']" (Dopico Black 2010, p. 245); on the reception of the latter, see (Bühler-Dietrich and Weingarten 2016, pp. 8–10). In this respect, cf. Boehrer on Ruskin's notion of the "pathetic fallacy" qua "invest[ing] the natural world with the observer's own passions" (Boehrer 2010, p. 2; cf. pp. 3, 11–12).

⁴ A corollary of taking other perspectives is their factual plurality; hence a (citational) pluralization of approaches is requisite in any descriptive form of scholarship. Blumenberg accentuates that "fast alles, was wir überhaupt wissen, die Bedingtheit

Alignable in tendency with the perspectival inversion characteristic of the Cynic's discourse (as in the above motto), Montaigne—whose *Essais* (proceeding from an awareness as to contingency) present an assorted accumulation of diverse data guided by, and gathered by way of, a poly-perspectival heuristics—muses: “When I play with my cat, who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me” (Montaigne 1989, p. 331, II.12; cf. p. 331n.; Montaigne 2009, p. 179, II.xii).⁵ Likely due to Derrida's affirmative citation thereof in what has come to be a seminal text of Animal Studies (Derrida 2002, pp. 375, 375n.), Montaigne's reflection continues to be reiterated in the respective paradigm, specifically as evidence of a creditable recourse to ‘the animal itself and as such’.⁶ With this

der Hypothese hat. Die Stärke der Hypothese kann nur in ihrer Konkurrenzfähigkeit mit anderen Hypothesen liegen. Sie macht jedes Wissenschaftssystem wesensmäßig pluralistisch—und das auch mit der Philosophie“ (Blumenberg 2006b, p. 161). For the context at hand, cf. “No less than feminist, Marxist, post-colonial, structuralist, and formalist approaches, a literary criticism perspective on animal issues is a point of view, a form of consciousness, a way to read any work of fiction” (Shapiro and Copeland 2005, p. 343). As to the period in question, Enekel/Smith emphasize the “variety of discourses on animals among early modern scientists, writers and artists” (Enekel and Smith 2007, p. 12).

⁵ For Montaigne's observations concerning animals with respect to humankind, see spec. (Montaigne 1989, pp. 330–58, II.12). For comparable instances of perspectival inversion, see spec. “This defect that hinders communication between them and us, why is it not just as much ours as theirs? It is a matter of guesswork whose fault it is that we do not understand one another; for we do not understand them any more than they do us. By this same reasoning they may consider us beasts, as we consider them. It is no great wonder if we do not understand them; neither do we understand the Basques [...] We must notice the parity there is between us. We have some mediocre understanding of their meaning; so do they of ours, in about the same degree. They flatter us, threaten us, and implore us, and we them” (Montaigne 1989, p. 331, II.12; cf. p. 344); see also (Fudge 2006, p. 118); as to the “parity”, cf. “this equality and correspondence between us and the beasts” (Montaigne 1989, p. 354, II.12). On the whole, Montaigne's *Essais* tender a dense (Early Modern) *summa*—an eclectic aggregate of (virtual, historical, proto-empirical) observations, common knowledge, judicious citations, inherited arguments, perceived facts on myriad subject matters (including animals), gathered by way of reading and (purported, personal, vicarious) experience—from a variety of sources, both Ancient and contemporary, collective and private. Cf. “Montaignes Essais sind eine Summe der Vielheit. Diversité ist das Stichwort [...] durch alle Essais [...] Panorama der Vielheit” (Sterle 1987, p. 424); see also (Küpper 1990, p. 272). On the changing knowledge concerning animals during “the early modern period”—triggered by “[t]he discovery of the new world”, its “dissemination” considerably “reinforced by the printing press”—see (Enekel and Smith 2007, p. 1).

⁶ With regard to “Montaigne's [...] *Apology for Raymond Sebond*” in general, Derrida states: “You will recognize that as one of the greatest pre- or anti-Cartesian texts on the animal” (Derrida 2002, p. 375; cf. spec. p. 375n.). In this respect, cf. Cummings: “Pliny left in place a countertradition on the question of animal rationality that Montaigne and others could still draw on” (Cummings 2004, p. 182); “the violence of Descartes's response, [...] Descartes's denial of animal language[,] can hardly be understood outside its context in a specific refutation of Montaigne and his sympathizers. [...] Sorabji surmises that Descartes went as far as he did only because of what Montaigne had said” (p. 180); cf. “I cannot share the opinion of Montaigne and others who attribute understanding or thought to animals’. Descartes [...] 1646”, qtd. in (Cummings 2004, p. 185n.). In this respect, the following Cartesian assertion ties in refutatively with Montaigne (as qtd. above): “Et on ne doit pas [...] penser, comme quelques anciens, que les bêtes parlent, bien que nous n'entendions pas leur langage: car s'il était vrai, puisqu'elles ont plusieurs organes qui se rapportent aux nôtres, elles pourraient aussi bien se faire entendre à nous qu'à leurs semblables” (Descartes 1969, p. 94, V.11, §59). For positions on Montaigne in the field of Animal Studies generally, see e.g., (Boehrer 2009, p. 545); (Boehrer 2010, p. 7); (Alves 2014, p. 272); (Enekel and Smith 2007, pp. 11–12, with further references); (Fudge 2007, pp. 42–45); (Fudge 2006, pp. 78, 96, 117–122); (Perfetti 2011, pp. 148–49, 163–64); on “Pliny's elephant”, “Montaigne's cat”, Descartes, and Derrida, see also (Cummings 2004, pp. 179–81, here 179). For a “representative but not exhaustive” (Wolfe 2009, p. 572n.) overview of seminal publications in animal studies until 2009, see (Wolfe 2009, passim); for a succinct outline of (particularly) formative texts, cf. (Boehrer 2009, p. 543). Concerning “the degree to which an animal is presented true to himself or herself”, see (Shapiro and Copeland 2005, p. 344). Generally, cf. the formulations: “the animality of the animal [...] its presence as meaningful in itself” (Fudge 2004, p. 7); “die Tiere selbst, das Tier-Sein der Tiere” (Bühler-Dietrich and Weingarten 2016, p. 7; cf. pp. 12–14); “dass die Tiere nicht für sich selbst, sondern aus der menschlichen Perspektive gesehen werden” (Mussner 2015, p. 174; cf. p. 162); “Freud did not let the dog be a dog” (Beusterien 2016, p. 35). With regard to the author and texts at hand: “The animals of Cervantes remain more than metaphor” (Alves 2011, p. 56); Beusterien “turns to Animal Studies in order to argue on behalf of the elimination of the animal as figure” (Beusterien 2016, p. 36; cf. pp. 8, 109); cf. “para encontrar al animal verdadero detrás del tropo antropomórfico” (Martín 2012, p. 462; Martín 2014, p. 476); “varios animales pueden ser examinados como algo más que la abstracción que proveen las metáforas antropomórficas” (Martín 2012, p. 452); cf. (Martín 2014, p. 469); (Martín 2004, p. 1560). Contrast Boehrer's descriptive stance: “animal character is always necessarily figurative, a result of socially generated patterns of meaningful action [...] despite [...] Fudge's exhortation that we attend to ‘the literal meaning of animals’ in early modern texts [...] animal character [...] arises through group interaction, in the space between individuals. Whether the groups in question are intraspecies or cross-species, they generate a sense of social being that cannot be reduced [...] to a literal notion of the *Tier an sich*” (Boehrer 2010, p. 22). Cf. “the cluster of attributes, often incompatible, associated with each species is historically inflected” (Perry 2004, p. 20). See also Mussner, evoking tropes as “eine auf Erfahrung mit dem Tier beruhende Wendung” (Mussner 2015, p. 174; cf. p. 173)—the selectivity of such (verbalized) experiences or observations (cf. “die versprachlichte Beobachtung”, p. 175) notwithstanding; in this respect, see Cuneo's suggestive remark: “It matters that it is the horse as opposed to [...] a goat, who is chosen as a symbol for pride” (Cuneo 2014, p. 4)

accentuation, ‘the real animal’ is seen to come into focus, thereby counteracting a ‘merely symbolic, purely figurative use’ (judged to be *a priori* compromised on account of the latter’s perceived semantic, notional, structural association with forms of exploitation).⁷

In this retrieval or liberation of ‘the animal as such’, the ensuing (also narratologically significant) aspects may seem to be suspended or elided: the textuality, virtuality, context, historical distance (alterity), and mediacy of the statement (including, in a scholarly environment, its stages of reception); the human being (here: the speaker of the *Essais*, usually identified with the historical author, referred to as ‘Montaigne’) performing the conjectural act of taking an animal’s perspective based on (what is semiotically represented as) a tangible experience; the respective human recipient visualizing the textually sedimented (putatively authentic) interspecies encounter by notionally accommodating it to her own (previously immediate, now recollected) experience with animals, not necessarily of the feline kind (thereby tying in her own *Lebenswelt* with what is perceived as the speaker’s lifeworld emerging suggestively from the text).

In an Animal Studies perspective, the collocation ‘animal narration’ might therefore seem a contradiction in terms, seeing that—rather than taking ‘the animal as such’—it adds another expression with (semantic) associations and (historical) implications that the paradigm expressly rejects: mediatedness, indirection, irony, semblance, the verisimilar, virtuality, ornament, symbolism, metaphor, figuration, rhetoric; along with certain genres expected to display a particular partiality toward the former, such as fables, satires, emblems, allegories, and the like; as well as a respective hermeneutics (qua more mediacy).⁸ In a radical view, the aspect of ‘narration’ might even be judged to be yet another arrantly anthropocentric mode, aiming to superstructure, earmark, instrumentalize, and ultimately veil ‘the animate animal itself’.⁹ By contrast, the language regime obtaining in the field of Animal Studies tends to privilege articulations positing immediacy, literalness, direct access, palpable life, authentic reality, truth, the body, nature, and animals.¹⁰

⁷ See Wolfe: “Rather than treat the animal as primarily a theme, trope, metaphor, analogy, representation, or sociological datum [...] scholars in animal studies” are to ‘take the animal seriously’ (Wolfe 2009, pp. 566–67). Cf. also the following formulations: “[in] reductive moves [...] an animal or animal part is an instrument or resource for the use of humans. [...] the animal is reduced radically [...] [in] symbolic use, ‘figurative appropriation’ [...] or ideational exploitation” (Shapiro and Copeland 2005, p. 344); “The dog as dog has disappeared [...] animals were prompts to the abstract. [...] animals were [...] used [...] animal behaviors were used” (Fudge 2006, pp. 106–7); “el empleo figurado del animal suele ser antropocéntrico, podría ser visto [...] como pura explotación estética” (Martín 2012, p. 462); cf. “reduce al animal a un tropo” (Martín 2014, p. 472; see also p. 469). All the same, the fundamentally metaphorical ‘nature’ of language may lead even animal-intentioned critics into statements such as: “Will man sich auf eine ertragreiche Weise mit den Tieren in der Literatur beschäftigen” (Borgards 2015, pp. 226–27).

⁸ Cf. e.g., “an occasional, tired, animal metaphor” (Shapiro and Copeland 2005, p. 343); “animals for Deleuze and Guattari are [...] conceptual pieces in a philosophical game” (Raber 2013, p. 12). As to the bias against rhetoric on the part of Animal Studies, see (Borgards 2015, p. 226). Regarding the paradigm’s rejection of a certain genre, see this catalytic statement on Derrida’s part: “Above all, it would be necessary to avoid fables. We know the history of fabulation and how it remains an anthropomorphic taming, a moralizing subjection, a domestication. Always a discourse of man, on man, indeed on the animality of man, but for and as man” (Derrida 2002, p. 405; cf. pp. 374, 378, 403, 403n).

⁹ Generally, see Derrida’s incisive caveat against “venturing to say almost anything at all for the cause, for whatever cause or interest” (Derrida 2002, p. 398).

¹⁰ In hermeneutic terms, everything is to be read *in sensu litterali*, not *spirituali* (*allegorico, tropologico/morali, anagogico*). The same as biographistic or psychoanalytical criticism, such proclivities as outlined above may lead to deprivatizing the inevitably mediated state, the historical alterity, the virtuality, the (textually sedimented) rhetorico-strategic functions, of the respective material. Moreover, the reader’s active participation in the production of meaning (by selective attention, by contributing associations, etc.) is sidelined along with textuality and mediacy—thereby (ultimately) spiriting away both the recipient and the medium. In discourse historical terms, the Animal Studies paradigm might (eventually) locate itself in a long tradition of cultural critique (along Lucretian, Rousseauist, Romanticist lines, for instance, and with the respective genres; as to the latter generally, cf. (Forcione 1989, p. 349)); in such a view, the field’s apparent, occasionally voiced uneasiness with its disciplinary parentage, cultural studies—cf. (Wolfe 2009, passim, spec. pp. 565–66, 568); contrast (Dopico Black 2010, passim, spec. pp. 236–37)—would be the result of its *de re* affiliation to the above; consequently, certain radical positions might indeed be innocent of an awareness as to—or even feel inclined to expressly disown—their own condition of possibility: human culture. Cf. “natural and timeless because the return belongs with nature (the animal, instinct) and not with culture (the human, reason)” (Fudge 2007, p. 40). Contrast: “the concept of culture that informs cultural studies is always already inhabited by the human” (Dopico Black 2010, p. 237). Regarding the countless variants of a ‘return to nature’ (as tentatively listed above), see e.g., Derrida’s emphasis on nudity (Derrida 2002, passim, spec. pp. 369, 373–74, 390, 418); Fudge’s accentuation of ‘homecoming’ (Fudge 2007, passim), of recovery: “the project of this book is to

Facing this apparent aporia in terms of approach, one might have recourse precisely to Derrida's aforesaid lecture—recognized as foundational for, and widely received in, Animal Studies—for purposes of proposing a provisionally practicable path.¹¹ Two textual gestures seem to be of particular import in this respect: the essay's express and recurrent signaling of its own textuality; and Derrida's ostensive refunctionalization of a notorious Cartesian formula.

While articulating a desire to return to various manifestations of immediacy, the speaker repeatedly points both to the factual nonviability and the virtual possibility thereof: although all returns are virtual, they typically tend to be effectual only if that fact fails to register.¹² The desired conflation—taking the virtual as the factual—occurs, as Derrida takes considerable care to render palpable, in the recipient (whether audience or reader), and precisely while acting in that capacity. Addressing others, language lays claim to reality:

I must make it clear from the start, the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, *a little cat*. It isn't the *figure* of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the room as an allegory for all the cats on the earth [...] that is *truly a little cat*, this cat I am talking about[.] (Derrida 2002, pp. 374–75)¹³

These protestations of verity and (deictic) emphases take place—and the cat exists—in language: “the cat said to be *real*” (p. 378) by a speaker, and potentially perceived as such by a recipient taking a semiotically mediated as an actual cat.¹⁴ In (always) other words: “It is an animal of reading and rewriting” (p. 406).

recover animals from the silence of modern scholarship” (Fudge 2006, p. 4); Raber's stress on a “belief in the primacy of the body [...] the role of the body [...] the significance of the body” (Raber 2013, pp. 12–13; cf. pp. 11, 19–20, 28, 30, *passim*), spec. as “this constant but incomplete search for actual animals with actual bodies” (p. 12); Boehrer's focus on a “return” to a “pre-Cartesian status” (Boehrer 2010, p. 12)—“to move beyond [...] by moving behind [...] to the issues and developments that preceded” (p. 12). In a Bataille/Kojève context, Agamben initially signals “a return to animality” (Agamben 2004, p. 5); “man, who has become animal again” (p. 6; cf. p. 7); “Kojève returns to the problem of man's becoming animal [...] [‘]Man [...] must also become purely ‘natural’ again[‘] [...] [‘]man's return to animality[‘]” (pp. 9–10); this emphasis is reiterated at the end: “make its way back to [...] from which it came [...] to return to their original place” (Agamben 2004, p. 89); “man's regained animality” (p. 90)—returns frame Agamben's book. Having asked “¿cómo recuperamos al animal[?]” (Martín 2014, p. 472; cf. p. 476), Martín—with regard to “interrelaciones [...] con otras especies” in Cervantes' *Quijote*—states: “ese mundo paralelo [...] hay que recuperar y validar. Hacerlo es sólo una de las recompensas de los Estudios de Animales” (Martín 2012, p. 462); cf. (Martín 2014, p. 476). A similar tendency might be visible even in Cuneo's more cautious statement: “I would like to [...] transport us out of the realm of the academic and the representational at least to the threshold of our lived lives” (Cuneo 2014, p. 13). Less warily, Wolfe asserts: “animal studies intersects with the larger problematic of posthumanism [...] in the sense of returning us precisely to the thickness and finitude of human embodiment and to human evolution as itself a specific form of animality [...] we are returned to a new sense of the materiality and particularity not just of the animal [...] but also of that animal called the human” (Wolfe 2009, pp. 571–72); with a complimentary (re)turn inward at the end: “not just ‘out there’, among the birds and beasts, but ‘in here’ as well, at the heart of this thing we call human” (p. 572). Virtually any (ever theoretico-rhetorical) ‘return to’ tends to be a ‘flight from’—in the case of Animal Studies: from anthropocentrism, most likely.

¹¹ As to the import of Derrida's aforesaid lecture, Wolfe states that it “is arguably the single most important event in the brief history of animal studies” (Wolfe 2009, p. 570); cf. (Bühler-Dietrich and Weingarten 2016, p. 8); see also Fudge's reading thereof (Fudge 2007, *passim*).

¹² As to a desire for immediacy in the face of constitutive indirection (given the linguistic medium), see the lecture's first line: “To begin with, I would like to entrust myself to words that, were it possible, would be naked” (Derrida 2002, p. 369)—with emphasis on the qualification; similarly, see the gradation and positing accentuated here: “posing them [sc. ‘some hypotheses in view of theses’] simply, naked, frontally, as directly as possible, *pose* them” (p. 392); as well as, at the end: “the naked truth, if there is such a thing [...] Nudity perhaps remains untenable” (p. 418). As to immediacy, see (pp. 369, 372, 374, 376, 378, 400, 418). For express emphasis on indirect structures, cf. e.g., “labyrinthine, even aberrant, leading us astray from lure to lure” (p. 392); “It will not be a matter of attacking frontally or antithetically” (p. 398). In Derrida's essay, returns are legion—cf. (Derrida 2002, pp. 369, 392–93, 400–1, 413, 418); meta-poetically, the text lays bare its recursive structure as such (pp. 380–381, 390, 401, 406, 412n.); cf. spec. “I must once more return to” (p. 380); “a term that will come back more than once, from different places and in different registers” (p. 381); “Yet I have been wanting to bring myself back to my nudity before the cat” (p. 390); “We will have reason to go back over these steps and tracks” (p. 401); “But since I wish ultimately to return at length to” (p. 406); “I will return to this” (p. 412n.).

¹³ For instances of what might appear to be a conflation of the figurative with the factual (and taken as the latter) in the present context, see e.g., (Fudge 2008, pp. 188–89; cf. p. 199); (Alves 2011, p. 62); (Raber 2013, pp. 79–80); (Beusterien 2009, pp. 212, 219); (Beusterien 2016, pp. 8, 38–39). With respect to the poetics of the Cervantine *œuvre*, an (*a priori*) rejection of the *modus obliquus*, of irony, of intercalated narrative levels and diverse perspectives, would arguably be particularly problematic.

¹⁴ Laying bare this linguistic factuality, Derrida refers to Carroll's “*Alice in Wonderland*” and “*Through the Looking Glass*”, quoting from the latter the phrase “really a little cat”—and later glosses that a respective intertextuality might even obtain throughout: “In fact you can't be certain that I am not doing that” (Derrida 2002, p. 376). Cf. “It is a question of words,

A form of indirection recurs also at another level. In the face of its allusively familiar appearance, Derrida's patent gesture towards Descartes—already visible in the lecture's title "L'Animal que donc je suis (à suivre)" (Derrida 2002, p. 369n.), and reiterated in variation throughout (cf. e.g., pp. 371–72, 379–83, 386, 400–1, 403, 407, 410, 416, 418)—is not a structurally equivalent reformulation. While the Cartesian "vérité: *je pense, donc je suis*" (Descartes 1969, p. 52, IV.1, §33) tenders a quasi-non-processual formula (the 'therefore' notwithstanding), Derrida—maintaining (immediate) identifiability not least by a partial citation—alters its structure entirely.¹⁵ Into the self's processing of itself, he intercalates an other: "I see it [sc. a 'cat'] as *this* irreplaceable living being [. . .]. Nothing can ever take away from me the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized" (Derrida 2002, pp. 378–79).¹⁶ The *ego's* unshakable foundation is external to itself: an *alter* that cannot be incorporated—"the wholly other that they call animal, for example, a cat" (p. 380)—and that might, for instance, "manifest to me in some way its experience of my language, of my words" (p. 387).¹⁷ Derrida's formula of indirection renders in expressly processual terms Descartes' virtual tautology of the self's all but immediate recourse to itself.¹⁸ Belying the surface, the perceived Cartesian and Derridean tendencies are thus fundamentally at variance (immediacy vs. indirection); in the latter case, human beings arrive at themselves by way of a detour—via an other, specifically animals.¹⁹ In

therefore. [. . .] an exploration of language" (p. 401; see pp. 409, 416–17, *passim*)—language being another of humankind's detours to itself (cf. (Derrida 2002, pp. 390, 401)). Derrida also signals (semiotic, linguistic) mediatedness by dwelling on the (human) act of naming, calling, classifying animals (cf. *Gen* 2:19–20)—see (Derrida 2002, pp. 380–81, 385–86, 392, 398–99, *passim*), spec. "what they call the animal" (p. 380); "the gaze called animal" (p. 381); in this respect, see also the critique of an inevitable linguistic possessiveness, of animal ownership in and via language (Derrida 2002, pp. 375–76, 383, 390); "*Animal* is a word that men have given themselves the right to give" (p. 400). Fudge reiterates the pattern: "Derrida insists that this incident with his cat is a real encounter [. . .]. He describes the scene, returning insistently to his nakedness, his actual nakedness" (Fudge 2007, p. 45; cf. p. 46)—with the 'scenic' quality accentuated; "Derrida's repeated return to his own nakedness in a lecture, in a medium in which he stands in front of his audience and speaks of his own full frontal nakedness. The philosopher—the great mind—asks his audience, who are fast becoming his spectators, to view him as a body, and worse, as a *naked body*" (Fudge 2007, p. 46)—with emphasis on (the several layers of) 'mediatedness'. The scene to be envisioned has affinities to Diogenical practice.

¹⁵ On Gómez Pereira's (structural) precursorship with regard to (apparently) Cartesian notions ("We have here a 'Nosco ergo sum'", see (Dopico Black 2010, pp. 241–45, here 243). Concerning the elision of the 'ergo', see Blumenberg: "In ihr [sc. der 'Reflexion'] wird dieses Bewußtsein sich selbst das Andere [. . .]. Es ist das Problem, das Descartes offenlegte, als er das ausdrückliche oder heimliche 'ergo' im *Cogito sum* bestritt oder verschwinden ließ" (Blumenberg 2006b, p. 154; cf. pp. 155, 161, 169–72); cf. "der schon zu Lebzeiten des Descartes von seinen Korrespondenten geäußerte Verdacht, im *cogito ergo sum* stecke ein diskursiver Prozeß, folglich sei momentane Evidenz ohne Erinnerungseinfluß ausgeschlossen" (p. 161).

¹⁶ Contrast: "cette certitude [. . .]: *je pense, donc je suis* [. . .] pour penser, il faut être" (Descartes 1969, p. 54, IV.3, §34). To tentatively put Derrida's move in (counter-)Cartesian terms: the desired "certainty" is externalized into the apparently irreducible being of an 'other than the self'; hence (perchance): 'I perceive (my perceiving) that the other is (other), therefore I am'. In other words: it is by insisting on the other's fundamental alterity that the self comes into (perceiving, being) its self (contrast the tendency in Schopenhauer's Vedantic reference above). Derrida seems to be insinuating which blueprint for conceptualizing 'radical alterity' he is refunctionalizing when suggesting: "I hear the cat or God ask itself, ask me" (Derrida 2002, p. 387).

¹⁷ See Montaigne: "the animals that live with us recognize our voice" (Montaigne 1989, p. 343, II.12); "How could they [sc. 'animals'] not speak to one another? They certainly speak to us, and we to them. In how many ways do we not speak to our dogs? And they answer us. We talk to them in another language [. . .] and we change the idiom according to the species" (Montaigne 1989, p. 335, II.12); see (Derrida 2002, p. 375n.). Cf. (spec. with the qualification in brackets): "In dieser von den Tieren ausgehenden Wirkung auf uns erfahren wir nicht nur etwas über uns selbst, sondern es ist nun sinnvoll möglich zu sagen, dass vermittelt dieser (Rück-)Wirkung wir etwas über die Tiere selbst (*aber nicht*: über Tiere an sich) erfahren" (Bühler-Dietrich und Weingarten 2016, pp. 13–14). Rather revealingly in this respect, Fudge claims: "In a world without animals, humans [. . .] would lose themselves" (Fudge 2006, p. 36); "Taking animals seriously [. . .] offers us [. . .] another way of conceptualizing both ourselves and the world around us" (Fudge 2006, p. 4; cf. p. 109). Derrida situates his entire *œuvre* with respect to "the question of the living and of the living animal. For me that will always have been the most important and decisive question. I have addressed it [. . .], either directly or obliquely, by means of readings of *all* the philosophers I have taken an interest in, beginning with Husserl!" (Derrida 2002, p. 402).

¹⁸ With the latter only temporarily delayed or deferred by the time it takes to think, say, or write: "*cogito sum*" (and but marginally accelerated by eliding the 'ergo'). As regards the apparently human need for (self-)reflection (at least in theory), one might—in this particular context—adduce that (as per Agamben's reading) "Linnaeus [. . .] defined *Homo* as the animal that is only if it recognizes that it is *not*" (Agamben 2004, p. 27); "man has no specific identity other than the ability to recognize himself. [. . .] *Homo sapiens* [. . .] is [. . .] a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human" (pp. 25–26)—potentially, that is.

¹⁹ This indirection via the animal seems particularly patent at the end: "And in the first place, me [. . .] Is there animal narcissism? But cannot this cat also be [. . .] my primary mirror?" (Derrida 2002, p. 418). Cf. "In [. . .] Derrida's lecture

Cuneo’s felicitously parrhesiastic wording: “We use all kinds of animals as homing ‘devices’, to tell ourselves and others who we are, where we are, and where we are going. We use animals to orient ourselves” (Cuneo 2014, p. 2).²⁰ By ceaselessly returning to returning, Derrida’s essay moreover and at once performs the impossibility (respectively, the virtuality) of direct access, and the ineluctability of indirection (specifically: of language).²¹

In light of the above, the fact that virtually all criticism in the field of Animal Studies seems to be (insistently, tacitly) channeling its efforts through Descartes might be additionally motivated.²² Naturally, certain Cartesian assertions (blatantly dis)regarding animals render ‘him’ an expedient antagonist.²³ Yet the paradigm’s tendency to privilege immediacy—and not the discursive tendencies in Derrida—may seem to align it with the Cartesian pattern, suggesting another reason for why Animal Studies can apparently neither do with nor without ‘Descartes’.

Arguably, the seemingly comfortable Cartesian recourse (with its negative leading sign only increasing that effect) results in a perspectival foreshortening, one outcome of which appears to be a

[...] can be traced an admission of the centrality of animals to the assertion of human status” (Fudge 2007, p. 51). Candidly, Cuneo accentuates “the [...] foundational, [...] complex, [...] ubiquitous ways in which humans use animals, not just for physical labor or for scientific experimentation, but for representational work and for self-definition. [...] [the] human use of animals [...] includ[es] our own scholarly use of historical animals to perform our professional identities” (Cuneo 2014, p. 3; cf. pp. 4, 14). See also Bühler’s structurally comparable position in an epistemological context, stressing “dass ein bestimmtes Wissen vom Menschen alleine über den Umweg über das Tier gewonnen werden kann. So werden Tiere in Experimentalsystemen zu Objekten des Wissens und fungieren dabei als Substitute des Menschen” (Bühler 2016, p. 20; on substitution in that regard, see also pp. 20–21, 23–26, 33, 35–36, 38). For a poeitic-literary context, cf. “In der langen Geschichte jenes Reflektierens der Menschen über sich fällt dem Tier [...] eine besondere Rolle zu” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 52). Generally in this respect, cf. “[...]Yet they needed them [sc. ‘animals’] in order to draw from their nature an experimental knowledge [*ad experimentalem cognitionem*]!”), Aquinas qtd. in (Agamben 2004, p. 22). In terms of animal heuristics, see also Montaigne’s formulations: “These are particular actions; but what everyone has seen and what everyone knows” (Montaigne 1989, p. 342, II.12); “if anyone studies closely what we see ordinarily of the animals that live among us, there is material there for him to find facts” (pp. 342–43, II.12).

²⁰ Cf. “There are many stories, told by philosophers, historians, poets, about dogs [...] the stories told about dogs [...] are never really about dogs at all, they are always about humans” (Fudge 2007, p. 37). See Beusterien, paraphrasing “Garber’s position”, which “argues that the critical return to the human is [...] taking place in the study of the dog” (Beusterien 2016, p. 5n).

²¹ In appropriating Derrida’s lecture, the paradigm of Animal Studies may seem to have isolated the instances calling for immediacy; such a reading would also have been facilitated by passing over the explicit signals of indirection as are provided in the text’s various auto-referential gestures, including the ironies of apparent authorial intent, which signal its constitutive state of mediatedness, of virtuality. For such techniques tender a structural, syntactico-semantic realization of the underlying configuration (indirection over immediacy) in a quasi-permanent ‘*mise en abyme du discours*’—to adopt Küpper’s formulation from another context (Küpper 1990, pp. 342, 370, 372, 381); this procedure is arguably characteristic of Derrida’s *écriture* in general. Cf. “Derrida’s tale [sc. ‘its end’] ultimately [...] returns us, it seems, to its beginning” (Fudge 2007, p. 48). The aforesaid pattern also appears to transfer itself into readings of his work: “I want to read Derrida as the re-teller of a key myth of modernity that brings together the dog, the home and the human. [...] I will, like Lassie to her home, return to Derrida” (Fudge 2007, p. 38).

²² See Fudge’s findings concerning the reception of Descartes, particularly in Early Modern England (Fudge 2006, pp. 5–6, 147–74; spec. pp. 153, 156, 160, 172); as well as her incisive critique of the (tacit) presence of a Cartesian approach (including the respective notions as to animals) in contemporary scholarship, which, in part, is seen to project that discourse back on, or into, pre-Cartesian writings (Fudge 2006, pp. 175–93, especially 179–80, 185); needless to say, spec. Cartesian positions cannot apply to Cervantine texts. On Descartes in the context of Animal Studies, see also (Boehrer 2009, pp. 545–46); (Boehrer 2010, pp. 9–10; spec. pp. 12, 24); (Martin 2014, p. 475); (Bühler 2013, p. 191); likewise Raber, who (while stating that “[b]oth of these critics [sc. ‘Boehrer’, ‘Fudge’] clearly struggle against Descartes’ legacy”) wishes to “fully subvert[...] Cartesianism” by way of “look[ing] to histories and narratives about embodiment”—since, “[a]s long as we fight over reason, we are stuck on Descartes’ playing field” (Raber 2013, p. 11). Cf. “As any medievalist or early modern scholar will tell you, the question of the animal assumes, if anything, even more centrality in earlier periods; [...] the idea of the animal that we have inherited from the Enlightenment and thinkers such as Descartes and Kant is better seen as marking a brief period” (Wolfe 2009, p. 564). Similarly: “in most posthumanist accounts, Descartes tends to be the go-to man [...], a habit we might question” (Dopico Black 2010, p. 237).

²³ For the Cartesian positions on animals in this respect, see (Descartes 1969, pp. 90–97, V.9–12, §§56–60); spec. “le corps de chaque animal [...] comme une machine” (p. 90, V.9, §56). Cf. “Between Augustine and Rousseau, [...] within the evolving history of the *ego cogito ergo sum*, stands Descartes. He waits for us with his animal-machines” (Derrida 2002, p. 391; cf. pp. 396, 400). Such (apparently unworldly) Cartesian speculations about beings other than humans would likely have made (or make) no sense to anyone in the presence of—and engaging with—animals on a daily basis: “*Cartesius certe non vidit simios*”, Linnaeus qtd. in (Agamben 2004, p. 23); cf. “the orthodox philosophical debate sits at odds with what was apparently obvious to day-to-day living. Animals think” (Fudge 2006, p. 145); see also Thomas as qtd. in (Boehrer 2010, p. 26).

virtually complete pretermission of discourses with cynical affinities from the pertinent discussions within Animal Studies—and this despite Cynicism’s sustained impact since its emergence in Antiquity, particularly also in terms of always already destabilizing the (now) so-called “human-animal divide” (Boehrer 2010, p. 3; Raber 2013, p. 30).²⁴ In this respect, the (historically pre-Cartesian) Cervantine texts to be described below might provide a perspectival counterpoise, seeing that they (explicitly, by implication) draw attention to the import of discourses with cynical affinities, and precisely in a context featuring (speaking) animals at a literal level; conceivably, such a nexus might tender a plausible basis (or incentive) for judiciously engaging with discourses of a cynical color also in the field whose discourse and method are under scrutiny here.

Having tentatively outlined (via Descartes, Derrida) selected discursive ground swells of Animal Studies, one might return to the above aporia, and formulate certain provisional observations in terms of method, specifically with a view to the nexus of ‘animals’ and ‘narration’.

As a focalizing device, an Animal Studies approach might serve a heuristic function in addressing textualized aspects hitherto unacknowledged, accentuating hermeneutic lacunae, drawing attention to data on, and descriptions of, animals sedimented in material and virtual documents, in works of art.²⁵

²⁴ Cf. Bühler, condensing theorizations on the part of (among others) Plessner, Simmel, Derrida, Luhman, and Lotman into the formula: “Grenzen sind nicht gegeben, sondern werden gemacht” (Bühler 2013, p. 13). Faced with “the border between human and animal” (Agamben 2004, p. 21; cf. pp. 22, 36)—this “hiatus” (p. 92) that, “[i]n our culture”, may seem to be “the decisive political conflict” (p. 80)—Agamben posits “a mobile border within living man” (p. 15): “the caesura between the human and the animal passes first of all within man” (p. 16; cf. p. 79); in so doing, he searches for instances where the “critical threshold, at which the difference between animal and human, which is so decisive for our culture, threatens to vanish” (p. 21). Describing “the blurring of the lines between humans and animals” in the Middle Ages, Salisbury states: “The separation between animals and humans seemed to be lost even as contemporary influential thinkers like Thomas Aquinas were asserting the absolute difference between the species” (Salisbury 1994, p. 134); he stresses that, from a Medieval viewpoint, “the species were [‘closely’] linked in people’s minds: animals cannot live without men” (pp. 18–19)—concerning the manifold ties between dogs and humans in the Middle Ages, see spec. (pp. 45–49, 135). Cf. Raber, remarking that in “Renaissance culture, [...] the boundary that divides human from animal is neither fixed nor stable” (Raber 2013, pp. 9–10). With regard to notions concerning animals in Early Modern times, Fudge notes the—discourse historically significant—impact of (Ancient) Scepticism, spec. in terms of its (effectively dissimilar) influence on Montaigne and Descartes; in particular, she accentuates “the impact on human–animal relations of the rediscovery of the skeptical writings of Sextus Empiricus in the sixteenth century” (Fudge 2006, p. 5; cf. pp. 116–22)—spec. that “Sextus constantly takes animals as evidence of the boundary of human understanding” (p. 117). As to the pretermission of Diogenes and Cynicism where mention would seem requisite (discourse historically speaking), cf. e.g., “I plan to speak endlessly of nudity and of the nude in philosophy. Starting from Genesis” (Derrida 2002, p. 369; cf. p. 374); “a properly *transgressal* if not transgressive experience of limitrophy” (p. 397; similarly: pp. 399, 408); likewise in Fudge, see (Fudge 2007, p. 45; cf. p. 46), e.g., when speaking of “this undermining of the opposition between reason and unreason” (Fudge 2006, p. 3); and especially, when citing Joubert’s definition of “‘untrue’ [...] laughter” as “‘dog laughter’ or the *‘cynic spasm’*”, since “‘angry and threatening dogs have this look’”, qtd. in (Fudge 2006, p. 17; cf. pp. 25, 35); similarly when Fudge later mentions the “connection between scornfulness and laughter” as “repeated by numerous early modern thinkers in England” (p. 19); likewise: “a pissing dog comes to stand for everything that a human is not, and cannot be” (Fudge 2008, p. 198); cf. Raber, referring to the latter remark, as well as to “Topsell” on “‘rayling’ as a characteristic of the cur: ‘The voice of a Dogge [...] is by the learned interpreted as rayling and angry speech’, which is why dogs are sometimes used as ‘emblems of vile, cursed, rayling, and filthy men’”, qtd. in (Raber 2013, p. 145). In such instances, mention of cynicism would seem indispensable (discourse historically speaking). Given her topic, Mussner’s omission of cynicism may seem striking (Mussner 2015, passim). A *Cultural History of Animals in the Renaissance*, cf. (Boehrer 2011, passim), mentions “Diogenes of Sinope, the Cynic philosopher” only in passing, and apparently without the critical attention requisite (Perfetti 2011, p. 163); the other references to cynicism in that ed. volume seem to be valuative, rather than discourse historically motivated: cf. “cynical overtones” (De Ornellas 2011, p. 31); “less cynical, demonstrably sincere” (p. 34); “the [...] cynical use of the pelican image [...] inspire[s] equal cynicism” (p. 36). By contrast, Perry—who examines instances of Early Modern English animal narration without rejecting rhetoric, cf. (Perry 2004, pp. 19, 30, 33), or certain genres (such as fables and satires)—refers to “Swetnam[s] [...] following the model of Diogenes”, with “several responses [...] turn[ing] his self-representation as a snarling dog back on himself” (p. 24).

²⁵ Generally in this respect, Fudge emphasizes that “there is no such thing as a pure human society” considering “the number of day-to-day interactions between humans and animals in all areas of life” (Fudge 2004, p. 6). Cf. “there is no such thing as human identity, history, *culture*, without the prior cooperation, collaboration, habitation, ideological appropriation, consumption of animals, without animals as the ‘always already’ of both materiality and culture itself” (Raber 2013, p. 28). Boehrer speaks of a “heavy integration of animals into” numerous “aspects of early modern society”—which includes the “literary”: “Montaigne’s *Apology for Raymond Sebonde* [...] abounds with sentient beasts” (Boehrer 2009, p. 545); cf. (Boehrer 2010, p. 7); “in early modern culture” there was a “literal and figurative proximity of nonhuman to human animals” (Boehrer 2009, p. 545); cf. (Boehrer 2010, p. 8). For the Spanish context, Alves stresses: “all ranks and estates interacted to a greater or lesser extent with nonhuman animals” (Alves 2014, p. 271). As “the three principal uses to which early modern Europeans put the beasts in their lives”, Boehrer suggests: “haulage, companionship, and food” (Boehrer 2010,

Such would include (Ancient, contemporaneous) notions about a perceived flora and fauna (common knowledge, particular views) as conveyed by the respective text or object.²⁶

Written animals speaking (narrating) in the human tongue appear in texts, whose protagonists are virtual characters; Borgards suggests the term “*diegetic animals*” qua “appearing as living beings [. . .] within the narrated world” (Borgards 2015, p. 225; trans. dsm).²⁷ This does not necessarily involve their standing (in) for something else (such as human beings), nor that theirs would be a ‘merely symbolic’ use.²⁸ In a crafted textual environment, animals will inevitably be rhetorically rendered, strategically placed, often also with discursive implications; yet this need not entail their not also

p. 18). Cf. what Raber gives as “some of the most ordinary, unremarkable, and unremarked experiences of early modern life: using a dog to hunt or herd, petting a cat, riding a horse” (Raber 2013, p. 14); with respect to “the dog” as “[t]hat most ubiquitous of pets”, she accentuates a “wide set of useful tasks for individual businesses (butchers [. . .] still used dogs to bait bulls [. . .]”, which “brought them into the city in huge numbers” (p. 140). Alves has: “On the ground, in practical application, many Spaniards, like other early modern Europeans, predominantly saw animals as sources of labor, food, and entertainment—as objects to be used to enhance their human lives” (Alves 2014, p. 273); cf. “en la temprana época moderna los animales eran absolutamente centrales en las vidas de los humanos, como alimento, ropa, medios de transporte y trabajo, y como compañía” (Martín 2014, p. 468).

²⁶ A note on alterity—on the other that is the text—may seem requisite at this point. If the initial, producing and receiving culture considered certain views plausible, it is not for the ‘modern critic’ to ignore them (to say nothing of deeming them absurd). Cautioning against positivistic approaches, Enekel/Smith highlight “*its* [sc. of ‘early modern zoology’] *striking alterity and discontinuity from modern science*” (Enekel and Smith 2007, p. 5), and call for contextualization: “Various methods of animal description may occur at the same time [. . .]. Most important are the specific historical contexts, interests, needs and the literary, theological, philosophical and artistic discourses” (p. 5). For a seventeenth century context, Bühler stresses: “die Antike [‘blieb’] als Argumentationsfolie auch weiterhin erhalten” (Bühler 2016, p. 20). Emphasizing alterity (“strikingly different from our own”), Salisbury cautions: “Our notions about animals were not uniformly acquired nor have they remained constant over time” (Salisbury 1994, p. 3)—cf. what may seem a particularly marked instance of Medieval alterity: “a saint’s cult that completely eliminates the lines between humans and animals”, “that of Saint Guinefort, a greyhound” (p. 175); at once, Salisbury notes certain relatively durable continuities: “dogs had been serving the same functions for millennia” (p. 18). See Callaghan, stressing “the radical alterity of nascent modernity” (Callaghan 2003, p. 58), spec. with regard to “that shady area, both literal and metaphoric, of relations between the species” (p. 64). Contrast the following claims: “para buscar al animal en *Don Quijote* a veces hay que leer a Cervantes contra Cervantes [. . .] para encontrar al animal verdadero detrás del tropo antropomórfico hay que mirar dentro y más allá del texto en sí” (Martín 2014, p. 476); cf. (Martín 2012, p. 462); as well as the obverse: “Cervantes anticipates postures from Animal Studies” (Beusterien 2016, p. 42; cf. pp. 47, 49). Texts and material objects (such as paintings) are embedded in their (back)grounds of emergence in manifold ways, not least in carrying along sedimented assumptions, views previously held. Moreover, general and prevalent, widely held notions (also about animals) may tend to be of greater import with regard to works of art (including literature) than particularist notions not available to most recipients (in terms of prior knowledge)—unless expressly contained in the respective document or material item itself. What Cuneo describes with reference to a particular context—“a suggestive mixture of eye-witnessing and authoritative accounts (textual and verbal) with folklore, literary conventions and [. . .] anecdotes” (Cuneo 2014, p. 12)—may apply to animals (as represented) in literature generally. Cf. Boehrer, stressing “the innumerable [. . .] commonplaces whereby traditional language assumes a continuity between human and nonhuman animal experience” (Boehrer 2010, p. 3). Arguably, it is only as a relative remark that the following holds good even ‘today’: “Nahezu alles, was wir heute als alltägliches Wissen von Tieren haben, ist geprägt durch wissenschaftliches Wissen” (Bühler-Dietrich and Weingarten 2016, p. 15); contrast Mussner, stressing “dass die in der Allgemeinsprache verwendeten Tierbezeichnungen häufig nicht der wissenschaftlichen Taxonomie entsprechen” (Mussner 2015, p. 161). Cf. Blumenberg’s remark concerning the relative ‘inertia or remanence of language’—“daß die Sprache von hoher Trägheit ist” (Blumenberg 2009, p. 129)—in another context; also exemplified in this: “Was auch immer wir wissen, die Sonne geht über uns auf und unter, insgeheim sogar für uns auf und unter” (Blumenberg 2011, p. 311).

²⁷ In her reading of “talking animals” in Early Modern English satire—with spec. focus on their inducing “pleasure for readers” (Perry 2004, p. 20; cf. pp. 19, 27, 29, 31, 33), and emphasizing “the power of rhetoric” (p. 19; cf. pp. 30, 33)—Perry, tentatively “borrow[ing] [. . .] Ritvo’s term”, speaks of “‘rhetorical’ animal[s]”, while simultaneously signaling their having “very little in common with [. . .] [their] ‘material’ counterpart” (Perry 2004, p. 20). Concerning speaking animals from a generally narratological perspective, see (Borgards 2015, p. 226)); while initially admitting that “die Tiere der Literatur zunächst aus Wörtern [‘bestehen’]. Literaturtiere sind Textgestalten” (Borgards 2015, p. 225)—he later censures the fact (in anthropocentric terms): “Literaturtiere sind [. . .] Produkte von Menschen für Menschen, gelesen und interpretiert von Menschen; die Tiere, die unsere Welt bevölkern, spielen dabei kaum eine Rolle. Dieser anthropozentrischen Perspektive lässt sich eine theozentrische Haltung entgegensetzen” (p. 227). Naturally, such a professed ‘theoriocentric stance’ would (supposing its viability) be taken—and valued as such—by human beings. Later, Borgards does call for the—frankly anthropocentric—modes of “contextualization, historicization” repeatedly (p. 228; trans. dsm; cf. pp. 227, 229), and vehemently: “zwingend nötige [. . .] Historisierung” (p. 229).

²⁸ Cf. Fudge, “asserting that the animals within these texts are to be interpreted as animals and not simply as symbols of something else” (Fudge 2006, p. 4)—with ‘interpretation’ qua mediacy.

being present—at a literal level—as (the portrayal of) an animal in its capacity as animal within a virtual realm.²⁹

A textual dog, for instance, might be represented (and appresented) as barking, retrieving, biting, shepherding, etc.—with there being no need to allegorize (and moralize) such semiotized phenomena with a view to human behavior. While not passing over other planes textually present, one might stay at a literal level, provisionally: the recipient is faced with the description of a virtual canine, appearing—in the context of a world semiotically induced—as a dog. The terms ‘rhetorical’ and ‘figure’ would then signify a plausibly rendered, textual canine, significantly and strategically placed in a virtual context, crafted by recourse to a (verbal) medium—and ‘realized’ by a recipient.³⁰ The latter would supply the corresponding—culturally conditioned, personally inflected—signifieds; tie the semiotically engendered virtual realm in with her (immediate, recollected) experience, translating a textual reality into her own; and, perchance, attempt to take a respective animal’s perspective. Via this detour—a virtual appresentation, particular appropriation, grounded in a human being’s potential for conceivably putting itself where it is not (in another’s place)—such may indeed lead to an altered perception of, and appreciation for, actual animals in the respective recipient’s realm of (haptic, olfactory, etc.) immediacy, in her material lifeworld.³¹

If these observations are held plausible, it might seem to be a viable approach to describe a work’s inevitably mediated status (its virtuality, textuality), its historicity, (socio-moral) alterity, its structural (including narrative) devices, its rhetorico-strategic disposition (without reducing the art to *elocutio*)—while also accentuating the descriptions of (historically observable) animal behavior and (culturally specific) practices involving animals sedimented in a given work (of art).³² In addition

²⁹ In terms of genre, it might especially be epics and novels that—in characteristically crafting (the impression of) ‘entire worlds’—would all but naturally seem to include ‘animals as animals’; hence (perchance) the tentative plausibility of suggestions such as: “*Don Quixote*’s animals are the animals of Spain in [a] literary microcosm” (Alves 2011, p. 58); “*Don Quijote* [...] contiene una cantidad elevadísima de animales reales” (Martín 2014, p. 470); cf. (Martín 2012, p. 452).

³⁰ If inclined to do justice to a mediated (textual, virtual) animal, one will arguably have to take seriously the media (texts, paintings, etc.) providing the semiotic stimuli for the recipient’s notional ‘realization’ of the animal represented. Close attention to the medium, to mediatedness, is the premise of a careful reading of a given textual animal, of the descriptions and views concerning animals. The reader makes—renders, ‘realizes’—the animal; consequently, contextualization (including the reception) is needful. To spirit away the reader is to do likewise unto the animal: isolating a perceived ‘animal as such’ will lead to its effacement. Any perceived (interpreted) ‘reality’—including an otherwise textual one—will be the ‘realization’ of its respective recipient. Striving to work as descriptively as possible, scholarship can attempt to describe these processes, their workings, and can never be free of them. The same obtains in a related matter: for, as far as “question[ing] anthropocentrism” (Wolfe 2009, p. 572; cf. pp. 568–69) is concerned, one might have to add that, for the most part, such curiously inquisitive conduct seems to be performed by animals capable of engaging in virtuality, and spec. such as they themselves have set up by, and for, themselves. In this view, perspectival inversion (‘theriocentrism’, ‘posthumanism’, cultural critique) is human. Structurally, see Raber on “the use of the term ‘nonhuman animal’”, while not also “refer[ring] to a human as a ‘non-canine’ animal”: “of all animals only *we* feel we need to signal our *lack of distinction*” (Raber 2013, p. 195n.). Generally, cf. “Doch scheint die Spezies Mensch ein großes Stück weit über das hinaus zu gehen, was andere Tiere machen, mithilfe oder aufgrund ihrer Sprache” (Mussner 2015, p. 157).

³¹ Cf. what Wolfe calls “the mobilization in literary texts of identification and sympathetic imagination regarding animals” (Wolfe 2009, p. 569); he emphasizes “the embodied finitude that we share with nonhuman animals” (p. 570; cf. p. 571). Borgards suggests: “Literatur kann versuchsweise die Perspektive eines Tieres einnehmen” (Borgards 2015, p. 227)—a performance on the part of human beings, who conceive of, and receive, literature. Cf. “We all have some knowledge of the life of a nonhuman animal and [...] some ability to empathize with the world-as-experienced by that animal” (Shapiro and Copeland 2005, p. 345). As regards the author and texts at hand, see also Beusterien, with reference to Haraway (Beusterien 2016, pp. 3, 7, 42, 47).

³² Cf. “historians [...] depend on documents written by humans for other humans. The animals have left no documents behind. [...] We cannot hear the animals—all we hear is human chatter” (Cuneo 2014, p. 3)—hence “an acceptance of the mediated nature of historical knowledge” (p. 4) is requisite. See also the balanced formulation of Cuneo’s guiding questions: “What kinds of identities (both human and animal) were generated by interactions between human and animal? How were these identities articulated, for what purposes, and for what kinds of audiences” (Cuneo 2014, p. 2); as well as her nuanced remark: “animals were used both physically and symbolically by human animals [...] some interactions between humans and animals can do more than one thing simultaneously” (pp. 4–5). See Fudge: “to ignore animals is to ignore key aspects of our own culture. [...] it is not only real animals that are significant to so-called human culture. It is also conceptual animals [...] animals of the mind” (Fudge 2008, p. 187); “the real and the conceptual are not [...] wholly separate spheres. In the early modern period they can become enmeshed” (p. 188)—the latter apparently modifying her earlier claim: “to ignore [...] the link made between humans and *real* animals in many texts from the [‘early modern’] period [...] is to translate real animals into figurative ones [...]. If there was a beast in man, there were also numerous

(and as the case may require), one might tender hypotheses concerning textually implicit attitudes towards animals, perhaps in conjunction with wary observations comparing multifaceted historical positions and points of view with those of a given present or paradigm.³³ One might, in Blumenberg's formulation, 'mobilize implications in retrospect'.³⁴

In anticipation of the findings to be detailed in the ensuing readings, further aspects relevant to the matter at hand might be adduced at this point, and tied in with the above reflections on method: while cultivating a dialogic form in arrangement and presentation, the novella and colloquy studied herein are—in discourse historical terms—rather proximate to the Montaignian approach of staging a pluralistic panorama of voices (including the cynical), of juxtaposing various viewpoints or positions (also with respect to animals), and permitting their textual coexistence and concomitance. In terms of design, the Cervantine *novelas*—as his *œuvre* by and large—might also be seen as paradigmatic instances of manifold forms of indirection, accentuating mediatedness (the medium, situation of reception, the reader's role in appresenting a tendered realm and its virtual residents, here specifically speaking animals), and effectually deploying diverse techniques of layering: in terms of a poetics of plot, and as regards the different notional levels textually present (relating to a possible reception)—such as a potential simultaneity of discursive, figurative, and literal planes (the latter being of particular significance in the present context).

The texts to be described in the following take and tender the perspective of an animal—specifically one that has always been particularly proximate to human beings (and vice versa).³⁵ Even so, the agent performing that 'taking' is—intratextually (in the narrative framework: Campuzano as author, Peralta as reader), extratextually (from a poetic and hermeneutic point of view:

beasts outside of man" (Fudge 2006, p. 177). Generally, cf. "die Tiere der Literatur [...] stehen mit den Tieren der Welt in einem vielfältigen und wechselseitigen Austausch" (Borgards 2015, p. 229; cf. p. 228); "the metaphor is intertwined with the realities of human animal-relations" (Alves 2011, p. 60n.; cf. p. 62)—a remark that might be infinitized. As regards sedimented historical knowledge, see Boehrer's formulation: "to concentrate on the semiotic residue of earlier social practices" (Boehrer 2010, p. 20); cf. "für eine [...] Wissensgeschichte der Tiere ist die Literatur [...] von konstitutiver Bedeutung" (Borgards 2015, p. 228). Fudge stresses: "animals" are "an important aspect of the cultures we interpret" (Fudge 2004, p. 7); "ignoring animals in our reconstructions of the past is also failing to fully represent those past worlds. [...] If animals are absent from the histories we write, then those histories remain incomplete" (Fudge 2008, p. 186); in particular, she stresses "the relevance and significance of animals to a reading of early modern literature" (p. 187). Referring to Fudge, Dopico Black emphasizes "the value of [...] the study of animals (and of human-animal relations) in order to understand the past" (Dopico Black 2010, p. 246n.).

³³ The latter might be induced by the contrast agent commonly referred to as "Theory"—with its administration clearly marked; in this respect, 'critical' will mean 'descriptive' attention. Contrast Wolfe, calling for "a critical and not just descriptive practice" (Wolfe 2009, p. 567); otherwise Boehrer: "this project is descriptive rather than ameliorative in nature" (Boehrer 2010, p. 199; cf. p. 27). Wolfe's angle—asserting "the radically ahuman technicity and mechanicity of language", and speaking of "creatures" in the same sentence (Wolfe 2009, p. 571); similarly: "Kreatur" (Borgards 2015, p. 227); "creature" (Beusterien 2016, p. 47); "criatura" (Martín 2014, p. 473)—seems to proceed from an ontologico-metaphysical premise that is no matter, here.

³⁴ See his guarded wording in the German: "es gibt die nachträgliche Mobilisierbarkeit von Implikationen" (Blumenberg 1999, p. 73).

³⁵ Joining Animal Studies and historical research in his exploration of Early Modern Spain, Alves examines "what was considered good and bad behavior toward animals", the "[s]ocially approved treatment of tame animals", "popular attitudes regarding animals", "[t]he definition of acceptable human interaction with other animals in the Spanish empire"—and, in so doing, also has recourse to "classic sources like Cervantes' 'Colloquy of the Dogs'" (Alves 2011, p. 27, for his respective reading, see pp. 56–57); spec. "Cervantes' work [sc. the *coloquio*, here] does offer some indications of what might be expected in an early modern Spanish dog's life" (Alves 2011, p. 56); cf. (Alves 2014, p. 273). "Cervantes' tale reflects much about his Castilian Spanish culture, and its empirical observations regarding dogs" (Alves 2011, p. 57); cf. (Alves 2014, p. 273). Similarly, Martín seeks to "ilustrar el papel social y cultural del perro en la temprana época moderna en Europa, tal como lo representan en su coloquio los finos interlocutores Berganza y Cipión" (Martín 2004, p. 1559); for a brief overview of "qué se sabía en su época sobre esos cuadrúpedos", cf. (Martín 2004, pp. 1561–1562, passim, here 1561). With regard to the text's historical substrates, she states: "los discursos de la literatura, de la cría de animales y de la vida real convergen en la narración de Cervantes" (p. 1566); "Cervantes [...] suministra un retrato exacto, detallado y realista de la España de su época" (p. 1569); hence she speaks of "una interpretación fidedigna de la vida" (p. 1567): "Digamos, entonces, que Cervantes logra crear un contrato mimético creíble" (p. 1571n.). Beusterien's chapter on the *coloquio*, cf. (Beusterien 2016, pp. 35–54; see also pp. 55, 57, 74, 77) aims to "turn[...] away from interpretations of the canine in the 'Dialogue of the Dogs' as a figure or mask for the human [...]. Instead, it turns to Animal Studies in order to argue on behalf of the elimination of the animal as figure" (Beusterien 2016, p. 36; cf. pp. 8, 109). For Boehrer's references to *Don Quixote* with respect to animal studies, see (Boehrer 2010, pp. 71–73, 112–13, 155–57).

'Cervantes', the respective recipient)—still and always a human being. In this respect, neither the recipient nor the medium (including various dimensions and forms of mediatedness) may be spirited away: "Our starting point lies [. . .] in the [. . .] works themselves and in the way they reflect upon animals" (Eenkel and Smith 2007, p. 11).

2. The Novellas in Question: "The Deceitful Marriage", "The Dogs' Colloquy"

púselo en forma de coloquio
(Cervantes 2002b, p. 295)

A brief synopsis of the Cervantine texts under scrutiny seems requisite. From a narratological perspective, the "Novela del casamiento engañoso" and "El coloquio de los perros" are closely interrelated: the former serves as a framework for the latter; via myriad echoes, they reciprocate at various levels (the structural, semantic).

After meeting the licentiate Peralta, the ensign Campuzano (having left a hospital after treatment) narrates a first (apparently autobiographical) story, then promises a curious tale concerning a conversation overheard and put to paper. While (the intratextual author) Campuzano rests, Peralta reads what is 'the colloquy of the dogs'.

Apart from a brief conclusion (closing the frame), the second narrative is in the form of a dialog between the aforesaid hospital's two hounds (Berganza, Cipión): after some reflections concerning their unexpected capacity for articulating themselves in the human tongue, Berganza proceeds to tell the story of his life *ab ovo*, along the lines of episodes experienced in the service of various masters (butcher, shepherds, merchant, students, bailiff, magistrate, soldiers, sorceress, gypsies, morisco, poet, theatrical producer, hospital worker).³⁶ This largely chronological narrative is interspersed with remarks, replies, and reprimands on the part of Scipio, with assorted mutual digressions of an often metapoetical or moral philosophical nature.³⁷

3. The Linguistico-Textual Setting: An Age of Rhetoric Across Europe

Así va el mundo
(Cervantes 2002a, p. 323)

In every respect, Early Modern Europe is dominated by, suffused with, the art of rhetoric.³⁸ Apart from the fact that contemporary narratology is based on this *téchne*, it is needful to approach a text emerging in early seventeenth century Spain from a rhetorical perspective.³⁹

Briefly, the art's overarching aim is effect—typically qua persuading (dissuading) someone of a case at hand. This entails taking into consideration the addressees, specifically as regards what they are always already primed for by their background (upbringing, education, 'Lebenswelt')—hence the *aptum*

³⁶ As regards the apparent prevalence of performing canines in Early Modern Europe, see Montaigne: "Everybody is satiated, I think, with seeing so many sorts of monkey tricks that mountebanks teach their dogs" (Montaigne 1989, p. 340, II.12); cf. (Montaigne 2009, p. 195, II.xii). On Montaigne and Cervantes generally, see also (Forcione 1989, p. 338); (Dümchen 1989, pp. 112–14); (Nerlich 1989, passim, spec. pp. 264, 266, 268–72, 280–81, 284).

³⁷ This abstract does not claim to be exhaustive; it condenses (Cervantes 2002b, pp. 279–95; Cervantes 2016a, pp. 433–46) and (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 297–359; Cervantes 2016b, pp. 451–512). The present essay focuses on two intercalated narratives: the conversation between Campuzano and Peralta qua framework for the colloquy of Berganza and Cipión, which equally frames a series of episodic tales—some of which include one or more narrative levels (quotes, forms of reported speech, implicit dialogs with intertexts via allusions, *sermocinaciones*). Integrated with this rhetorico-narrative setting, discourse historical implications—re *Scripture*, Ancient philosophy, cynicism, animal narration—form the other focal points. For reasons of space, the present article cannot address all facets, nor detail each of the episodes in the *coloquio*. A comprehensive analysis of these *novelas* may be found in Forcione's seminal studies (Forcione 1984, passim); cf. (Forcione 1982, passim).

³⁸ See (Mayfield 2017a, passim); spec. (Bloemendal 2017, pp. 115–17); (Küpper 2017, pp. 151–52, 156, 163, 165); (Mayfield 2017b, passim).

³⁹ On the nexus between rhetoric and narratology, see e.g., (Mayfield 2017b, pp. 4n.–5n., 13n., 18n., 24–25).

(what is taken to be appropriate, at a given time, in a specific context).⁴⁰ The latter will determine what readers or listeners deem plausible: what they can be taught (*docere*), or brought to accept, as being so, via various strategies of amusing (*delectare*), stimulating emotionally (*movere*).⁴¹ The ultimate objective remains to convince (*persuadere*) the respective addressees of the plausibility of what they are being presented with—and supposed to take in—by any means and all: the art of rhetoric tends to cumulate and integrate its techniques for maximum effect.⁴²

4. The Narrative Framework: Crafting Plausibility in “The Deceitful Marriage”

Auffällig ist [. . .] die komplizierte Rahmentchnik.

(Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 190)⁴³

para hacer memoria [. . .] y para desengaño

(Cervantes 2002a, p. 354)

The aspect of persuading the (intra-, extratextual) readership of the tale’s plausibility is particularly pertinent to the case at hand, since it tenders animal narrators—specifically dogs, and precisely in their capacity as canines at a literal level.⁴⁴ Consequently, the respective Cervantine novellas suggest and assemble several reasons for what must otherwise seem out of the ordinary, arranging these on several planes. While its caption points to a town (‘Valladolid’) and specific locale (‘hospital’), another indicator of the text’s attempt at tying in with shared knowledge is given in the last clause of its full title: the canines are ‘commonly called the dogs of Mahudes’.⁴⁵ In other words: regardless of whether

⁴⁰ On the Husserlian (phenomenological) term ‘*Lebenswelt*’ in general, see (Blumenberg 2010, *passim*). On the rhetorical ‘*aptum*’, cf. (Lausberg 1990, p. 44, §102; Lausberg 2008, p. 144, §258); (Mayfield 2017b, pp. 18–19, 18n.–19n.); his perceived *parrhesia* notwithstanding, Berganza observes it in certain areas (implicitly of a risqué nature), here as regards the lifeworld of the “comediantes”, to which pertain “*infinitas cosas, unas para decirse al oído y otras para aclamallas en público*” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 354; cf. p. 351)—with Cipión’s respective comments (p. 358). Generally, see (Boyd 2010, p. 16; Hart 1979, p. 385n.); cf. “converting the raw material of life into acceptable patterns of expression” (El Saffar 1974, p. 80).

⁴¹ Cf. (Lausberg 2008, pp. 181–85, §§325–334). As to plausibility (*‘probabile, credible, verisimile’*), see (Quintilian 2001, p. 234, 4.2.31; Lausberg 2008, pp. 179–80, §322; Mayfield 2017b, p. 10n.). Cf. “*Ist der Grundstein für die phantasierte Welt einmal gelegt, so wirkt jeder weitere Schritt schlüssig, plausibel*” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 65).

⁴² See (Lausberg 2008, pp. 180–81, §§322, 325).

⁴³ “The intricate [or: ‘complex, complicated’] framing technique [. . .] is striking [or: ‘prominent, conspicuous’]” (Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 190; *trans. dsm*); later, Nolting-Hauff links this to “a layered [or: ‘multiple’] delegation of the role of the narrator and a cautiously dosed increase of unreality from one narrative plane to the next” (p. 194; *trans. dsm*).

⁴⁴ See e.g., (El Saffar 1974, pp. 69–70); (Aylward 2010, pp. 256–58); cf. “flirtation with the implausible” (Gaylord 2002, p. 115). Kohlhauer, speaking of a “*cynocentric*” narrative perspective” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 55; *trans. dsm*), stresses: “Cervantes’ Hunde sind [. . .] alles andere als allegorische Figuren, personifizierte Abstraktionen oder gar mythisch anmutende Gestalten von märchenhaftem Typus” (p. 55); “Abgesehen davon, daß sie denken, sprechen und vor allem erzählen, verhalten sich seine [*cf. of the coloquio*] Hunde wie . . . Hunde eben” (p. 63). Martín has: “Berganza discierne y actúa como un perro, y entendiendo el mundo de muchas maneras caninas” (Martín 2012, p. 462); if this is perceived to be thus, her earlier remark may seem problematic: “En términos de la enunciación, hay que olvidar que Berganza habla en vez de ladrar” (Martín 2004, p. 1562)—*spec. since these (textual) dogs themselves, in their capacity as canines, repeatedly deal with this very problem (by speaking); similarly, Beusterien asserts that “from a narrative point of view, the dog’s ontological status is irrelevant in the consideration of language” (Beusterien 2016, p. 38)—while the canines render precisely this aspect problematic throughout.*

⁴⁵ Cf. (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299). The full title—thereto, see (Schmauser 1996, pp. 18–26)—expressly embedded (also layout-wise) into the narrative itself (by far the most protracted in the collection, with the greatest density of spatial references), reads: “*Novela y coloquio que pasó entre Cipión y Berganza, perros del hospital de la resurrección, que está en la ciudad de Valladolid, fuera de la puerta del campo, a quien[es] comúnmente llaman los perros de Mahudes*”, cf. (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299); titular caps removed). Via explicitly obtaining Peralta’s agreement to his knowledge of the dogs, the ensign had already primed also the extratextual reader to take in the above more immediately (perhaps unquestioningly): “*Your honor has probably already noticed [‘habrá visto’] [. . .] two dogs that go around at night [. . .], lighting the way with a pair of lanterns’. ‘Yes, I have seen that’” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 443); “‘Your honor has probably also seen, or heard about [‘habrá visto o oído’] [. . .] what they say concerning those dogs[?] [. . .] ‘I’ve heard tell [. . .] that all that is true[.]’” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 444; 2002b, p. 293). The modes of (potentially) acceptable evidence are dominantly tied in with the aural and visual: cf. “*visto [. . .] visto [. . .] visto o oído [. . .] oído [. . .] oí y casi vi con mis ojos [. . .] oí [. . .] oído escuchando, por ver [. . .] oyó*”—all within a brief space (Cervantes 2002b, p. 293); generally, cf. (Schmauser 1996, pp. 29–35). This audiovisual tendency continues also in the canine *coloquio* (without, as one might provisionally surmise, shifting the dominance also to the olfactory, in conjunction with the auditory rather than the visual); in other words: construals trying to spirit away the inevitable anthropocentrism will meet with considerable resistance.*

this is taken as a historical reference by the respective recipient, the textual effort in terms of producing an effect of immediate plausibility based on the projection of a supposed common ground will be patent (at a metapoetical level).

Similarly, the colloquy initially ties in with customary assumptions: “the difference between the brute animal and man is that man is a rational animal [‘animal racional’], while the brute is irrational” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 452; Cervantes 2002a, p. 299; cf. p. 309).⁴⁶ Berganza and Cipión then proceed to log and exchange apparently prevalent notions concerning various canine characteristics, taken up from human conversations overheard during their lives, and evidently stored in a copious retentive faculty: “ever since I could gnaw at a bone I have wanted to be able to talk, to express things [. . .] I had accumulated in my memory [‘depositaba en la memoria’]” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 453; Cervantes 2002a, p. 301).⁴⁷

Teeming with rhetorical techniques aiming at rendering plausible the tendered tale featuring speaking animals, the narrative framework presents a conversation between the convalescing “ensign Campuzano” and the “Licentiate Peralta” (Cervantes 2016a, pp. 433–46, here 433–34), which leads to the latter’s perusal of the former’s manuscript—the *coloquio*.⁴⁸ Setting the scene for canine interlocution, the “Novela del casamiento engañoso” is decisive narratologically: its transition to the dialog of the dogs demands detailed analysis.

Above all, the ensign’s narrative (novella-related) strategy aims at accommodating his friend’s curiosity, apparent penchant for “amazement”; in this vein, he declares:

⁴⁶ Cf. the *locus classicus*: “man is a political animal [‘politikòn ho ànthropos zoon’] in a greater measure than any bee or any gregarious animal [. . .]. Nature [. . .] does nothing without purpose; and man alone of the animals possesses speech [‘lógon’]” (Aristotle 1944, pp. 10–11, I.i.10, 1253a); “a man who is incapable of entering into partnership, or who is so self-sufficing [‘autárkeian’] that he has no need to do so, is no part of a state, so that he must be either a lower animal or a god [‘hè therion hè theós’]” (pp. 11–13, I.i.12, 1253a); as to cynicism in this context, stressing simultaneity, the transitional nature of such perceived limits, cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 25, 25n., 28, 28n., 183, 197–98, 238–39, 320n., 391–402, 437); concerning the *coloquio* (see (Forcione 1984, pp. 15–16, 83, 152–53, 215–17, 221); regarding Berganza, Schmauser remarks “that the boundary between animal and human being oscillates in both directions” (Schmauser 1996, p. 78; trans. dsm). Sextus Empiricus cites the Hellenistic common ground, then balances it skeptically: “Others [sc. ‘Stoics’, ‘Peripatetics’] used to assert that ‘Man is a rational mortal animal [‘zoon logikòn thnetón’], receptive of intelligence and science’. [. . .] no animal is irrational but all are receptive of intelligence and science” (Sextus Empiricus 1933, pp. 168–69, II.26; p. 168n.). Tying in with several (Stoic, Peripatetic, Platonic) formulae, he later ridicules the act of definition itself: “‘O rational mortal animal, receptive of intelligence and science, have you met with an animal capable of laughter [‘zoon gelastikòn’], with broad nails and receptive of political science, with his (posterior) hemispheres seated on a mortal animal capable of neighing, and leading a four-footed animal capable of barking [‘zoon tetrapouon hylaktikòn’]?” (Sextus Empiricus 1933, pp. 286–87, II.211). In the *coloquio*, perspectivism, skeptical views are put into the witch’s mouth (the latter being crucial): “a nuestro parecer, mudamos forma, y convertidas en gallos, lechuzas o cuervos” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 342); cf. the perceived change of supposedly rational animals into beasts: “que convertían los hombres en bestias”; “sirviéndose dellos en todo cuanto querían, que parecían bestias”; “aquella ciencia que llaman *tropelía*, que hace parecer una cosa por otra” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 337); cf. (Boyd 2010, p. 24); generally, cf. “toda *tropelía*” (Gracián 2009, p. 164, I.7); such undermines, renders (potentially) permeable, an alleged animal–human divide: “sé que eres persona racional y te veo en semejanza de perro” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 337). In this respect, Alves suggests: “The tale of the witches summarizes the extent to which distinctions between the human and canine have grown difficult to make” (Alves 2011, p. 57); cf. (Alves 2014, pp. 273–74); “Berganza’s story sympathetically breaks down species boundaries by cataloguing behavioral similarities” (Alves 2011, p. 57); cf. (Alves 2014, p. 274)—while supplying the decisive qualification in a footnote: “the witch, discredited as she is” (Alves 2011, p. 57n.).

⁴⁷ Cf. “Bien es verdad que en el discurso de mi vida diversas y muchas veces he oído hablar grandes prerrogativas nuestras; tanto, que parece que algunos han querido sentir que tenemos un natural distinto, [. . .] que da indicios y señales de faltar poco para mostrar que tenemos un no sé qué de entendimiento capaz de discurso” (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 299–300). See these formulations (by both interlocutors): “Lo que yo he oído [. . .] nos suelen pintar [. . .]; y así, habrás visto [si has mirado en ello] [. . .] donde suelen estar [. . .] Bien sé que [. . .]. Sé también que [. . .]. Así es; pero bien confesarás que ni has visto ni oído decir jamás” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 300; cf. p. 309), reaffirming a common ground in this respect). Concerning the retentive emphasis: “ocupaba la memoria en acordarme de muchas cosas” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 306; cf. pp. 308, 318, 322, 332); see (Forcione 1984, p. 159); (Schmauser 1996, pp. 40–41). On the concept of ‘*hypólepsis*’ qua ‘taking up and tying in with’ an (ostensible) common ground, see (Mayfield 2017c, *passim*). Cf. “Statt etwa ihre eigene Meinung kundzutun, ziehen es beide Hunde geschickt vor, mit Hilfe des indirekten Standpunktes die allgemein-(un)verbindliche Sprache der opinio communis zu inszenieren” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 59). As to current and common ken regarding what is taken to be the characteristic loyalty of dogs during Early Modern times, see also Montaigne’s testimony (Montaigne 1989, p. 346, II.12).

⁴⁸ Cf. Johnson, suggesting that one “read the *Casamiento* narrative [. . .] as a story artfully told, characterized by the narrator’s withholding and anticipating information [. . .] establishing a complex and dynamic rhetorical relationship with his hearer-reader” (Johnson 1991, pp. 8–9).

I still have other events [‘sucesos’] to relate to you that surpass the human imagination [‘exceden a toda imaginación’], seeing as how they go beyond the very limits of the natural order of things [‘fuera de todos los términos de naturaleza’] (Cervantes 2016a, p. 443; Cervantes 2002b, p. 292).⁴⁹

He also expressly asks Peralta to “be prepared to believe it”, “se acomode a creerlo” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 444; Cervantes 2002b, p. 293), describing himself as an earwitness of an all but vivid event: “yo oí y casi vi con mis ojos”—as he admits, Campuzano never actually sees the dogs talking, inferring the fact from what he hears, “a poco rato vine a conocer, por lo que hablaban, los que hablaban” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 293).⁵⁰

When Peralta reacts with predictable incredulity, the ensign agrees to the event’s implausibility—“animals can’t talk”—while offering a (discourse historically irrefutable) exception in the same breath: “unless it be owing to some miracle” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 444).⁵¹ This (orthodox) metaphysical leeway is immediately supplemented by commonly accepted, demonstrable cases that likewise challenge an unconditional denial of speaking animals: “I know quite well that thrushes, magpies, and parrots can talk, but only in the sense that they recite words from memory that they learn by heart [‘aprenden y toman de memoria’]”—an empirical observation, bolstered by an epistemological hypothesis—“and because these animals’ tongues are aptly shaped [‘cómoda’] for pronouncing the words”; ultimately, this series of concessions is itself limited in agreement with common assumptions: “But none of that means they can actually talk and answer, or engage in coherent speech [‘discurso concertado’]” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 444; Cervantes 2002b, pp. 293–94).⁵² Regarding

⁴⁹ The colloquy’s outset echoes: “el hablar nosotros pasa de los términos de naturaleza” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299); cf. (Teuber 2005, p. 251). Berganza’s surprise at his capacity for speech mirrors the (implicit) reader’s reaction to the ‘notable novelty’ (novella): “me causa nueva admiración y nueva maravilla” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299); cf. “noté su vida y costumbres, que por ser notables es forzoso que te las cuente” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 346); likewise characteristic for this genre—cf. (Küpper 1990, pp. 41–44; on Cervantine *novelas*, pp. 270–72, 277, 282n., 286, 387, 387n., 395–96, 459–60); (Küpper 2005, pp. 218n–219n.); generally, see (Krauss 1940, *passim*, here spec. pp. 20–23); also (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, pp. 211, 220–21)—is the above tendency of outperformance, already visible in the framework: “my experiences [‘sucesos’] are the strangest and oddest [‘los más nuevos y peregrinos’] your honor ever heard of in your life” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 434; Cervantes 2002b, p. 282). Before the “dogs” are first mentioned, a comment (implicitly) directed at the novella’s readership speaks of “Peralta’s [‘inflamed’] eagerness to hear his friend’s tale” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 443); “encendían el deseo” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 293); the ensign’s own fervent “desire to see” (“encendió más el deseo de verla”) conducted to his being deceived (Cervantes 2016a, p. 435; Cervantes 2002b, p. 283); in the *coloquio*: “les encendió el deseo de no dejar de ver todo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 335). Calling Campuzano a “víctima del lenguaje” (Sieber 2002, p. 32), Sieber—also referring to the “eco” of the aforesaid passages—sees the ensign apply the knowledge (gained by his experience with the lady) to his poetic productions qua “arte de contar historias” (p. 34); concerning Peralta, he speaks of “una curiosidad vital” (p. 34); for “curiosidad” in the *coloquio*, see (Cervantes 2002a, p. 338). On rhetoric qua “art of accommodation” (Eden 1997, pp. 2, 14); cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 50n.; Mayfield 2017b, pp. 18–20); re the *coloquio*, cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 26, 158).

⁵⁰ Cf. (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 101). See “hace[r] algo de nonada” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 304); on *enárgeia* in Cervantes, cf. (Schmauser 1996, pp. 35–36); on rhetorical *evidentia* generally, see (Mayfield 2017b, pp. 16n–17n.).

⁵¹ The Spanish fronts the concession: “si no es por milagro no pueden hablar los animales” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 293). Cipión later echoes: “este milagro” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299); cf. “aquel misterio o prodigio”, p. 336. A Nominalist ground swell is present in the emphases on the divine ‘*quia voluit*’: in the ‘theologian’ witch’s tale—“porque Dios no quería” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 341), “su voluntad [sc. ‘del Altísimo’] permitiente” (p. 342), see (Forcione 1984, p. 80, generally); as well as in the effect of ‘consummate contingency’—cf. (Blumenberg 1999, pp. 166, 170, 181, 194n., *passim*), (Küpper 1990, pp. 268, 269n., 283, 286), (Küpper 1998a, pp. 117–18), (Küpper 1998b, pp. 173–77), (Mayfield 2015, pp. 98–108), referring to “perspectivism”, “chance”, “Blumenberg”, see (Forcione 1989, p. 340; cf. p. 349); in the resultant semblance of diversity—cf. (Cervantes 2002a, p. 332), see (Forcione 1984, pp. 179, 189–90), (Gaylord 2002, pp. 112–14), also intertextually (Boyd 2010, pp. 13–16); and of the variability of all things, from the perspective of the *animal rationale*—cf. (Küpper 1990, pp. 41–44, 173, 263–90, spec. 282–83), (Boyd 2010, pp. 43–44); here as mediated via another animal: “lo que el cielo tiene ordenado que suceda, no hay diligencia ni sabiduría humana que lo pueda prevenir” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 301). It is notable that the aspect of animal narration is rendered problematic at all—spec. in epistemological terms; the latter could be read as indicative of the epoch, considering that prevalent literary forms (fables, metamorphoses, folktales) otherwise take it for granted, cf. (Aylward 2010, p. 256); see the lore concerning Orpheus (Ovid 2005, pp. 75–76, X.143–44; pp. 120–21, XI.1–2); cf. Friedman on Unamuno’s canine “Orfeo” in *Niebla* (Friedman 2006, pp. 264–65, 303).

⁵² See Montaigne: “Yet the animals are not incapable of being taught also in our way. Blackbirds, ravens, magpies, and parrots we teach to speak; and that facility with which we see them rendering their voice and breath so supple and manageable for us [. . .] testifies that they have an inward power of reason which makes them so teachable and determined to learn” (Montaigne 1989, pp. 339–40, II.12)—emphasis on “we see”, and “for us”. The above is precisely what Descartes would later explicitly oppose (among other aspects). Cf. “Up until the eighteenth century, language [. . .] jumps across orders and

other animals—‘elephant, dog, horse, ape’, see (Cervantes 2016b, p. 453)—this acknowledged state of affairs is given as inverted within the *coloquio*: for such beings are said to be capable of (retentive and) seemingly rational acts, while lacking the capacity for articulation in the human tongue.⁵³

In another rhetorical move to craft a common ground, Campuzano skillfully concedes his own skepticism, “yo mismo no he querido dar crédito a mí mismo, y he querido [. . .] tener por cosa soñada” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 294)—yet only to willfully assert (and later repeat: “contra mi opinión vengo a creer que no soñaba”) that he was “wide awake and in full possession of his senses [‘con todos mis cinco sentidos’]”; that he recorded everything verbatim (“sin faltar palabra”), to serve as a testimony “from which one may obtain sufficient evidence [‘indicio bastante’] to incline and persuade a person to believe [‘mueva y persuada a creer’] that truth of what I’m saying” (Cervantes 2016a, pp. 444–45; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294).⁵⁴ The terminology being evidently rhetorico-forensic, it will be little

classes, for it is suspected that even birds can talk. [. . .] even the physical demarcation between man and the other species entailed zones of indifference in which it was not possible to assign certain identities” (Agamben 2004, p. 24). See also Cummings’ remarks on the issue in general: “the question of animal language [. . .] is always a question of epistemology. For what is meant by language (and what is an animal)? [. . .] The question of epistemology at issue is not animal language [. . .], but human language, and the tests applied prove not whether animals speak animal language but whether animals speak human language” (Cummings 2004, pp. 178–79).

⁵³ Cipión’s *hypólepsis* of Berganza’s statement lists these animals—unable to articulate themselves in a human fashion—as almost or seemingly rational: “elefante, perro, caballo o mona” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 300). As to comparable (historical) presences of perceivedly ‘reasonable animals’ in Early Modern times—attesting to a European prevalence—see Fudge on “Morocco the Intelligent Horse” (Fudge 2006, pp. 123–46, here 123); likewise as to “Morocco, the knowledgeable horse”, cf. (Perry 2004, p. 27)—spec. “The animals that could be used to explain Morocco existed in the world outside of books, outside of intellectual discussions. They could be found in a world available to all, and meaningful to all. In this context [. . .] [a]nyone who owned a horse would know the animal’s capacities; anyone who had a dog would likewise know” (Fudge 2006, pp. 144–45). On elephants in this respect, see (Cummings 2004, passim; spec. pp. 168, 173).

⁵⁴ Similarly Berganza: “sin añadir ni quitar de la verdad una tilde” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 330); cf. (Mt 5:18); what he says about *novelas pastoriles* might also be taken as an (ironic) meta-comment on the *coloquio*: “todos aquellos libros son cosas soñadas y bien escritas para entretenimiento [. . .], y no verdad alguna” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 309). The fact that a given text explicitly censures other (apparently highly idealized) works for their distance from a perceived ‘reality’ (for the present context in this respect, see also (Dümchen 1989, p. 106) tends to serve as an effectual device for reinforcing its own plausibility, its claim to verisimilitude (or even to verity, authenticity, authority, etc.); relating to an effect of such a strategy *de re*, Manning—with reference to (Gittes 2006, p. 356)—states: “we frequently find Berganza’s narrative more credible than Cañizares’ version of events” (Manning 2007, p. 149)—which (including other intratextual levels) is Peralta’s reading of Campuzano’s rendering of Berganza’s account of the witch’s version (along with Scipio’s objections; cf. (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, pp. 221–22); spec. “Berganza’s text is not complete without Cipión’s active intervention in its constructions”, p. 229). In readings focusing primarily (or solely) on a work’s literal plane, the equalization of an (inevitably crafted, arranged) text with a perceived historico-spatial (or even local) reality may seem especially problematic when centering on non-specific, basically recyclable images also otherwise employed: “El tipo de pastor merodeador que encont[r]amos en el *Coloquio* era una realidad de la vida” (Martin 2004, p. 1566)—while this may be the (historical) case or not (to say nothing of ascertaining its statistical relevance), the function of such *tópoi* is of particular effectuality in literature (*sensu lato*). On Skepticism in the Cervantine *œuvre*, see (Ihrle 1982, passim); re the *coloquio*, pp. 113–15). The oneiric hypothesis is present in both tales, see e.g., (Cervantes 2002b, p. 294; Cervantes 2002a, p. 347); cf. (Forcione 1984, p. 127); (El Saffar 1976, pp. 85–86); (El Saffar 1974, pp. 68, 75); (Teuber 2005, pp. 249–50, 257); (Gaylord 2002, pp. 113, 115); (Boyd 2010, pp. 39–40); (Kohlhauser 2002, p. 65); “the world of Cañizares is oneiric, too, [. . .] a dream world in a world of dreams” (Nerlich 1989, p. 295). A crucial precedent in this respect—and also as to animal narration—is Lucian’s “The Dream, or the Cock”, featuring a speaking rooster (Lucian 1915, passim; thereto, see especially, pp. 184–90, passim); cf. spec. “The cock talked like a human being!”, “Then do you think it a miracle if I talk the same language as you men?” (p. 175, §2); “Why, this is not a dream, is it?” (p. 177, §3); “A philosopher cock!” (p. 181, §4); etc. As to Aesop, Ovid, Apuleius, Lucian, Rabelais, Des Périers (“*Cymbalum Mundi*”), Villalón (“*El Cróton*”), see (Kohlhauser 2002, pp. 56, 60, spec. 64–68, 70, 74–75, 81, passim; here pp. 70, 70n.); as to Lucian, Villalón, cf. also (Nolting-Hauf 1987, pp. 184–90, passim; and pp. 190–195 re the colloquy); as regards the *coloquio vis-à-vis* the “*Baldus*”, see (Bleuca 1972, pp. 175–78, here p. 175). Beusterien’s claim that “[t]he animals in important source texts of ‘The Dialogue of the Dogs’ are bereft of language” (Beusterien 2016, p. 37; cf. p. 38; contrast p. 51) is problematic—spec. since he briefly glances at Lucian, at des Périers (p. 38); his discarding the latter is based on the fact that “Cervantes never mentions that the dogs have consumed or incorporated a human tongue in order to speak” (Beusterien 2016, p. 38). The narrative framework and the dogs (in the *coloquio* itself) explicitly accumulate a considerable number of other possible motivations for the capacity for speech on the part of the canines: their being metamorphosed humans, the whole scene being a miracle, a dream, a feverish vision or hallucination induced by Campuzano’s treatment (likely for syphilis), a poetic tour de force on the part of Campuzano, etc.; in Spadaccini’s/Talens’ felicitous wording: “The reader enters the world of the *Coloquio* through a series of filters” (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, p. 226). Of a similarly problematic status as a nondifferentiation of a text’s various narrative planes is the conflation of the intra- with the extratextual level: “Cervantes accurately had his Berganza tell us” (Alves 2011, p. 84). It is precisely from the perspective of Animal Studies that claiming authorial intent (especially if harnessed as a warrant for a perceived authenticity) will effectively spirit away the animal in the process. A mindful, even wary correlation of the various textual planes potentially present simultaneously (e.g., literal, putatively authorial, discursive, epistemological, etc.) is requisite, in order to bring an animal into focus in its capacity as animal. When Beusterien briefly

wonder that any refinement in terms of *elocutio* (*ornatus*) is ostentatiously denied for the alleged report itself (a rhetorical denial of ‘rhetoric’)—which, with a view to plausibility (always a matter of degree), somewhat alleviates (“casi”) the previous, absolute claim:

almost in the exact same words [‘casi por las mismas palabras’] that I had heard spoken, I transcribed it the next day, refraining from trying to adorn it [‘adornarlo’] with any sort of rhetorical coloring [‘colores retóricas’], and neither adding nor removing anything just to improve its flavor [‘para hacerle gustoso’] (Cervantes 2016a, p. 445; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294); cf. (Schmauser 1996, pp. 16–17); (Forcione 1984, p. 232).

Between these two reciprocal passages occurs the most effective rhetorical move, similarly structured along an articulated act of apparent self-persuasion via argument *in utramque partem*.⁵⁵ Peralta having voiced his view to the effect that Campuzano be telling tall tales, the latter immediately concedes, but only to deliberately reassert his sensorial confidence, his faith in the power of words to craft credence, his willingness to intersubjectively suspend his judgment (“mi verdad”) yet again—culminating in a rhetorical question regarding his interlocutor’s attested desire for a narrative’s delightful function:

But supposing [‘Pero puesto caso’], maybe, that I have been deceived [‘engañado’], and that what seems real is actually a dream [‘y que mi verdad sea sueño’] [. . .]—even so, would not your honor [. . .] like [‘se holgará’] to see written down, in the form of a colloquy, the conversation between those two dogs, whoever or whatever they really are [‘o sean quien fueren’]? (Cervantes 2016a, p. 445; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294; cf. p. 359)

As with all things in nature, the strongest argument is always pleasure.⁵⁶ Peralta immediately falls into the rhetorical trap, believes the attempts at persuasion to be of the past, and consents:

As long as your honor [. . .] doesn’t waste any more time trying to persuade me [‘persuadirme’] that you really heard two dogs talking, I will right gladly listen to [‘de muy buena gana oiré’] this colloquy, which I already judge to be good [‘juzgo por bueno’], seeing that it has been composed and written down as the product of his honor the ensign’s notable literary talent [‘buen ingenio’]. (Cervantes 2016a, p. 445; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294; cf. p. 359)⁵⁷

refers to “the ensign” for purposes of a construal combining “psychoanalytic interpretations” and “Animal Studies”, he asserts that Campuzano actively narrates (“the oral telling of the dog dialogue itself”, (Beusterien 2016, p. 42) or ‘reads’ the *coloquio* ‘to’ Peralta (“the ensign’s [. . .] reading to his friend”, p. 42n.), neither of which is supported by the text. If opting, as Beusterien does throughout, for the supposition of a perceived authorial intent as the (sole) basis for his case, and for what he takes to be the respectively authoritative reading—cf. e.g., “This intentional lack” (Beusterien 2016, p. 38); “Cervantes deliberately emphasizes” (p. 39); “Cervantes anticipates postures from Animal Studies” (p. 42); “Berganza, a creature intentionally defined” (p. 47); “Cervantes intentionally tangles” (p. 49; cf. pp. 50, 53); “‘The Dialogue of the Dogs’ should be read as disposing of certain foundational anthropocentric precepts” (p. 54)—maintaining the impression of having focused on ‘the animal as animal’, “studying the animal itself” (p. 35), on the “elimination of the animal as figure” (Beusterien 2016, p. 36; cf. pp. 8, 109) might prove difficult; and all the more so, when insisting on a biographically inflected poetics: “I have given preference to the stuttering thesis as an influence in Cervantes’ creation of the talking dogs [. . .] Cervantes’ stuttering inspired him to conceive the human-animal divide in the innovative ways that he does” (Beusterien 2016, p. 39n.); cf. (Beusterien 2009, pp. 218–19). With respect to apparently oneirically induced animal speech in general, see also Fudge’s reference to “Artemidorus’s dream text”, and “the speaking animal of the dream” (Fudge 2006, pp. 35–36); as well as Perry on “Woodhouse’s Flea speak[ing] for himself [. . .] from the shelter of a Dog’s ear”—which speech act “is framed by two dreams” (Perry 2004, p. 30).

⁵⁵ See this arch-rhetorical (forensic) technique: “in utramque partem vel in plures” (Quintilian 2001, p. 156, 3.11.2); cf. (Mayfield 2017b, pp. 14–16).

⁵⁶ Cf. “What matters is not the truth, but the virtuosity of the ‘engaño’” (Gossy 1989, p. 72). Rhetorically, this pertains to the function of *delectare*, chiefly produced by the *elocutio* (including the *ornatus*) and *actio*; see Scipio’s metapoetical remarks (Cervantes 2016b, pp. 455–56; Cervantes 2002a, p. 304); Campuzano on his lady: “tenía un tono de habla tan suave que se entraba por los oídos en el alma” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 284; cf. p. 285). Generally: “el deleite mucho mayor es imaginado que gozado” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 343, cf. p. 342); see (Hart 1979, p. 383); (Teuber 2005, p. 257); (Boyd 2010, pp. 22, 39); *cum grano salis* (Dunn 2010, pp. 97–101). On the etymological ‘sweetness’ in the word ‘persuasion’, see (Bers 1994, p. 188); (Mayfield 2017b, p. 19n.; Mayfield 2017d, p. 210).

⁵⁷ See (El Saffar 1974, pp. 72, 74, 78, 81). Structurally, this attitude echoes that on the part of Campuzano’s lady: “parecía que les [sc. ‘demonstraciones’, ‘ofrecimientos’, ‘razones’] daba atento oído antes que crédito alguno” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 284).

All the while, the reader is fully aware that Campuzano has just left the hospital, apparently after a rather laborious treatment (“I underwent the sweatbox cure forty times”), suggesting that he had not exactly been in control of his senses at all times (Cervantes 2016a, p. 443; cf. p. 434; Cervantes 2002b, pp. 282, 282n.). The ensign’s preemptive giving of (quasi-empirical, medico-nutritional) reasons for his asserted attention to detail and acoustico-textual fidelity might thus be received as (highly) ironic—pleasing the reader into persuasion, into a considerable readiness for (being) taking in (by) what follows in the *coloquio*:

since I was being so attentive, my intellect [‘juicio’] was really keyed up [‘delicado’], and my memory [‘memoria’] was sensitive [‘delicada’], subtle, and completely unencumbered (thanks to the numerous raisins and almonds that I had consumed), I got it all down by heart [‘todo lo tomé de coro’] (Cervantes 2016a, p. 445; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294).

Another inverted echo—the *animal rationale* here behaves (“todo lo tomé de coro”) like the ‘verisimilitudinous’ avians: “toman de memoria” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 294). Given all of the above, the intratextual reader plausibly takes the tale as an occasion for delight: “the licentiate [. . .] accepted the notebook, laughing [‘riyéndose’] and acting as if he were making fun [‘como haciendo burla’] of everything he had heard, and everything he was about to read” (Cervantes 2016a, p. 446; Cervantes 2002b, p. 295).

This insinuated form of reception is decisive: having ostensibly relinquished the explicit claim to be presenting a per se persuasive narrative (with animals conversing in the human tongue), and having thus implicitly advocated that the extratextual reader take in what has been announced as a delightful tale in the corresponding manner, the colloquy seldom seems to fulfill the expectation raised by its framework. The arrangement (*dispositio*) is analogous to giving a dog its medication embedded in some liver. At intervals, this textual technique recurs in the canine tête-à-tête itself: a pleasant sugaroating is administered in the form of often brief, waggishly clever (*levis*), subtly ironic interludes (*delectare*), while the dialog’s tart core is conveyed as a series of quasi-descriptive observations (*docere*)—its topic and tone being predominantly serious (*gravis*).⁵⁸ The latter also applies to the presence and significance of a complex set of discursive implications pertinent to the selection of a particular animal—present and significant, at a literal level, precisely as animal—for the *sermocinatio* that is the “coloquio de los perros”.⁵⁹

5. A Tale of Hounds and Humans, by Hounds, for Humans: Animal Narration in “The Dogs’ Colloquy”

man alone of the animals possesses speech.

(Aristotle 1944, p. 11, I.i.10, 1253a)

A discursive struggle inscribed into the text, and directly pertinent to the question of animal narration, is the very fact of—in what is officially a Counter-Reformation context—endowing animals with a human form of articulation in the first place. As the Christian religion has a notoriously polyvalent relation to ‘speech’—in both its Jewish legacy (see the performative “fiat lux” in *Gen*

Cf. Cummings’ felicitous formulation in another context: “He [sc. Browne] knows his readers will not believe him, but they will half want to, and they will play along with his game” (Cummings 2004, p. 166).

⁵⁸ Cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 11, 168). For this textual strategy (with corresponding images), as précised by the *siglo de oro*’s grand maestro of rhetoric, see (Gracián 2011, p. 180, §144; pp. 217–18, §210; p. 245, §267); cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 206–7, 233–34); on the ‘decoy’ in Gracián, see (Küpper 2007, pp. 426–27). Cf. and contrast: “The tone is light and ironical throughout, but behind it is the grim assumption that speaking ill of others is one of the most damaging things in life” (Riley 1976, p. 195). Generally, cf. “Talking animals [. . .] sugar the instructive pill; they exist to entertain” (Perry 2004, p. 20).

⁵⁹ Like the comprehensive art of rhetoric, a text’s discursive (sub- or super)structure is located at an (often latent) metalevel. Throughout this essay, the heuristico-hermeneutic application of discourse analysis to literary texts follows Küpper’s take on the Foucauldian blueprint (Küpper 1990, pp. 30–32, spec. 31n.); cf. (Küpper 2001, passim). On *sermocinatio*, see (Rhetorica 2004, pp. 394–99, IV.iii.65); for varying terminologies, cf. (Lausberg 1990, p. 140, §425; pp. 142–143, §§432–433; Lausberg 2008).

1:3; *Vulgate*) and the *New Testament*, blending the former with (Neo-)Platonizing inheritances via the polysemous Greek word ‘lógos’ (cf. spec. *Jn* 1:1)—granting animals a locutionary capacity might be problematic, could be seen to destabilize man’s primacy (cf. e.g., *Gen* 1:27–28, *Mt* 10:31), likely also in Salvation Historical respects.⁶⁰ At the same time, *Scripture*’s last book (*Apocalypsis*) not only ‘opens the eyes’, but apparently also the mouths: at the end of days, “every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them” are said to praise the Lamb of God (*Rev* 5:13); “the four beasts” also speak (*Rev* 4:6–7, 6:1); likewise, the adversary one: “there was given unto him a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies” (*Rev* 13:5; cf. *Dan* 7:3–8, 11, 20, 25; *KJV*).⁶¹ While the possibility of animal locution (if taken literally) is thus inscribed into the tradition—hence conceivable generally speaking—it seems to be reserved for exceptional times, to say the least.

In its discursive climate of conception (with the Counter-Reformation well underway), the *coloquio* must therefore (seem to) employ several strategies of either mitigating what is likely to have been a discursively volatile matter; or of justifying the latter in (apparently) orthodox terms—hence these words, put into Berganza’s mouth: “I find myself enriched by this divine gift of speech [‘deste divino don de la habla’]”; also implicitly equating speech with life (in an orthodox acceptance): “this gift [‘bien’] [. . .], which I consider to be something on loan [‘prestado’]” (*Cervantes* 2016b, p. 453; *Cervantes* 2002a, p. 301).⁶² Mirroring Campuzano’s strategy, both dogs accentuate their (textually) factual caninity, and that they will exploit their *kairós*, while deprioritizing its causative:

there’s no reason for the two of us to start arguing [‘disputar’] about how or why we’re talking. [. . .] let us take advantage [‘aprovecharnos’] of this happy situation, and talk all night [. . .] I intend to enjoy myself and take advantage [‘gozarle y aprovecharme’]

⁶⁰ To say nothing of the host of passages on “dumb idols” (*Hab* 2:18, *1Cor* 12:2; *KJV*; cf. e.g., *Pss* 115: 4–7, 135:15–17); nor of these notoriously thorny lines (*Lev* 24:16; *Mt* 12:31–32; *Mk* 3:29). As everyone knows, there is also a speaking serpent in *Gen* 3:1, 4–5; naturally, this particular precedent for animal narration in *Scripture* will likely be considered rather problematic, in a Christian context. Cf. Cummings, noting (with regard to Early Modern England): “As if to provide authority, Browne cites (with disingenuous seriousness) ‘the Serpent that spake unto Eve’ and dogs and cats that talk to witches” (*Cummings* 2004, p. 165). For speaking animals (donkey, dog, lion) in *Scriptural* traditions from a dogmatic point of view, see also (*Hobgood-Oster* 2014, passim), with spec. reference also to Balaam’s speaking donkey at *Num* 22:28–30 (pp. 217–18); the readings—including a “story of a preaching dog” from “*The Acts of Peter*” in “Christian apocrypha”—are problematic (p. 218; cf. p. 219), to the extent that they may seem to be uncritically dogmatic; as to the centrality of the *lógos* in the Christian tradition, see also (*Hobgood-Oster* 2014, passim, spec. pp. 211–15, *cum grano salis*). Generally—and like the Cervantine *œuvre* overall—the *coloquio* teems with (largely) oblique references to *Scripture*, see (*Forcione* 1984, p. 72, passim). As to the *fiat lux* with regard to the present thematic focus, see also: “Wären wir Gott gleich, so würden die Geschichten, die wir uns ausdenken, selbst zu Wirklichkeiten, in denen wir uns ausdrücken”—thus Blumenberg’s paraphrase of a sentence on the part of Campanella: “*ut cum fabulas fingimus, quas realiter exprimeremus si Deo aequivalentes essemus*”, qtd. in (*Blumenberg* 1986, pp. 83, 83n.).

⁶¹ The doctrinal plane is also inscribed into the witch’s tale (*Cervantes* 2016b, pp. 487–95), suggesting that Berganza and Scipio are human brothers in houndlike shape. She cites a prophecy, see (*Cervantes* 2016b, p. 490; *Cervantes* 2002a, p. 338), concerning their (potential) retransformation, which alludes to a suitably distorted *mélange*—cf. (*Forcione* 1984, pp. 44–46); (*Gossy* 1989, pp. 79, 130n.); (*Boyd* 2010, p. 39); (*Dunn* 2010, p. 100)—of various *Scriptural* passages (among others: *Dan* 4:37, with context; *Isa* 2:11–17, 40:4; *Lk* 1:51–52, 3:5, 14:11; *Mt* 23:12, 28:18) with a revelational tendency. In a rhetorical analysis of *sermocinatio* (at various levels), it must be rendered problematic what is put into the mouth of whom—e.g., a hag teaching a dog on dogmatic matters of the Faith, his account thereof being additionally mediated via the intratextual reader (Peralta) and author (Campuzano).

⁶² Likewise, Scipio states: “si el cielo me concede tiempo, lugar y habla” (*Cervantes* 2002a, p. 322). See Sieber’s felicitous formulation: “El don del hablar es el punto de origen de su vida” (*Sieber* 2002, p. 37). For the discursive implications: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (*1Cor* 6:19–20; *KJV*). See an orthodox articulation of ‘life on loan’ in Calderón’s later *El gran teatro del mundo*: “¿Cómo me quitas lo que ya me diste?”—“Porque dados no fueron, no: prestados/sí, para el tiempo que el papel hiciste” (*Calderón* 2009, p. 81, vv.1296–1298); see (*Epictetus* 1928a, pp. 490–91, §11; pp. 496–97, §17); cf. (*Mayfield* 2015, p. 59n.). On the Council of Trent, the Tridentine Counter-Reformation, generally and re Cervantes, cf. (*Küpper* 1990, pp. 21–23, 25, 287–290, 387n., 459–460, passim); with (*Küpper* 2000, pp. 178–79, 193n., 197–98, 199n., 201n., 203–4, 212n.–213n.; *Küpper* 2005, pp. 218–19); (*Forcione* 1984, p. 196); (*Spadaccini* and *Talens* 1989, pp. 212, 238–39); (*Nolting-Hauff* 1987, pp. 191–92); on the *novelas*, see (*Teuber* 2005, pp. 243–44); (*Gossy* 1989, p. 59); contrast (*Atkinson* 1986, p. 131)—who thus does not render sufficiently problematic the following: “investing dogs with the power of speech, a liberty for which also there was sound precedent” (p. 138); see (*Aylward* 2010, p. 256).

of it [sc. this gift of speech] as much as I can[.] (Cervantes 2016b, p. 453; Cervantes 2002a, p. 301); cf. (Hart 1979, p. 383)

Analogously to the ensign's aforesaid assertion of his sensory perception, Berganza declares:

I [...] believe that everything we've undergone up to this point, and what we're undergoing right now, is a dream ['todo (...) es sueño'], and that we are, in fact, dogs. But let us not for all that refrain from enjoying ['gozar'] this gift of speech which we have been given, and the exceeding excellence of possessing human powers of reason, for as long as we possibly can (Cervantes 2016b, p. 499; Cervantes 2002a, p. 347).

The extratextual recipient might take a structurally equivalent stance (at a metalevel): while animal narrators are not exactly likely, this need not deter the reader from deriving some benefit from the text, whether in terms of *delectare*, *movere*, *docere* (or otherwise)—with the colloquy accommodating each and all of these potential approaches (*Einstellungen*).⁶³ In the present case, the function of *delectare* (the enjoyment promised) envelops that of *docere* (the message conveyed); while the latter is apparently not how the intratextual reader (Peralta) peruses the novella, (present-day) extratextual recipients may tend to focus particularly on the socio-moral, historico-cultural, epistemological, or zoopoetic—cf. (Derrida 2002, p. 374)—information simultaneously imparted.⁶⁴

In line therewith, scrutinizing the dialog's intratextual situation of communication is needful.⁶⁵ In many passages, the referential and emotive functions dominate textually (Berganza narrating observations, experiences).⁶⁶ Whenever Scipio is speaking, the conative function tends to be in the forefront; several (interactive) sections feature metalingual, metapoetic assessments—including those where the dogs speak about their surprise at being capable of speech (partly, this involves the

⁶³ Cf. "a set (*Einstellung*) toward" (Jakobson 1987a, p. 66). Generally, any type of text, particularly those of an expressly literary make, are polyfunctional constructs—from both a productive (poetic) and a receptive (hermeneutic) point of view. Historically, various rhetorical traditions log the functions of *docere* (*prodesse*), *delectare*, *movere*—usually all with a view to *persuadere* or *dissuadere*, cf. (Mayfield 2017b, p. 19n.). For the Horatian "aut prodesse [...] aut delectare" (Horace 2005, p. 478, v.333); cf. "gusto o provecho" in the witch's tale (Cervantes 2002a, p. 341); the *ars poetica* is mentioned on (p. 355); see Berganza's aiming at taking Scipio's advice to recount events "de manera que enseñen y deleiten a un mismo punto" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 307); cf. (Boyd 2010, pp. 40–41); (Thompson 2010, pp. 265–66, passim); with the context *cum grano salis*, cf. (Atkinson 1986, pp. 138–39); re "mezclar [...] lo útil con lo dulce" in connection with cynicism (Cervantes 2005, p. 20); cf. (Riley 1976, pp. 194–95). On polyfunctionality and rhetoric, cf. (Mayfield 2017b, pp. 5–8, 5n.–6n., 8n., 14n., 33n.).

⁶⁴ Cf. "the specific world view of Hapsburg Spain [...] that reality is in the text and is part of its structure" (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, p. 214); "the reader plays a central role in the construction of meaning" (p. 216); "The reading of the *Casamiento/Coloquio* [...] entails the discovery of the rhetorical structure of our perceptions of reality; an [...] encounter with a world constructed out of a confluence of discourses through the [...] tricks of language" (p. 231); "From a rhetorical standpoint, one of the techniques used by art and literature to persuade was to implicate the reader/spectator in the work itself. [...] the power of interpretation is 'given' to the reader/spectator in order to make the manipulation (and the persuasion) more viable" (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, p. 240); cf. "the creative act of reading belongs to the actual reality of the text itself" (Nerlich 1989, p. 254); "Cervantes's complex fictionalization of the reading process in the *Dogs' Colloquy*. [...] this kind of activation of the reader" (Forcione 1989, p. 336; cf. p. 345). For an ethical reading re "*tropelia* y engaño literario: *El coloquio de los perros* es una mentira que quiere ser en su propio modo una verdad" (Sieber 2002, p. 38; cf. p. 31); see (Teuber 2005, p. 258); (Hart 1979, pp. 379–80).

⁶⁵ Jakobson's linguistic-literary description of communicational situations suggests six functions (and corresponding factors): the emotive (addresser), conative (addressee), referential (context), metalingual (code), phatic (contact), and poetic (message); cf. (Jakobson 1987a, passim, spec. pp. 66–71)—all of which will be present in most any form of semiotic interaction, albeit to differing degrees of predominance; these may differ from an intra- or extratextual perspective. Poetic and hermeneutic emphases tend to vary (even be at variance), since any recipient all but inevitably refunctionalizes anything received—a process also influenced by how a semiotic artifact has been conceived.

⁶⁶ Cipión had requested: "me cuentes tu vida y los trances por donde has venido al punto en que ahora te hallas" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 301); cf. Berganza's summary remark towards the end, with Nominalist *couleur* re contingency—generally thereto, cf. (Küpper 1990, pp. 41–44, 263–90, spec. 270–72, 277; Küpper 2000, pp. 210–15)—"¿Ves mis muchos y diversos sucesos? ¿Consideras mis caminos y mis amos tantos?" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 354). These rhetorical questions are paradigmatic of polyfunctionality: the emotive and conative function are accentuated; the poetic one is present in various forms of parallelism, in the cumulative consonance based on the high density of the letter <s>. Regarding the "comediantes", Berganza details the focus and content of his observations ("noté, averigüé y vi") in this *percurso* (partly representative re other episodes): "su proceder, su vida, sus costumbres, sus ejercicios, su trabajo, su ociosidad, su ignorancia y su agudeza, con otras infinitas cosas" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 354).

phatic function).⁶⁷ Typically a source of pleasure for the recipient, the poetic function subtly prevails throughout (to a greater degree in the highly rhetoricized original).⁶⁸ This is decisive, since (at a metalevel) a text's poeticity integrates with its discursive dynamics in several respects: "poeticalness is not a supplementation of discourse with rhetorical adornment but a total reevaluation of the discourse and of all its components whatsoever" (Jakobson 1987a, p. 93). In Cervantes' case, this is particularly pertinent in terms of assorted (poetically functionalized) echoes, inversions, frequent equivalences at the structural level—including (narratological) *mise en abyme*, recurring discursive latencies, forms of notional suspension with a tendency to produce various effects of irony.⁶⁹

6. Concerning Cynicism: 'Diogenes the Dog' and the Cervantine Canines

no en el sentido alegórico, sino en el literal

(Cervantes 2002a, p. 347)

todo cuanto decimos es murmurar.

(Cervantes 2002a, p. 321)

A self-reflexively rhetorical dimension is woven into the text itself.⁷⁰ In a respective approach, it is requisite to describe what is stated (*de dicto, de re*)—and, more intricately, what could have been, but is not. In a context referring to *inventio, sermocinatio* (qua device in terms of *tractatio*), and aiming at crafting an effect of plausibility, Campuzano claims:

The things they talked about ['trataron'] were important and diverse ['grandes y diferentes'], and more aptly debated ['tratadas'] by wise men ['varones sabios'] than spoken out of the mouths of dogs ['dichas por bocas de perros']. So that, since I could never have made up ['inventar'] these utterances on my own, I have come to believe ['vengo a creer'], in spite of myself and against my better judgment ['contra mi opinión'], that I have not been dreaming ['soñaba'], and that the dogs have been, in fact, talking (Cervantes 2016a, p. 445; Cervantes 2002b, p. 294).⁷¹

At the metalevel, the choice has been precisely for dogs speaking 'wisely' (literally: to and with each other, in their capacity as canines, and in what is, to their knowledge, an 'intraspecies' colloquy)—and

⁶⁷ See "la admiración que nos causó el vernos con habla" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 336); cf. (Gaylord 2002, p. 115); cf. "Hablan sobre la posibilidad de hablar (como Cervantes habla en el Prólogo de la posibilidad de prologar)" (Sieber 2002, p. 35).

⁶⁸ In its generally metalingual context—cf. "Este nombre se compone de dos nombres griegos" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 320)—the pun in *'añadiendo colas al pulpo'*, with Berganza remarking "no se llaman colas las del pulpo" (p. 319), seems a rhetoric-semantic paronomasia, melding 'colon' (from Greek 'kólōn') with 'cola'; for another reasoning, see (Forcione 1984, p. 6n.; cf. pp. 227–28); on wordplay in the *coloquio*, see (Hart 1979, p. 383). The account of Berganza's and Scipio's being human brothers in canine shape is additionally motivated poetically: the sorceress causative of their alleged metamorphosis—"Tuvo fama que convertía los hombres en animales" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 337)—is supposed to be able to "hacer nacer berros", a patent paronomasia with the "perros" she is then said to have 'midwived'; cf. "mostróle que había parido dos perritos", "este perruno parto de otra parte viene", "ella había convertido a sus hijos en perros" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 338); cf. (Forcione 1984, p. 155n.). For the 'paronomastic' "metamorphosis" in "*Canis*, Cañizares, 'Canization'", see (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 54; trans. dsm).

⁶⁹ Cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 10, 41, 102, 126–27, 138); (El Saffar 1976, pp. 58, 84–86, passim; El Saffar 1974, pp. 64, 76, 82–85); (Gossy 1989, pp. 57–58); (Schmauser 1996, pp. 159–60); (Teuber 2005, p. 257); (Boyd 2010, pp. 15–16, 41); (Aylward 2010, pp. 235, 239–58); (Spadacini and Talens, p. 228); (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 75, 81). The *coloquio* commences with an ironic marker (typical of Cervantine *écriture*), then echoed at the end: "[la] merced que el cielo en un mismo punto a los dos nos ha hecho" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 299); "El acabar [...] y el despertar [...] fue todo a un tiempo" (p. 359); cf. (Boyd 2010, pp. 16, 41). For internal parallelisms featuring slight variations with considerable discursive import: "la ociosidad, raiz y madre de todos los vicios" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 310); cf. (1Tim 6:10, 2Thess 3:6–13, spec. v.10); "la ociosidad sea madre de los pensamientos" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 318). Cf. Johnson's metapoetical statement: "We are left, as usual, where Cervantes so often leaves us, with [...] multiple perspectives, and [...] competing voices" (Johnson 1991, p. 22).

⁷⁰ This must all the more caution against anachronistic construals, against spiriting away the reader or recipient.

⁷¹ On the various "*modi tractandi*", here spec. "*sermocinatio*" qua 'putting words into the mouth of', see (Lausberg 2008, pp. 532–33, §1105; p. 543, §§1131–1132)—with 'delegating one's voice' being a device of indirection. On "*memoria*" and "*inventio*" with regard to Cervantes, cf. (Nerlich 1989, pp. 264–65).

not for other, equally conceivable entities (else one might as well think of two owls, horses, or elephants); it is a discourse historically motivated selection, as the following will demonstrate.⁷²

A recent translator of the *Exemplary Novellas* labels four of them—including “The Glasswork Graduate”, “The Deceitful Marriage”, “The Dogs’ Colloquy”—“darker”, “gloomier narratives” (Cervantes 2016c, p. 431).⁷³ Typifying the protagonist of the first as “[a] thoroughly disillusioned pessimist” (Cervantes 2016c, p. 210), he avers—with (Forcione 1982, pp. 242–50)—the “destructive negativity of cynical philosophy” (Cervantes 2016c, p. 212).⁷⁴ Reflecting a widespread attitude toward ‘cynicism’—cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 3–11)—such value judgments tend to arise from certain (personal, moral, notional) expectations, as per which something is then seen to fall short. While the gauge applied is naturally up to the respective reader’s proclivity, the above is not the only possible measure and assessment.

This essay takes as its point of reference the—distinctly transcultural—reception of the literary *persona* of ‘Diogenes the Dog’, which had already had a history of almost two millennia when the Cervantine “Coloquio” was published in 1613, culminating the *Novelas ejemplares*.⁷⁵

A text’s discursive substratum—its structurally relevant, (partly) latent or express intertexts (a historico-culturally specific, even distinctive kind of code)—might be located at a metalevel of the rhetorical function of *docere*, and be conceived of as (conatively) directed at the extratextual recipient (metareferentially, metalingually, from a poetico-hermeneutic perspective).⁷⁶ The process of reception can (and typically does) take place without attention being paid to this additional plane—just as one might enter a house without knowing its ground plan. In other words: a literal level—at which, for instance, textual canines are (semiotically) portrayed and (virtually) received in their capacity as dogs—can coexist with other planes simultaneously present (among them the discursive).⁷⁷ Even so, knowledge of the structural, “architextual” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 60; trans. dsm; cf. p. 81) level tends to initiate a reassessment of the overall (semiotic) edifice by adding (exegetic) nuances, disclosing

⁷² Refunctionalizing the concept of “motivation” *mutatis mutandis* (Jakobson 1987b, pp. 26–27); cf. (Küpper 1990, pp. 41–42, 41n.–42n.). At a literal level, cf. also: “el único animal que se ajustaba a la intención satírica del *Coloquio* era precisamente el perro, por su doble condición de animal doméstico, hábil escrutador de vidas cotidianas, y de andariego y callejero. Ni el asno ni el gallo le servían para ello” (Bleuca 1972, p. 177). Like other domestic beings (or, as Bleuca argues above, more than others), dogs tend to be perceived by humankind as quasi-go-between entities—hence (literarily) expedient for evincing various forms of human–animal interaction. Generally speaking, dogs may have always seemed to give humankind the impression that they were striving to communicate; the particularly close—spatial, physical—proximity that has (arguably all but always) obtained between these species may be seen to provide the (factual) basis for a continued semiotic interaction characterized by reciprocity, mutuality; hence: “reading a dog’s bodily movements as communication is not anthropomorphic, but is an acknowledgement of the shared embodiment that makes all languages possible” (Raber 2013, p. 192n.).

⁷³ Cf. e.g., (Riley 1976, pp. 195–96); (Gaylord 2002, pp. 111–12); (Boyd 2010, p. 5); (Dunn 2010, p. 98); (Nerlich 1989, pp. 306–7); (Forcione 1989, p. 340). Contrast Hart’s sober (qua ‘*sachlich*’) approach (Hart 1979, pp. 383–84, 385n., 386n.).

⁷⁴ Cf. (Riley 1976, pp. 196–197); (El Saffar 1976, p. 45); (Forcione 1984, pp. 13–14, 133). On the *coloquio* with respect to Cynicism, see (Forcione 1984, pp. 5–6, 6n., 29–30, 56, 132, 155–56, 155n., 166, 171–76, 180–83, 201, 219, 227); (Ziolkowski 1983, pp. 101–2); (Hart 1979, pp. 381, 386n.); cf. and contrast (Antonio 1953, *cum grano salis* throughout, due to its biographic approach, pp. 293–95, 304–7, *passim*, and problematic conception of cynicism, pp. 295, 297–98, 303, 306–7); to some extent, the former and latter set of problems applies also to (Riley 1976, pp. 191, 196–98); cf. the echoes in (Aylward 2010, pp. 235–37); see also (Montauban 2006, *passim*, *spec. pp.* 770–72), (Montauban 2009, *passim*, *spec. pp.* 395–97), both *cum grano salis*; for a brief and problematic mention, cf. (Dümchen 1989, p. 113).

⁷⁵ See (Sieber 2002, p. 31); cf. “this extraordinary two-part finale” (Gaylord 2002, p. 113); “the summation of the entire moral thrust of the *Novelas*” (Boyd 2010, p. 41; cf. p. 42).

⁷⁶ As to a multilevel approach, see Küpper’s explication (with reference to Aristotle, Lotman) regarding “welchen Grad an Abstraktion die Literatur erreicht, welchen Profils also ihr kognitiver Anspruch ist”: *spec.* “dass ein literarischer Text in dieser Hinsicht eben jenen Grad erreicht, den wir ihm als Leser zuschreiben”; hence: “das entsprechende Niveau von Verallgemeinerung ist in das Benehmen des Rezipienten gestellt”—with it being possible “im Akt der Lektüre mehrere denkbare Ebenen des Allgemeinen zu erproben und zwischen diesen Ebenen hin- und herzuwechseln” (Küpper 2013, p. 265).

⁷⁷ Within the *coloquio*, Cipión performs an exegesis of Camacha’s (supposedly prophetic) verses, trying to read them allegorically: “sus palabras se han de tomar en un sentido que he oído decir se llama al[e]górico, el cual sentido no quierere decir lo que la letra suena, sino otra cosa” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 346); when that has apparently proven unsuccessful, he opts for the ‘literal sense’: “no en el sentido alegórico, sino en el literal, se han de tomar los versos de la Camacha” (p. 347); and when this proves inconsistent with the facts—precisely since “nos estamos tan perros como ves” (p. 347)—he rejects the verses and witches altogether.

other potential points of view. Such is the objective of the ensuing synopsis, providing the discourse historical groundwork for the colloquy's (partly oblique) references to cynicism.⁷⁸

D. Laertius' *Lives of Eminent Philosophers* were brought from Constantinople in the early fifteenth century, translated into Latin within the first half thereof, available in print by the 1470s, and widely circulated.⁷⁹ Well-known Diogenical matter had already been prevalent throughout Europe in the Medieval Latin *Gesta Romanorum*, the Spanish *Bocados de oro*.⁸⁰ While the (infinite) sentences and anecdotes in such compilations invite 'reallocation' by their very form, Machiavelli's refunctionalization of dicta—extracted from D. Laertius, employed in *La vita di Castruccio Castracani da Lucca* (~1520)—is particularly noteworthy.⁸¹ It might be signaled by the mention of "Florence" and "Lucca" in the Cervantine novella "The Glasswork Graduate" (Cervantes 2016d, pp. 216–17)—precisely in a text performing a structurally equivalent reallocation of sayings with a cynical slant.⁸² In terms

⁷⁸ Concerning the *Quijote*, Küpper states: "the author favors the oblique modus as a result of fundamental considerations" (Küpper 2005, p. 219n.; trans. dsm); Nolting-Hauff accentuates "a particularly wary mode of expression" on the part of Cervantes (Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 192; trans. dsm). Overall, as Forcione notes, "Cervantes tends to exploit the value system of his society to construct his works" (Forcione 1989, p. 350); cf. also (Nolting-Hauff 1987, pp. 191–92); (Küpper 2000, p. 179)—the latter with the universal remark as to "was sich hinter wohlfeilen Formeln zu verbergen pflegt: Abgründe" (p. 184n.).

⁷⁹ See (Rahe 2007, pp. 42–43, 42n.); (Mayfield 2015, p. 95n.); cf. and contrast (Riley 1976, pp. 189, 191–92); referring to Riley, see also (Montauban 2009, p. 395).

⁸⁰ On the *Gesta Romanorum*, see (Largier 1997, pp. 246–48)), giving an *exemplum* featuring a familiar Alexander–Diogenes encounter, from a 1342 manuscript—cf. (Oesterley 1872, p. 589, §183, germ. §15); see the Medieval Spanish *libro de los exemplos* (~13th century), cited in (Largier 1997, pp. 204–5), referring to Valerius Maximus, to Seneca's *de beneficiis* for its moral message—see (Seneca 2006, pp. 298–99, V.iv.3–4). Cf. the 13th century *El libro de los buenos proverbios*, "also translated into Hebrew", based on an "Arabic collection of sayings [. . .] of the 9th century" (Largier 1997, p. 208n.; trans. dsm). On the 13th century *Bocados de Oro*, see (Bocados 1971, pp. 39a–44, X); (Largier 1997, pp. 188–96); cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 23n.); as to the "Medieval 'genres'" of "the *exempla* and the *novas*" (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, p. 210; see pp. 211–213); *cum grano salis*, cf. (Beusterien 2016, pp. 8, 37–40, 49, 51, 53–54, 57). The above might demonstrate the transcultural, translingual prevalence of the matter at hand. Rather than to a historical individual, it refers to a literary *persona* commonly called 'Diogenes the Dog/Cynic (of Sinope)'—cf. "ὁ Κυνὸς" (Aristotle 2006, p. 400, III.x.7, 1411a)—continually constructed and construed over the course of a considerable tradition enduring to this day: "the story of Diogenes, like a snowball rolled downhill, gathered additions to itself as it went along" (Dudley 2003, p. 19); generally, see (Niehues-Pröbsting 1988, p. 18); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 11–12, 18–53, spec. 18n., 21n.–22n.).

⁸¹ See (Machiavelli 1969, pp. 747–63); cf. (Strauss 1978, pp. 223–25); (Rahe 2007, pp. 42–43, 43n.); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 94–95, 94n.–95n.).

⁸² On 'chria', (in)finite 'sententia', see (Lausberg 1990, pp. 130–31, §§398–399; Lausberg 2008, pp. 431–34, §§872–879, pp. 536–40, §§1117–1121); re the *coloquio*, cf. (Hart 1979, passim, spec. p. 380). For Blumenberg's concept of "Umsetzung", 'refunctionalization', 'reallocation', cf. (Blumenberg 1999, pp. 52, 57–58, 60, 71, 87–88, passim; Blumenberg 1996, pp. 183–299); re applications, see (Küpper 1990, pp. 258, 274, 406, passim); (Mayfield 2015, p. 170n.; Mayfield 2017c, passim). For the present argument concerning the *coloquio*, it is useful to log a comparable presence of this textual strategy in the "Novela del licenciado Vidriera" (Cervantes 2002c, pp. 54–73); cf. (Riley 1976, pp. 190–95, passim); (Küpper 2000, pp. 180–90; re cynicism, pp. 186n.–187n., 190); (Ricapito 1996, pp. 85–88); (Dümchen 1989, passim). Refunctionalizations occur in terms of form and content—cf. (Cervantes 2016d, pp. 221–39), with (D. Laertius 2005, pp. 22–85, VI.20–81). The context—*siglo de oro*, Counter-Reformation Spain, the attribution of the protagonist's wayward behavior to a mental condition caused by a substance administered against his will, see (Cervantes 2016d, p. 220)—produces (paradigmatic) alterations (in tendency); moreover, a textual strategy of *aemulatio* regarding the Diogenical 'source type' (Lotman's term *mutatis mutandis*)—see (Lotman 1972, pp. 151, 151n.); cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 11–12, 12n., 19, 19n., 22–55, 272, 272n., 286)—holds sway throughout, while the basic structure of the anecdotes and *sententiae* remains discernible; cf. and contrast (Riley 1976, pp. 191–94, including examples); (Forcione 1982, p. 263, ch. 3 passim); cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 6n., 7, 12n., 181, 201); (Schmauser 1996, pp. 87, 89–90). In terms of tendency, cf. e.g., the Cervantine version—"he would only drink water from springs or rivers, and that only with his hands. [. . .] During the summers, he slept out in the countryside, out in the open [al cielo abierto]" (Cervantes 2016d, p. 221; Cervantes 2002c, p. 54); the formulation "al cielo abierto" is also used by Berganza (Cervantes 2002a, p. 305)—with this account in D. Laertius: "One day, observing a child drinking out of his hands, he cast away the cup from his wallet with the words, 'A child has beaten me in plainness of living'" (D. Laertius 2005, p. 39, VI.37); "In summer he was wont to roll around on the red-hot sand" (D. Laertius 2008, pp. 289–90, VI.23; trans. dsm); cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 46–48). In terms of structural affinity, cf. e.g., a Cervantine version—"One time, as he was standing in front of a tailor's shop, he noticed that the fellow was standing around doing nothing [estaba mano sobre mano]. He said to him: 'There is no doubt about it, master tailor: you are on the path to salvation [. . .], since you have nothing to do, you won't have any occasion to tell lies'" (Cervantes 2016d, p. 231; Cervantes 2002c, p. 65)—with the following in D. Laertius: "to a man whose shoes were being put on by his servant, he said, 'You have not attained to full felicity, unless he wipes your nose as well; and that will come, when you have lost the use of your hands'" (D. Laertius 2005, p. 47, VI.44); cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 45). A penchant for wordplay is discernible in "The Glasswork Graduate" (in Cervantes generally) and D. Laertius passim; cf. "De las damas que llaman *cortesanus* decía que todas, o las más, tenían más de corteses que de sanas" (Cervantes 2002c, p. 71; for comparable puns,

of genre, the *coloquio*'s frequently (and in part explicitly) satirical thrust additionally reinforces its ties to cynical discourses—the latter having been dependably linked particularly to the Menippea since Antiquity.⁸³

Everyone knows this anecdote: “He [sc. ‘Diogenes’] lit a lamp in broad daylight and said, as he went about, ‘I am looking for a man’” (D. Laertius 2005, p. 43, VI.41).⁸⁴ It is decidedly refunctionalized in “The Deceitful Marriage”:

two dogs [. . .] go around at night with the brothers of the Order of St. John of God, lighting the way with a pair of lanterns [‘lanternas’]. [. . .] if perchance someone tosses alms out of a window, [. . .] the dogs go up to it right away, shedding light [‘alumbrar’] with their lanterns, to see what has fallen. And they tend to stop in front of the windows which they know [‘saben’] to be places where people are in the habit of [‘tienen costumbre de’] giving them alms [‘darles limosna’]. And out on the street like that, the two dogs behave so meekly [‘mansedumbre’] that they seem [‘parecen’] more like lambs [‘corderos’] than dogs; back in the hospital, however, they are veritable lions [‘leones’], protecting [‘guardando’] the building with extreme care and vigilance [‘cuidado y vigilancia’]. (Cervantes 2016a, pp. 443–44; Cervantes 2002b, p. 293)⁸⁵

A comparison with the terse Diogenical anecdote, attention to the discursive implications conveyed by contrast, are needful, as the above sets the scene for all that follows in terms of animal narration in the *coloquio*—hence also for a potential reception in this respect.⁸⁶ Initially, one might log the alterations: midday vs. night, ostensibly undue or prodigal vs. functional employment of

cf. pp. 63, 63n., 65, 65n., 67|B39-humanities-06-00028); with: “The school [‘scholèn’] of Euclides he [sc. ‘Diogenes’] called bilious [‘cholén’] and Plato’s lectures [‘diatribèn’] waste of time [‘katatribèn’]” (D. Laertius 2005, pp. 26–27, VI.24); cf. (D. Laertius 2008, p. 290n.); (Dudley 2003, p. 57); (Mayfield 2015, p. 50n.; on Diogenical wordplay, p. 30n.). Generally, cf. “News of his madness [‘locura’] and of his answers and sayings extended throughout Castile” (Cervantes 2016d, p. 223; Cervantes 2002c, p. 56); “people of every walk of life were always hanging on his every word” (Cervantes 2016d, p. 228; cf. p. 230; Cervantes 2002c, pp. 61, 63); “In the end, he said so many such things that, if it were not for [. . .] his dementia [‘locura’], anybody would have thought he was one of the wisest men in the world” (Cervantes 2016d, p. 239; Cervantes 2002c, p. 73)—statements that, *mutatis mutandis*, might plausibly be reapplied ‘backwards’ to ‘ho kyon’ (qua control); spec. in connection with the (paronomastic) comment on the apparent ‘madman’, embedded in a particular alteration: “más tenéis de bellaco que de loco” (Cervantes 2002c, p. 55). ‘Diogenes’ is dubbed “[a] Socrates gone mad” by ‘Plato’ (D. Laertius 2005, p. 54, VI.54); thereto, cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 31). Figuratively at first, Berganza is described as “algún demonio en figura de perro”, dubbed “perro sabio” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 333); later, some take it literally: “¡Apártense, que rabia el perro sabio! [. . .] es Demonio en figura de perro” (p. 345).

⁸³ (Juvenalian) satire is explicitly mentioned: “era difícil cosa el no escribir sátiras” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 306; cf. p. 306n.); (Forcione 1984, pp. 180–82); see (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 66). As to satire, diatribe, the Menippea, the carnivalesque, with respect to the *coloquio*, see especially (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 54; cf. pp. 56–57, 60, 63, spec. 64–70, 74–76, 78, 81, passim; with explicit reference to Cynicism, cf. pp. 70, 74); generally, see (Nolting-Hauff 1987, passim; pp. 184–89), in conjunction with (Nolting-Hauff 1983, passim); as to the *coloquio* in particular, cf. (Nolting-Hauff 1987, pp. 190–95).

⁸⁴ See (Mayfield 2015, pp. 31–31, 31n.–32n.); cf. and contrast (Forcione 1984, pp. 155–56).

⁸⁵ See (Forcione 1984, pp. 155–56, 155n.); also Berganza, on his conduct toward the poet: “Hícele mis acostumbradas caricias, por asegurarle de mi mansedumbre” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 351). Cf. Montaigne: “I observe with [. . .] amazement the behavior, [. . .] common enough, of the dogs that blind men use both in the fields and in town; I have noticed how they stop at certain doors where they have been accustomed to receive alms, how they avoid being hit by coaches and carts, even when for their part they have enough room to pass; I have seen one, along a town ditch, leave a smooth flat path and take a worse one, to keep his master away from the ditch” (Montaigne 1989, p. 340, II.12); cf. the spec. pertinent passage in Montaigne’s French with the Cervantine wording above: “je me suis pris garde comme ils s’arrêtent à certaines portes, d’où ils ont accoutumé de tirer l’aumône” (Montaigne 2009, p. 196, II.xii). The other segment perhaps relevant here, “jen ai vu le long d’un fossé de ville, laisser un sentier plein et uni, et en prendre un pire, pour éloigner son maître du fossé” (p. 196, II.xii), may seem like a rendering of dogs as anti-*picaros*, if contrasted with Lazarillo’s vengeful termination of serving “el ciego”, at the end of the first *tractado* (Lazarillo 2011, pp. 44–46, I)—for whom he acts as a sort of human seeing-eye dog, and an aide in begging alms, “salimos por la villa a pedir limosna” (p. 44, I)—by deceiving the blind man into leaping headlong (“de toda su fuerza”) into a post (“poste”), leaving him “medio muerto” (Lazarillo 2011, p. 45, I).

⁸⁶ Concerning the dogs with their lanterns, Beusterien writes: “Cervantes evokes the commonplace notion from the day that the dogs are connected to the pursuit of an exemplary life associated with Saint Dominic and his order. A multitude of images from the sixteenth and seventeenth century can be found of Dominican dogs holding torches in their mouths [. . .] Rosal’s description of the Dominicans states: ‘the preaching order of [. . .] Saint Dominic has the dog with a torch in its mouth as its coat of arms, a symbol of preaching and representative of the purest doctrine and an exemplary life’” (Beusterien 2016, p. 49; cf. p. 49n.); as to Dominicans and canines, see also (Forcione 1984, pp. 155n.–156n.); (Alves 2014, p. 277); (Manning 2007, p. 148). In the latter case, dogs are indeed (only) instrumentalized as symbols, therefore

(artificial) sources of light, apparently gratuitous vs. conducive, purposive objective, resplendent futility of endeavor vs. attainment. Asking for alms is also part of the agenda dependably attached to the arch-Cynic's literary *persona* since Antiquity—as in this notorious instance: “He once begged alms of a statue, and, when asked why he did so, replied, ‘To get practice in being refused’” (D. Laertius 2005, p. 51, VI.49).⁸⁷ The tendency differs considerably from that of the Cervantine canines; their collecting of alms is set in a Christian—socio-morally sanctioned, rather than willful (even frivolous)—context.

Regarding their intratextual portrayal, these specific dogs—in their textual capacity as animals—are here markedly (re)functionalized by human beings: as organico-technical mélanges (body, lantern); as ambulant luminaries, characterized by a knowledge of human habits (later presented as capable of articulating the like). In material, metaphorical, and abstract terms (all of which are simultaneously present textually), both aspects appear as leitmotifs of the following *coloquio*: ‘to shed light on’, focusing on sight and ken (by figurative extension); ‘to know customs’, accentuating a retentive faculty (among other things).⁸⁸

From an intertextual perspective, their characterization is clearly informed by a Christian ground swell, as the catchwords “meekly” and “lambs” indicate (immediately perceived by anyone in that discourse historical climate): “Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (*Mt* 5:5; *KJV*); “Bienaventurados los mansos: porque ellos recibirán la tierra por heredad” (*RVA*). “I send you forth as lambs among wolves” (*Lk* 10:3; *KJV*); “yo os envío como corderos en medio de lobos” (*RVA*).

This discursive setting is melded with another venerable point of reference. The discussion of the guardians (*phýlakes*) in Plato's *Politeía*—here (Plato 2013, pp. 182–91, II, 374e–376c; see pp. 314–19, III, 410c–411d), cf. (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 96), (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 58, 58n., 71, 74–75)—seeks a literally natural occurrence coalescing (inward) affability (towards familiars) and (outward) aggression (against externals): “they [sc. the guardians] must be amenable [‘práous’] toward their own people, but intractable [‘chalepóús’] against their enemies” (Plato 2013, pp. 184–85, II, 375c); and heuristically encounters it in the factual conduct of canines:

Where shall we find a gentle and stouthearted [‘praon kai megalóthymon’] character together? [. . .] surely gentleness of nature and strong spirits are opposing qualities. [. . .] Yet whichever of these qualities you removed, the result would never be a good guardian [‘phýlax agathòs’]. [. . .] there are natural dispositions [. . .] which have these opposing qualities. [. . .] We may see it in other animals [‘állois zóois’], not least in the

Beusterien's all but exclusive privileging of this imagery—which would have contributed to the Early Modern recipients' being able to tie in their experience with the *coloquio*'s virtual world—may seem somewhat remarkable, considering his claim to a decidedly non-figurative, Animal Studies approach otherwise (Beusterien 2016, pp. 35–36, 48n., *passim*). The reference to Cervantes' being “also interested in the Cynics” (Beusterien 2016, p. 78n.) occurs later, as a footnote in the context of a discussion concerning Velázquez' painting of “Mennipus [sic, known as Cynic or ‘little dog’” (p. 78), where Beusterien asserts: “While the dogs carrying torches principally connected them with Dominican iconography, it also connected them with the Cynic philosophers” (p. 78n.). Given the express reference to cynicism in the *coloquio*, as well as the textual presence of Platonic-Socratic and *Scriptural* indications even at the semantic level, an effectively exclusive emphasis on Dominican iconography (which, in turn, would have been influenced by the aforesaid traditions) may seem problematic. Beusterien's reading of the *coloquio* as “a revolutionary animal exemplum” (Beusterien 2016, p. 39)—contrast (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 61)—hinges on the dualism of “the dog's connection to saintliness” and “to a tradition in which they are icons of the diabolic” (Beusterien 2016, p. 50; cf. p. 51); a reference to the text's explicit gesture(s) toward cynicism would have significantly diluted the alleged polarity Beusterien requires, in order to make his case.

⁸⁷ Cf. (D. Laertius 2005, p. 47, VI.46, p. 51, VI.49, p. 61, VI.59, pp. 69, 68n., VI.67); see (Mayfield 2015, pp. 26n., 30, 45, 48, 51, 52n., 61, 306). Cf. Berganza on the *gitanos*: “Cuando piden limosna, más la sacan con invenciones y chocarrerías que con devociones” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 348).

⁸⁸ “Cipión and Berganza serve as watchdogs and ‘lightdogs’” (Nerlich 1989, p. 309). Throughout the *coloquio*, the dogs are not ‘employed’ in line with what might seem their most ‘utile’ natural capacity (the olfactory) from a human perspective; instead, they serve as audiovisual observers—a tendency accentuated by frequent mentions of terms referring to the respective senses (in physical and figurative contexts); but cf. “llegó a mis narices un olor de tocino [. . .]; descúbrile con el olfato, y halléle” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 325)—ironically, this instance (where Berganza's scent plays a crucial role) causes considerable havoc for the humans involved. Generally, cf. also Raber's heuristic contrast: “When early modern texts discuss cats, they rarely if ever dwell on the haptic zone that for postmoderns may be the most significant source of pleasure for both parties: petting cats simply does not figure in early modern texts or cultural artifacts, although we must assume that it happened” (Raber 2013, p. 25).

one we compared to our guardian. I'm sure you know about dogs with good breeding [‘ton gennaion kynon’]: that their character [‘ethos’] is naturally to be able to be most friendly to those they are used to and recognize, but the opposite with those they don't know. [. . .] Then this is possible [. . .] and we are not looking for our guardian to be the type that contradicts nature [‘ou parà phýsin’]. [. . .] he who is going to be watchful [‘ho phylakikòs’] still lacks something: in addition to being strong-spirited, he must be naturally interested in philosophy[.] [. . .] You will also see this in dogs, something that deserves our admiration in the animal. [. . .] at the sight of someone unknown to it, it becomes aggressive, even if it hasn't had an adverse experience before. But whoever it sees that it recognizes, it welcomes them even if it has never been treated well by that person [. . .] this natural instinct of the animal makes it seem clever [‘kompson’] and truly a philosopher [‘alethos philòsophon’] [. . .] in that it distinguishes what it sees as either friendly or hostile [‘phílen kai echthrán’], by no other means than being familiar with the one and not recognizing the other. Yet how could it not be eager to learn[,] when it can distinguish by what it knows and what it does not know what belongs to its world [‘oikeion’] and what is alien [‘allòtrion’] to it? [. . .] is [not] passion for knowledge [‘philomathès’] the same thing as the passion for wisdom [‘philòsophon’]? [. . .] In that case, let's [. . .] apply it to mankind as well. (Plato 2013, pp. 186–89, II, 375c–376b)⁸⁹

Again, the Cervantine text—staging the hospital's environment as a quasi-micro-*pólis*—provides a catchword, “guardando” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 293) to support the signaling of this intertext, echoed at several levels (semantic, structural) in the *coloquio*.⁹⁰ In both Plato and Cervantes, the respective dogs are textual canines, but precisely in their capacity as animals; the recipient is to (and likely will) visualize virtual dogs, based on her experience with tangible, olfactible ones. Even so, the necessary presence of this literal level does not signify that—at the discursive level concurrently present—the natural, factually observable conduct of dogs could not also have further implications (as is the case in both texts). In other words: not only does a discursive reading not efface the literal plane; but the former actually depends on the latter.

Regarding the incorporation of apparent opposites, another *Scriptural* dictum literally tying in with the above is crucial: “I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves” (*Mt* 10:16; *KJV*); “yo os envío como á ovejas en medio de lobos:

⁸⁹ The dog had already been introduced at (Plato 2013, pp. 182–83, II, 375a); mentioned again, with the horse (pp. 184–85, II, 375a). The glosses at (Plato 2013, pp. 188n.–189n.) seem to be innocent of a serious appreciation for the rhetorico-hypoleptic dimension of Plato's *écriture*; on this problem, see (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 96). Given a respective readiness, a polyfunctional view of semiotic artifacts might demonstrate that apparent or near opposites (the ironic, grave, cheerful, severe, etc.) may be simultaneously present; re the *coloquio*, see (Forcione 1984, pp. 171–74, 177–78, 195, 200, 214, 231)—spec. “contexts of rapidly shifting perspectives and varied tones” (p. 173); “[t]he plurality of meanings effected” (p. 174); “play of possibilities” (p. 177).

⁹⁰ Scipio refers to the “amistad y fidelidad inviolable” attributed to dogs with the respective term figuratively employed, “guardaron” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 300; cf. p. 300n.). Regarding outward aggression, Berganza states: “servía con gran cuidado y diligencia; ladraba a los forasteros y gruñía a los que no eran muy conocidos; [. . .] hecho universal centinela de la mía y de las casas ajenas” (pp. 312–13). In his shepherding episode: “it seemed to me that the proper and natural function of dogs [‘propio y natural oficio de los perros’] is to stand guard over [‘guardar’] livestock, which is a task entailing a very great virtue, namely that of sheltering and defending the humble [‘humildes’] and the needy from the proud [‘soberbios’] and powerful” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 457; Cervantes 2002a, p. 305; cf. pp. 310–11), where these terms reappear: “el oficio de guardar”, “se guardase”, “guardar”, “guarda”, “centinelas”). Generally, the attributes human beings in a certain context attach to particular animals tend to be mediated by previous (literary) formulations (fables, folktales, proverbs, etc.); cf. e.g., Montaigne's following formulations, apparently melding near-contemporaneous historical data with allusions to the Platonic intertext: “as the Spaniards in the recent conquest of the Indies did to their dogs, to whom they gave pay and a share in the booty; and these animals showed as much skill and judgment in pursuing their victory and holding back, in charging or withdrawing according to the occasion, in distinguishing friends from enemies, as they did ardor and fierceness” (Montaigne 1989). For a reading of a document relating to “the Spanish dog” qua “mighty military fighting machine” of “sixteenth-century conquistadors”, see (Beusterien 2016, pp. 1–3)—given the Animal Studies approach of the latter, the wording may seem rather curious.

sed pues prudentes como serpientes, y sencillos como palomas” (RVA).⁹¹ While, at a literal level, the familiarly canine (shepherding) function of fending off wolves will later feature in the *coloquio*—see (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 305–11, spec. 310–11), with Berganza wearing “el collar de *Leoncillo*”, standing in for the defunct dog so named (p. 306)—the serpentine–columbine prodigy, which Christ’s dictum counsels, is replaced by alluding to the alloy of ‘lion’ and ‘lamb’ that another *Scriptural* passage employs to portray Christ Himself (see *Rev* 5:5–6).⁹²

Likewise, it is needful to note that Epictetus’ diatribes—specifically (Epictetus 1928b, pp. 130–69, III.22)—had already refunctionalized the Platonic ‘guardian–watchdog’ analogization to textually housetrain unruly Cynics, particularly with the aim of Stoicizing the image otherwise conveyed of the ‘Diogenes’ *persona*.⁹³ The Epictetian discourse employs the equation ‘Cynic (from *kyōn*) qua scout and guardian’ in a literalized fashion, thereby deriving an itemized occupational profile and targeted mission statement for his Stoicized ‘Cynicism’:

Man, the Cynic has made all mankind his children [. . .] in that spirit he approaches them all and cares for them all. Or do you fancy that it is in the spirit of idle impertinence he reviles those he meets? It is as a father he does it, as a brother, and as a servant of Zeus, who is Father of us all. (Epictetus 1928b, p. 159, III.22); cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 65)

above all, the Cynic’s governing principle should be purer than the sun; if not, he must needs be a gambler and a man of no principle, because he will be censuring the rest of mankind, while he himself is involved in some vice. (Epictetus 1928b, p. 163, III.22); cf. (Mayfield 2015, p. 69)

the true Cynic [. . .] must know that he has been sent by Zeus to men, partly as a messenger [‘ángelos’], in order to show them that in questions of good and evil they have gone astray [. . .]; and partly [. . .] as a scout [‘katáskopos’]. For the Cynic is truly a scout, to find out what things are friendly to men and what hostile; and he must first do his scouting accurately, and on returning must tell the truth[.] (Epictetus 1928b, pp. 136–39, III.22); cf. (D. Laertius 2005, pp. 44–45, VI.43); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 69–73)⁹⁴

⁹¹ Not only a learned Early Modern audience would all but inevitably connect this *Scriptural* passage, or (narrative) allusions thereto, also with the notorious Plautine *sententia* (which, incidentally, also resonates with the Platonic passage above, if cited in full): “lupus est homo homini, non homo, quom qualis sit non novit” (Plautus 1966, p. 176, II, v.495); re the *coloquio* in this respect, cf. (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 59). Generally, see Gracián’s topical coalescence: “entre los hombres, pues cada uno es un lobo para el otro” (Gracián 2009, p. 99, Liv); “ya estamos entre enemigos [. . .] que si los hombres no son fieras es porque son más fieros, que de su crueldad aprendieron muchas veces ellas. Nunca mayor peligro hemos tenido que ahora que estamos entre ellos” (p. 100, Liv). Contrast Beusterien, who—contesting what he calls “the *homo homini lupus* tradition”, including “*La Celestina*”, “Gracián”, “Hobbes” (Beusterien 2016, p. 48; cf. p. 49)—claims: “Cervantes [. . .] marks an important step toward the manifestation of the Animal Studies argument against the use of the *homo homini lupus* metaphor” (p. 49).

⁹² Cf. and contrast (Forcione 1984, pp. 155–56). See Gracián’s formulation: “No ser todo columbino. Alternense la calidez de la serpiente con la candidez de la paloma. [. . .] Sea uno mixto de paloma y de serpiente; no mostro, sino prodigio” (Gracián 2011, pp. 234–35, §243); cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 227–28). In the *coloquio*, Cipión praises the Jesuits in precisely those terms (“singular prudencia [. . .] humildad profunda [. . .] bienaventuranza”), while adding the notion that they function as celestial scouts: “guiaadores y adalides del camino del cielo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 316); cf. (Hart 1979, pp. 380–81); (Forcione 1984, pp. 147–51); (Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 192). Regarding ‘poetic license’, Horace’s *ars poetica* states that this cannot include “that savage [‘immitia’] should mate with tame [‘placidis’], or serpents couple with birds, lambs with tigers” (Horace 2005, pp. 450–51, vv.12–13).

⁹³ See (Mayfield 2015, pp. 61–75, spec. 69–70, 72n, 73). Cf. its history of reception during the Early Modern Age: “the first printed edition of the *Discourses*” was “published [. . .] in Venice in 1535” (Dobbin 2011a, p. xxiii). “The most important modern editions are [. . .] published in Basel between 1560 and 1563, which included a Latin translation and commentary” (p. xxiv).

⁹⁴ Cf. the second quote with Scipio’s ensuing guidelines: “murmura, pica y pasa, y sea tu intención limpia, aunque la lengua no parezca” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 308). On ‘Diogenes’ qua “spy” (Epictetus 2011, pp. 45–46, I.24); Epictetus ties to this literary *persona* the ‘espying’ of the following: “death is no evil, for it is not shameful either. [. . .] ill repute is the empty noise of madmen” (p. 45); “to be simply clothed is better [. . .] to sleep on the bare ground is the softest bed”: “This is a proper spy” (p. 46). Dobbin glosses: “Diogenes is a ‘spy’ because he has scouted out the extremes of hardship, and is in a position to report that nothing there is beyond endurance” (Dobbin 2011b, p. 202)—adding that suchlike is “part of a revisionist effort to rescue Cynicism’s reputation by bringing it more into line with traditional Hellenic values” (p. 203).

Displaying a monodirectional, didactico-moralizing impetus, an assertive air of authority, the Stoic thus tries to impose his view of how matters should be. With differences in tone and semblances in tendency, the Cervantine *coloquio* features the ensuing agenda:

You think gossiping [‘murmurar’, implying harm done: ‘slandering’, ‘maligning’, ‘censuring’] is the same as philosophizing [‘filosofar’]? There you go! Canonize it, [. . .] Berganza, that cursed plague of gossip [‘la maldita plaga de la murmuración’], and give it whatever name you like, and that will give us a reputation for being cynics [‘cínicos’], which is the same as saying ‘gossip-mongering dogs’ [‘perros murmuradores’]. (Cervantes 2016b, p. 471; Cervantes 2002a, p. 319)

The translation of “murmurar”, “murmuración”, “murmuradores” as “gossip” seems infelicitous, here; for such arguably mitigates the term’s impact, obscuring the import of the discursive reference to the history of reception and various refunctionalizations of cynicism.⁹⁵ The damage (potentially) done by the tongue—“speaking ill” (“decir mal”)—is a leitmotif throughout (Cervantes 2016b, p. 466; Cervantes 2002a, p. 315).⁹⁶ Moreover, such forms of articulation are stably attached to cynicism from its outset, due to the contumelious conduct of the arch-Cynic ‘Diogenes’: “He was great at pouring scorn on his contemporaries” (D. Laertius 2005, p. 27, VI.24).⁹⁷

Apparently in accord with the discursive climate of its conception, the “Colloquy” has Berganza link injurious words and deeds to the doctrine of Original Sin: “wrong-doing and speaking ill [‘hacer y decir mal’] are things inherited from our first parents [‘nuestros primeros padres’], that we lap up with our mothers’ milk” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 466; Cervantes 2002a, p. 315; cf. pp. 342, 344).⁹⁸ Ostensively in line with the official Counter-Reformation agenda and its universal(ist) claim, this Catholic reading is then also applied to (a particular conception of) secular philosophy (words put in Scipio’s mouth):

⁹⁵ As the third meaning of three, the DRAE offers: “Conversar en perjuicio de un ausente, censurando sus acciones” (Real Academia Española 2014, s.v. “murmurar”)—with “perjuicio” conveying a clearly severe implication. Cf. the witch’s self-description: “no puedo [. . .] pensar en bien, porque soy amiga de murmurar” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 343; cf. p. 340). Having cautioned “Vete a la lengua, que en ella consisten los mayores daños de la humana vida” (p. 304)—Cipión distinguishes two kinds of “murmuración”: “consentiré que murmures un poco de luz y no de sangre; [. . .] no es buena la murmuración, aunque haga reír a muchos, si mata a uno” (pp. 306–7); cf. “murmura, pica y pasa” (p. 308); Sieber glosses: “Cipión se refiere al lenguaje como instrumento físico del satírico que puede herir a su víctima” (Sieber 2002, p. 37). Referring to Scipio’s aforesaid line, Beusterien bases his reading of the *coloquio* on Aesop’s having (been believed to have) been a stutterer—with “Cervantes’ creation of talking dogs [. . .] parallel[ing] Aesop’s interest in creating talking animal[s]” (Beusterien 2009, p. 218); hence he wishes to hinge “new readings of *El coloquio de los perros*” vis-à-vis Cervantes’ intuited stuttering on a “literal” (“not [. . .] a figurative”) reading of the sentence “en ella consisten los mayores daños de la humana vida” (Beusterien 2009, p. 219)—the decontextualization of which may seem rather problematic. For “murmuración” as “backbiting” (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 101); cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 171–72, 180–81, 227); (El Saffar 1974, p. 64); (Hessel 2008, pp. 13–14, the latter *cum grano salis* passim). Elsewhere, the trans. gives “murmura” as “tattle” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 308; Cervantes 2016b, p. 459), while later rendering “un maldiciente murmurador” (linked to: “calu[m]niar”) as “a certain malicious slanderer” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 314; Cervantes 2016b, p. 466), “murmuración” as “slander” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 318; Cervantes 2016b, p. 469); cf. also (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 65–66, 71); the semantic distance between ‘gossip’ and ‘slander’ seems considerable. Generally, an onomatopoeic quality of the word ‘murmurar’ cannot be discarded; cf. the felicitous formulation: “murrende Kritik” (Teuber 2005, p. 253; with ‘knurrende’ implied in a canine setting); hence also ‘snarling’ (perchance ‘grumbling’). Cf. the contexts, variants of ‘murmurar’ in “The Glasswork Graduate” (Cervantes 2002c, pp. 59, 69, 71); see (Riley 1976, p. 194). As to the semantic scope of ‘murmuración’, and regarding the overall *œuvre*, the dedication’s nexus of “los Cínicos” with ‘vituperation’, ‘lack of respect’ (“su vituperio, sin guardar respecto a nadie”), might be adduced (Cervantes 2003, p. 54); see (Riley 1976, p. 194); re Machiavelli, cf. (Strauss 1978, p. 40); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 109, 197, 197n.); *cum grano salis*, as Riley notes—(Riley 1976, pp. 194–95); cf. (Hart 1979, p. 386n.)—also the reference in Torres’ ‘aprobación’ for the *Quijote*’s second part; see (Cervantes 2005, p. 20). Generally, cf. also Gracián’s description of the human tongue as a weapon “mucho más terrible[. . .] y sangrienta[. . .]” than the “armas naturales” of the animals: “tienen [sc. ‘los hombres’] una lengua más afilada que las navajas de los leones” (Gracián 2009, p. 101, Liv); the glosses add: “Navajas: Fig. colmillo de jabalí y de algunos otros animales”. (*Dic. Acad.*) Gracián lo relaciona con la lengua de los murmuradores, que también se llaman ‘navajas’. (*Dic. Aut.*)” (Gracián 2009, pp. 101n.–102n.).

⁹⁶ Cf. (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 306–8, 314–15, 318–19, 321, 327, 340, 343); see (Forcione 1984, pp. 187–236, spec. 196, 201–2, 218–21).

⁹⁷ Cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 28–35). Re “The Glasswork Graduate”: “Like Diogenes he is intellectually vain and courts the admiration of a public which he spends most of his time insulting. [. . .] His habit of destructive criticism is his outstanding Cynical characteristic” (Riley 1976, p. 194).

⁹⁸ See (Forcione 1984, pp. 171–73, 195–96, 202–4); (Riley 1976, pp. 195–96).

Beware, Berganza, lest that urge to philosophize [‘esa gana de filosofar’] you say has come over you be some temptation sent to you by the devil. Because slander [‘murmuración’] has no better veil for glossing over and covering up its dissolute wickedness [‘su maldad disoluta’] than the slanderer’s [‘murmurador’] giving to understand that everything he says is a matter of philosophical opinion [‘sentencias de filósofos’], and that speaking ill [‘decir mal’] amounts to moral censure [‘reprehensión’], and revealing [‘descubrir’] other people’s flaws [‘defectos’] is only righteous zeal. And there is no slanderer [‘murmurante’] whose life, if you consider and scrutinize it, is not full of vice [‘vicios’] and contempt for others [‘insolencias’] (Cervantes 2016b, p. 469; Cervantes 2002a, p. 318).

After a section chastising the ostentatious, non-pertinent, erroneous use of Latin for purposes of signaling erudition—see (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 318–19)—Scipio offers the abovequoted reproof, cautioning against gaining a reputation for being “cínicos” qua “perros murmuradores” (p. 319).

Despite several attempts—including later ones, especially since the Enlightenment, see (Mayfield 2015, pp. 3–11, 66–75)—the Stoicized version of the ‘Cynic’ could not succeed. By contrast, the Cervantine take is still very much present comparatively—also due to several literary allusions, adaptations.⁹⁹ The variance between the Epictetian and the Cervantine strategy of reshaping the cynic’s image is directly tied to their discursive tendency and communicational situation—hence also of narratological import. “I wouldn’t want us to sound like preachers”, Berganza asserts; and when he admonishes “all [that] sounds like preaching, Scipio”, the latter replies: “So it seems to me, so I shall remain silent” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 463).¹⁰⁰ Whereas the Stoic imperatively scolds and dogmatically lectures his intratextually explicit audience, the Cervantine *coloquio*’s “contrapuntal” (Díaz-Plaja 1968, p. 110; trans. dsm), decidedly dialogic, dynamically polydirectional disposition permits the implicit (intra-, extratextual) addressees to follow the verbally staged contentions *in utramque partem*—see (Forcione 1984, pp. 179, 186, 228)—the articulated and (virtually) embodied ‘intraspecies’ altercation between the two canines, in the manner of their choice: be it primarily for purposes of pleasure (*delectare*), of edification (*docere*), or for effecting an emotionally responsive state of mind (*movere*); be it as a piece of epideictic rhetoric (the *genus demonstrativum*, chiefly in its variant of blaming rather than praising), an (implicit) exhortation (based on a scene featuring several voices, as in the *genus deliberativum*), an indictment of contemporary society (qua infinitized ‘lawsuit’, pertaining to the *genus iudiciale*); be it as a secular confession, an extended fable, a (Menippean, carnivalesque) satire or dialogic diatribe, a *novela picaresca*, a meta-dialog, a metalingual or metapoetical treatise; be it as a socio-historically, epistemologically informative, zoopoetically plausible narrative (simultaneously encouraging and facilitating the taking of other perspectives); be it still, or altogether, otherwise.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ See spec. Hoffmann’s “Nachricht von den Neuesten Schicksalen des Hundes Berganza” (Hoffmann 2006, pp. 101–77, II.v; cf. pp. 690n.–723n.). See the synopses in Ziolkowski’s ch. “Talking Dogs: The Caninization of Literature” (Ziolkowski 1983, pp. 86–122, spec. 102–22, 240–45); on Unamuno’s *Niebla*, see (Friedman 2006, pp. 264–65, 303); as to Lizardi’s “Conference of a Bull and a Horse”, cf. (Alves 2011, p. 198); for further references concerning the *coloquio*’s ‘afterlife’ in other texts, see also (Nolting-Hauff 1987, p. 192); (Johnson 1991, pp. 23, 23n.); (Beusterien 2016, pp. 24–25, 45n.); (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 81); as regards the “representational strategies of the illustration of ‘El coloquio de los perros’” in its various editions over the centuries, see (Manning 2007, passim, spec. p. 148, here p. 136).

¹⁰⁰ The Spanish has forms of ‘to seem’: “no quiero que parezcamos predicadores” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 311); “Todo eso es predicar, Cipión amigo [. . .] Así me lo parece a mí, y así, callo” (p. 312).

¹⁰¹ Generally, cf. (Forcione 1984, p. 17); (Dunn 2010, p. 86); (Hart 1979, pp. 378–79, 382, 384n.). For the rhetorical genera, see (Lausberg 2008, pp. 52–61, §§59–65). On the dialog’s dynamics, cf. the metatextual reference in the framework narrative: “púselo en forma de coloquio por ahorrar de *dijo Cipión, respondió Berganza*, que suele alargar la escritura” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 295); cf. (Aylward 2010, p. 238). On Cervantine dialog, see (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 70–76); (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, pp. 211, 222, passim); cf. spec. “Cervantes’s works culminate in dialogism” (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, p. 211); “a plurality of voices surfaces *within the text*” (p. 222). Kohlauer also suggests: “In vielerlei Hinsicht liest sich das Hundegespräch wie eine pointierte Persiflage auf die *Disputatio* des Mittelalters [. . .] ebenso [‘käme’] das gelehrte Streitgespräch der Renaissance in Frage” (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 71). The intratextual framework offers (Aesopic) fables, folktales, for generic situating: “¿Si se nos ha vuelto el tiempo de Maricastaña, cuando hablaban las calabazas, o el de Isopo, cuando departía el gallo con la zorra y unos animales con otros!” (Cervantes 2002b, p. 294). Berganza applies to his situation a specific Aesopic fable regarding a “donkey” (Cervantes 2016b, pp. 464–65);

7. 'Against the Dog only a Dog': Talking Canines Humanizing Cynicism

qué quiere decir filosofía; que aunque yo la nombro, no sé lo que es;
sólo me doy a entender que es cosa buena.

(Cervantes 2002a, p. 320)

Rhetorical techniques of indirection (especially such as pertain to a multiplication, interlacing of narrative levels) are prevalent in the Cervantine *œuvre* overall—and also in the novellas at hand.¹⁰² Rather than lecturing the addressee by itemizing how the human Cynic must be and act, the *coloquio's* two dogs talk—as textual canines—about how they are and behave in (literary) fact: a vivid, virtually actual embodiment of the etymological root of the word 'cynic' ('*kyon*')—rather than a human being observing and adopting animal traits, with 'Diogenes' being dubbed a 'dog' due to his flagrantly crude conduct.¹⁰³ Via the contrast of Berganza's (articulated) bearing (as a literal canine) to that on the part of the humans in his narrated lifeworld, the reader—taking the textual dog's perspective at a metalevel—may have a tendency to side with the colloquy's canine approach as represented by this

in his exegesis, focusing on the (rhetorical) *aptum*, he uses the term "pícaro" re one who might pertinently imitate a donkey: "rebuzne" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 313); this also links to the mention of "Apuleius's Golden Ass", "El asno de oro" (Cervantes 2016b, p. 491; Cervantes 2002a, p. 339); cf. (El Saffar 1976, p. 63). The text's structure (a life story, usually *ab ovo*; narrated episodically; tendering a sequence of various masters served, locales visited, customs observed; with a tone ranging from tongue-in-cheek to caustic; etc.) implicitly signals the picaresque; cf. and contrast (El Saffar 1976, pp. 15, 38–39, 46; El Saffar 1974, pp. 63–64, 80); see (Forcione 1984, pp. 7, 15, 24–29, 89–99, 156–58, passim); (Schmauser 1996, pp. 198, 201); (Teuber 2005, p. 254); (Ziolkowski 1983, pp. 100, 102); (Gossy 1989, pp. 59–60, 72–74, 128n.–129n.); (Gaylord 2002, pp. 114, 127n.–128n.); (Aylward 2010, pp. 237–39); (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 66–69, 78); (Nolting-Hauff 1987, passim, spec. pp. 185–87), also in conjunction with (Nolting-Hauff 1983, passim); re the *coloquio*, see (Nolting-Hauff 1987, pp. 190–92); cf. "metapicaresque" (Echevarría 1980, p. 19, cf. spec. p. 23, passim); the latter reprinted in (Echevarría 1993, pp. 48–65, here 54); the initial setting conduces thereto, in signaling a deviant milieu: "Seville ['Sevilla'] [...] that shelter of the poor and refuge of outcasts, whose grandeur not only finds a place for the lowly, but also allows the great to go unnoticed" (Cervantes 2016b, p. 464; Cervantes 2002a, p. 302); on Seville in this respect, see (Küpper 1990, p. 403). Sieber suggests: "Lo que lee es una 'novela picaresca' [...] una parodia del género [...] . Las aventuras de un perro son en realidad una experiencia de intertextualidad. Tiene todos los elementos: el punto de vista autobiográfico [...], padres desconocidos [...], sirve a muchos amos [...], y juega el papel de satírico, castigando a la mayoría de sus amos, y descubriendo sus vidas hipócritas" (Sieber 2002, p. 35). Campuzano—admitting to his "intención tan torcida y traidora", while preferring to prudently omit it ("que la quiero callar")—qualifies a literary (secular) confession thus: "aunque estoy diciendo verdades, no son verdades de confesión, que no pueden dejar de decirse" (Cervantes 2002b, p. 286); rhetorically, this pertains to the office of *dispositio* ('being economical with the truth'); generally, see (Lausberg 2008, pp. 241–47, §§443–452). Cf. "Una verdad te quiero confesar, Cipión" (Cervantes 2002a, p. 344). "The very fact of a succession of masters undermines the ideal of loyalty of which the dogs have spoken. Berganza's narration is, from a dog's point of view, a confession. He has failed as a loyal servant. [...] Berganza justifies his disloyalty by citing the hypocrisies and deceptions of men" (El Saffar 1974, pp. 67–68). The witch (like an unrepentant 'Augustinian') seems to be making her willful 'confessions' to a dog—cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 41–42, 59–60, 63, 68, 89–91, 135–37, 178). As regards genre (and apart from brief mentions of "the humanist dialogue" (Beusterien 2016, p. 57; cf. pp. 37–38), Beusterien seems to limit the *coloquio* to a "ground-breaking version" of the "animal exemplum" (p. 40; "revolutionary", p. 39; cf. pp. 8, 49, 51, 53–54, 57); "Cervantes [...] not only radically reconfigure[s] the animal exemplum and the humanist dialogue, but the renaissance representation of the canine. [...] Cervantes borrows renaissance conceptions of the animal only to reconfigure them" (Beusterien 2016, p. 57). Even when omitting the narrative framework that is *El casamiento engañoso* from the analysis (which hardly seems a sustainable approach, given its textual presence in the *coloquio*), such a generic mono-focus will seem problematic for this (and very likely for any other) Cervantine text. Incidentally, Beusterien's all but categorical emphasis on the genre of the *exemplum* might, from his own point of view, not seem to be exactly conducive to the Animal Studies approach he claims. Focusing on (Menippean) 'satire' and the 'carnavalesque' (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 54; cf. pp. 56–57, 60, 63, spec. 64–70, 74–78, 81, passim), Kohlhauer reads the *coloquio* as a 'parody' ("parodistisches [...] Spiel") on "animal literature" (p. 53; trans. dsm; cf. pp. 57, 60, 65, 75, spec. 77, 79–81, passim); "eine Parodie, eine Satire der Satire" (p. 66), 'breaking with all of its conventions' (p. 54; cf. pp. 56–58, 60, 77, passim); he stresses its "'desymbolization' [...] of the *conditio animalis*" (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 62; trans. dsm; cf. p. 77). Metapoetically, Sieber sees Cervantes 'satirizing' "la falta de estructura aristotélica de esas novelas picarescas" (Sieber 2002, p. 35). One might consider the poet's all but exclusive emphasis on the "espectáculos" (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 352–53, here 353) as staging the effects of not following Aristotle in this respect; on '*opsis*', see (Aristotle 1995, pp. 52–55, §6, 1450b); cf. (Mayfield 2017b, p. 27n.). Cf. "Esta *novela* [sic. the *coloquio*] es [...] una *meta-novela*"—Dunn cited in (Sieber 2002, p. 38n.); cf. (Gaylord 2002, pp. 115–16). Cf. "a colloquy about the colloquy" in general, "a kind of metadialog" (Kohlhauer 2002, p. 75; trans. dsm; cf. p. 77).

¹⁰² See e.g., (Forcione 1984, pp. 24, 27, 178–79); (El Saffar 1976, p. 16); (Aylward 2010, pp. 250, 253, passim); (Kohlhauer 2002, pp. 75, 79–81, passim).

¹⁰³ With the second to last item *cum grano salis*, the ensuing précis might be utile: "Various reasons were given for the [...] canine title: [...] sexual shamelessness, [...] biting criticism—and [...] sycophancy—[...] homeless frequenting of the streets" (Riley 1976, p. 192; cf. and contrast p. 196); see (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 97).

interlocutor in the dialog.¹⁰⁴ In this indirect way, the *persona* of a human cynic (generally conceived) is implicitly (at the discursive level) reshaped by a textually literal recourse to the very animal that provided the name in the first place—a complex situation of (partly latent) discursive remodeling that relies precisely on (the recipient’s appresentation of) the dogs textually present in their capacity as animals.

Echoing the framework narrative’s account concerning the apparently renowned conduct of the clinic’s canines, the ensuing tenders Berganza’s perspective, describing his (view of his) canine performance within the colloquy’s (virtual) world:

one night, seeing you [‘viéndote’] carrying a lantern [‘llevar la linterna’] in the company of that good Christian, Mahudes, I perceived you to be contented, virtuous, and engaged in pious actions [‘contento y justa y santamente ocupado’]. And, full of righteous envy [‘buena envidia’], I sought to follow in your footsteps [‘quise seguir tus pasos’], and with this laudable intention I presented myself to Mahudes, who straightaway chose me to be your companion and brought me to this hospital (Cervantes 2016b, p. 507; Cervantes 2002a, p. 355).¹⁰⁵

Concurrently present with the (socio-historically, zoopoetically plausible) literal plane, the concept of (visually induced) *imitatio* appears to be patent at a discursive level.¹⁰⁶ The dogs, as animals, seem ‘humanized’ (qua process)—especially Berganza. Still, he is not presented (respectively: does not represent himself) as an idealized specimen—even after joining the hospital crew.¹⁰⁷ Throughout his (narrated) life, he often acts in not exactly ethical ways: partly (and plausibly) due to his factually canine nature—see (Schmauser 1996, pp. 78–79); in part because his behavior as animal always seems influenced by human (while not strictly humane) conduct—with the doctrinal root of this (‘fallen’) state of affairs being explicit.¹⁰⁸ Even so, Berganza’s actions are humanized (at a metalevel) in that he

¹⁰⁴ Rhetorically, this is a most effective (because indirect) device, since (even provisionally) ‘identifying’ with the hounds is not necessary: the delegation of humanity to dogs does not inevitably make a claim as to the comportment of humans (only potentially)—thereby refraining from a moralizing ‘you should/ought to’; generally, see (Aylward 2010, p. 258). Cf. “One of the peculiar effects of the *Colloquy* [...] is its heavy thrust toward dogmatic assertion and its simultaneous resistance to that very thrust. A double elusiveness” (Forcione 1984, p. 17; cf. p. 18); generally, Krauss states “[d]af’s Cervantes nicht moralisieren ging” (Krauss 1940, p. 22).

¹⁰⁵ While also being a reference to a traceable historical individual, cf. (Alonso 1942, *passim*, spec. pp. 301–302), the syllables in the name of Berganza’s and Scipio’s master may also allude to the other world religions (previously) present on the Iberian peninsula—a hypothesis reinforced by the emphatic phrase in its vicinity (with thanks to Prof. Küpper for this suggestion).

¹⁰⁶ As to his previous capacity for imitative behavior: “cuando me daban nueces o avellanas las partía como mona [...] ensalada [...] comí como si fuera persona” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 316).

¹⁰⁷ Contrast (Forcione 1984, pp. 161–63).

¹⁰⁸ Cf. Forcione on “the manner in which Berganza implicates himself in the folly that he surveys” (Forcione 1984, p. 175; cf. p. 235); hence suggestions of “heroism”, cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 154–66, here 154), of “Berganza” qua “true descendant of the Socratic school of philosophers” (p. 160; equally re Neo-Stoic elements, pp. 163–68), may seem problematic. Berganza is a hound of many names and masters—but ultimately his own; his ‘service mentality’ tends to be motivated by the fact that it serves him to serve—when it does: “Yo, de corrido, ni pude ni quise seguirle” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 354); “Pero, en efeto, llevado de mi buen natural, quise responder a lo que a mi amo debía, pues tiraba sus gajes y comía su pan, como lo deben hacer no sólo los perros honrados, a quien se les da renombre de agradecidos, sino todos aquellos que sirven” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 320); cf. “buen natural” (p. 313); see (Forcione 1984, pp. 157–58). Throughout, he leaves his ‘masters’: “servía bien [...] y nadie me despidió, si no era que yo me despidiese, o, por mejor decir, me fuese” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 312); “sin despedirme de nadie” (p. 332); this conduct is sometimes rationalized as a defensive move: “acordé de poner tierra en medio, quitándomeles delante de los ojos. Halléme un día suelto, y sin decir adiós a ninguno de casa, me puse en la calle” (p. 323). Berganza expressly instrumentalizes a virtue: “la humildad [...] es un medio [...] Désta [...] me aprovechaba yo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 312); crucially, cf. (p. 316); see (Hart 1979, pp. 380–81, 383); contrast (Antonio 1953, p. 307); (Riley 1976, p. 197); (Forcione 1984, pp. 162–64, 169–74). Scipio states: “Berganza, si tú fueras persona, fueras hipócrita, y todas las obras que hicieras fueran aparentes, fingidas y falsas, cubiertas con la capa de la virtud, sólo por que te alabaran, como todos los hipócritas hacen” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 321). This parallels the witch’s ‘Machiavellian’—see (Machiavelli 1995, pp. 115–20, XVIII); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 118, 122, 125–26, 133–41, 146, 150, 173–75, 193, *passim*)—explanation of her conduct: “rezo poco, y en público; murmuro mucho, y en secreto; vame mejor con ser hipócrita que con ser pecadora declarada [...] En efeto: la santidad fingida no hace daño a ningún tercero, sino al que la usa. [...] Este consejo te doy: que seas bueno en todo cuanto pudieres; y si has de ser malo, procura no parecerlo en todo cuanto pudieres” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 340); “cubro con la capa de la hipocresía mis muchas faltas” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 342); on “murmuración and hypocrisy”, see (El Saffar 1974, pp. 66–68, here 66); cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 29–30, 175–76); (Ihrie 1982,

does not partake in ‘man’s inhumanity’—on account of his kind caninity (as commonly conceived); and since he ties in with human(ist) values otherwise (considered) inaccessible to an animal, such as moral philosophical musings of the following nature: “premeditated vengeance bespeaks cruelty and a spiteful disposition” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 506).¹⁰⁹

From a meta-perspective, Berganza is neither portrayed as an utterly deprived, all but depraved, and then (partially) reformed ‘pícaro’—nor as an idealized sage in canine skin. Rather, he is presented in terms of a conceivable ‘*errare caninum est*’: a flawed, ultimately considerate *animal quasi rationale*, concurrently capable of aggressive and gentle conduct—precisely as Plato’s ‘Socrates’ had envisioned the guardians of his *pólis* by heuristically tying in with an apparent coincidence of opposites occurring naturally in the observable behavior of dogs (precisely in their capacity as animals). Alleviating its rigor, the Cervantine version outperforms the Epictetian reformulation of the Cynic by rendering the cynical Berganza a dog in fact—a decidedly down-to-earth one, with visible defects in accord with the current discursive climate (Original Sin, affecting nature as a whole).¹¹⁰ While still ‘only’ barking (a literal dog in his own narrative), Berganza is forced to keep his observations to himself; not speaking the human tongue, he is naturally unable to gradually alter or somewhat alleviate (say, by introducing laws) the state of affairs—the human condition—he witnesses:

since it was easier for me to perceive all these things than to reform them, I decided not to pay any attention to them. I therefore sought refuge in a sanctuary, as so many do when they renounce vices when they can no longer practice them, although it’s better late than never (Cervantes 2016b, pp. 506–7).¹¹¹

pp. 113–14). In *Scripture*, an explicit effect of the Fall is described in *Gen* 3:19, which Berganza echoes: “me hallaba bien con el oficio de guardar ganado, por parecerme que comía el pan de mi sudor y trabajo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 310); even so, and against his apparently best intentions, he is not actually performing his task (“Desesperábame de ver de cuán poco servía mi mucho cuidado y diligencia”), being deceived by the shepherds, whose malevolence (“los pastores eran los lobos”) evinces another effect of the Fall (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 310–11). Cf. “A lo menos, yo haré de mi parte mis diligencias, y supla las faltas el cielo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 315); see (Cervantes 2002b, p. 292); (Forcione 1984, p. 146).

¹⁰⁹ The Spanish resembles a (proverbial, forensic) *sententia*: “la venganza pensada arguye crueldad y mal ánimo” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 354). Even so, Berganza is not only a barking dog, but also a biting one (both: literally, figuratively); his intermittent factual mordancy in several episodes, e.g., (Cervantes 2002a, pp. 322–23, 331, 344–45); cf. (Hart 1979, pp. 381–82) might be seen to ‘translate’ into a certain incisiveness; since sarcasm (‘tearing flesh’ verbally) does not seem to be his case (*murmuración*, cynicism, being somewhat more on the ‘insidiously’ subtle side), one might argue that ‘the gift of speech’ as such already somewhat blunts his ‘bite’ (particularly in this dialogic setting, and self-interestedly); cf. (Cervantes 2002a, p. 321). On ‘man’s inhumanity’, cf. e.g., “these butchers kill a man as readily [‘con la misma facilidad’] as they kill a cow” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 455; Cervantes 2002a, p. 303); generally, see (Mayfield 2015, pp. 197–98). Cf. “the world of the *Coloquio* is a world of beasts [. . .] [with] human beings everywhere descending to the level of the beast [. . .] The association of man’s inhumanity with bestiality in Christian writings is [. . .] as ancient as the Bible” (Forcione 1984, p. 83; cf. pp. 117–18, 132).

¹¹⁰ See Riley’s twist-in-the-tail formulation: “Berganza [. . .] keeps lapsing and finally gives up trying to avoid making remarks that might be construed as malicious” (Riley 1976, p. 195). Cf. Scipio’s *sententia*: “since doing evil is a thing that comes natural[ly] [‘viene de natural cosecha’], it’s easy to learn how to do it” (Cervantes 2016b, p. 454; Cervantes 2002a, p. 302). At the metalevel—and in contrast to Baroja’s view, stressing the “humorous touches” regarding the witch’s depiction qua mediated via a dog (Baroja 2001, p. 219; cf. p. 220)—it will hardly be without discursive import that the didactic formulation of the doctrine (and vicious cycle) of Original Sin—thereto, cf. (Küpper 1990, pp. 51n., 55–56, 56n., 116, 122, 159, 401–2, 414–15, 421, *passim*)—is put into the witch’s mouth, acting as a “teóloga”: “Dios es impecable; de do se infiere que nosotros somos autores del pecado, formándole en la intención, en la palabra y en la obra, todo permitiéndolo Dios, por nuestros pecados [. . .] la costumbre del vicio se vuelve en naturaleza [. . .] como el deleite me tiene echados grillos a la voluntad, siempre he sido y seré mala” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 342; cf. p. 344); (*Rom* 7:19; see *Mt* 4:6, *Lk* 4:10–11); cf. (Forcione 1984, p. 171). In his picaresque, partly cynical rationalizations, Berganza sometimes begins sounding like the ‘Machiavellian’ witch: “hoy se hace una ley, y mañana se rompe, y quizá conviene que así sea. Ahora promete uno de enmendarse de sus vicios, y de allí a un momento cae en otros mayores” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 321). Generally, cf. “the canine viewpoint functions as an alienating device that exposes human affairs in a cynical light. [. . .] scarcely an aspect of early seventeenth-century Spanish society fails to come under the cynical eye of the dog Berganza” (Ziolkowski 1983, p. 102).

¹¹¹ Riley notes “[t]he touch of cynical humour in these words” (Riley 1976, p. 197); cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 177–78); (Hart 1979, p. 383). Generally, see Berganza’s struggling with his being unable to articulate himself in the human tongue, cf. (Schmauser 1996, p. 77); (Gossy 1989, pp. 73–74); (Dunn 2010, p. 99): “queriendo decirselo, alcé la voz, pensando que tenía habla, y en lugar de pronunciar razones concertadas ladré” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 358). He speaks of “la grande tentación que tengo de hablar” (p. 304); “me acuden palabras a la lengua como mosquitos al vino” (p. 315). Berganza says he had considered speaking before being capable thereof: “determiné, como si hablar supiera, aprovecharme dellos [sc. frases ‘latines’]” (p. 318). See his semiotic behavior: “Bajé yo la cabeza en señal de obedecerla” (p. 336); “Dijele bajando la cabeza

While freely admitting to his shortcomings and not abandoning his canine nature, Berganza (at the literal level, in his textually natural capacity qua dog) does indeed do his part throughout (not only at the hospital)—mostly (alleging that he is) acting more ‘humanely’ (in a humanist acceptance) than ostensive ‘humans’ (in the textual realm he crafts in his capacity as narrator, and by way of his narrative).¹¹² Even so (one might conjecture, at a metalevel), a human being—while not able to give up its flawed nature (in the orthodox view)—may play its part for the time being.

As the extensive history of reception concerning Diogenical matter evinces, all of the manifold attempts at moralizing—civilizing, humanizing, housebreaking—that apparently feral ‘*kýon*’ ultimately proved feckless: always, the appealingly appalling mélange that is cynicism—its skillful contumely, its refined disrespect, its elegant indelicacy in stance and statement, see (Mayfield 2015, pp. 1, 12–13, 53–55, 98n., 109, 390n.)—has effectively outshone and outdone any Epictetus or Enlightenment representative (much less any more recent attempters) as might have felt it incumbent on themselves to muzzle the matter.¹¹³ For ‘*parrhesía*’ (‘saying it all’, freedom of speech) remains ‘the most appealing thing among men’—as ‘Diogenes’ is said to have asserted.¹¹⁴ After more than two millennia, the Cervantine *coloquio*—specifically its character Berganza, semiotically present as a literal canine, and (all but inevitably) appresented as such by the recipient—is arguably still the closest any text has come in terms of pitting a (discursively) functional opponent against the *persona* of the arch-Cynic: ‘*nemo contra Canem nisi canis ipse*’, ‘against the Dog only a dog’.¹¹⁵

que sí haría” (p. 343); on the expectation of human beings in this regard, cf. (Cervantes 2002a, p. 339); they tend to act as if the hound could talk: “y todos me hablaron, y así me preguntaban por mi amo como si les hubiera de responder” (p. 332). To facilitate (the semblance of) a dialog, the witch generally supplies what she surmises might be Berganza’s queries: “Quisíerale yo preguntar [. . .], y parece que me leyó el deseo, pues respondió a mi intención como si se lo hubiera preguntado” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 341; cf. p. 312, between the dogs)—this might also imply the reader’s position.

¹¹² Despite his disavowals: “la virtud, [. . .] con alcanzárseme a mí tan poco, o nada, della” (Cervantes 2002a, p. 316). Berganza (says he) makes up for his masters’ faults, lies: “por no sacar mentiroso a mi amo” (p. 334). As to Humanism in this respect, see (Forcione 1984, pp. 15–16, 146–86, spec. 152–53, 186, 215, 227, 235, passim); cf. (Forcione 1982, passim).

¹¹³ Regarding cynicism in “The Glasswork Graduate”: “Vidriera is a mixture of attractive and unattractive qualities. [. . .] his likable qualities combined with his ruthless critical intellect” (Riley 1976, p. 190); while the context is problematic, cf. the felicitous link between “wit” and “vituperative” in this respect (Babb cited in (Riley 1976, p. 191).

¹¹⁴ “Asked what was the most beautiful thing among men [‘en anthrópois’], he [sc. ‘Diogenes’] replied: ‘The free word’ [‘παρρησία’]” (D. Laertius 2008, p. 312, VI.69; trans. dsm; D. Laertius 2005, p. 70); see (Mayfield 2015, pp. 52–53). Cf. “the unsparing candor of the Cynic philosopher” (Forcione 1984, p. 6; cf. p. 228). On *parrhesía* and ‘propriety’ in the *coloquio*, see (Cervantes 2002a, p. 319); cf. (Forcione 1984, pp. 5–8, 13). While embedded in a problematic context, the following seems decisive: “Berganza y Cipión [. . .] dicen todo cuanto quieren y como quieren. [. . .] Los dos perros, murmuración adelante, llegan a murmurar de la murmuración” (Antonio 1953, p. 305); re Erasmus in this respect, cf. (Forcione 1984, p. 183). *Parrhesía*, paradoxically put: animals cannot talk, so they might say whatever they want.

¹¹⁵ Cf. the following motto, opening part IV of Goethe’s *Dichtung und Wahrheit*: “*Nemo contra deum nisi deus ipse*” (Goethe 1962, p. 205); cf. (Blumenberg 2006a, p. 596, passim). This oppositional structure reflects the arch-Cynic’s tendency of aiming at outshining anyone—as inscribed into several encounters with seeming ‘social superiors’, such as ‘Philip’, ‘Plato’—as to the latter, cf. e.g., (D. Laertius 2005, pp. 28–29, VI.26); (Forcione 1984, p. 183); (Mayfield 2015, pp. 25n., 26–27, 37n., 44, 44n., 47n., 52n.)—with the most emblematic being: “When [. . .] sunning himself [. . .], Alexander [. . .] stood over him [sc. ‘Diogenes’] and said, ‘Ask of me any boon you like’. To which he replied, ‘Stand out of my light’ [‘apokótesón mou’, sc. ‘unshadow me!’]” (D. Laertius 2005, pp. 40–41, VI.38); cf. (Mayfield 2015, pp. 20n., 27–28, 42–43, 47–48, passim). In this respect, the *coloquio*’s being (in generic label, in textual fact) a multidirectional, polyphonic dialog is fundamental—see (Spadaccini and Talens 1989, pp. 222, 229): an uncynical Scipio’s counterclaims, his more restrained *persona* and presence, are articulated and active throughout—even while Berganza is performing his (intermittently) parrhesiastic, cynical self.

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Article

The Search for Dog in Cervantes

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Abstract: This paper reconsiders the missing *galgo* from the first line in *Don Quixote* with a set of interlocking claims: first, that Cervantes initially established the groundwork for including a talking dog in *Don Quixote*; second, through improvisation Cervantes created a better *Don Quixote* by transplanting the idea for a talking dog to the *Coloquio*; and third, that Cervantes made oblique references to the concept of dogs having human intelligence within the novel.

Keywords: Cervantes; talking dogs; narratology; animal studies

1. Introduction

“[Cervantes] saw his scenes and the actors in them as pictures in his mind before he put them on paper, much as El Greco [see Figure 1] made little clay models of his figures before painting them.” (Bell 1947, p. 101)



Figure 1. Detail from El Greco, *Adoration of the Magi* (1568), Museo Soumaya, Mexico City. Public domain (Greco 1568).

The knight-errant Don Quixote wears his armor, carries his lance, and rides his skinny steed Rocinante throughout the novel and in the popular imagination. But what happened to the greyhound, or *galgo*? Why does Cervantes mention a hidalgo’s *galgo* at the start of the first chapter of Book I of *Don Quixote*, and why does he let it disappear?

This unexplained absence seems to be a clear violation of the dramatic principle of “Chekhov’s Gun,” i.e., “Don’t put a loaded gun on stage if you don’t plan to shoot it” (Chekhov 1976). In this case,

the loaded gun is a fast greyhound, introduced alongside the most iconic items carried by the knight only to be relegated to being a mere detail on the level of a pot of stew.

The famous first line of the novel:

“In a village in La Mancha (I don’t want to bother you with its name) there lived, not very long ago, one of those gentlemen who keep a lance in the lance-rack, an ancient shield, a skinny old horse, and a fast greyhound.” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 13)

“En un lugar de la Mancha, de cuyo nombre no quiero acordarme, no ha mucho tiempo que vivía un hidalgo de los de lanza en astillero, adarga antigua, rocín flaco y galgo corredor.” (Cervantes 1999a, pt 1 chp. 1)

Given its prominent placement, one might expect the greyhound to reappear elsewhere within the novel, as do Don Quixote’s lance, shield, and horse. Any such expectation is confounded. Certainly, you would not expect a dog to appear in a book of chivalry, and nevertheless, in the very first sentence of a parody that, according to the Prologue,¹ “tries to shatter the authority of all those tales of chivalry” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 11), we find a dog. Bakhtin cites *Don Quixote* as an exemplar of parody (Bakhtin 1981, p. 51) and of the “novelistic hybrid” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 361) that mixes high and low, “dragging what is being compared [i.e., chivalric novels] down to the dregs of an everyday gross reality congealed in prose” (Bakhtin 1981, p. 386). In a parody, by any definition and of any genre, a dog would not be out of place.

The learned Cervantista knows full well that the *galgo* from the first line never reappears, but the first-time reader, expecting parody and immediately finding a dog, might anticipate a second appearance of the *galgo* for comic effect, or if nothing else, to mark the moment of separation between hound and hunter. These divergent expectations separating naïve from experienced readers illustrate reader-response theory and Iser’s “active interweaving of anticipation and retrospection” (Iser 2007, p. 1006). On a first reading of *Don Quixote*, a person, particularly one attuned to the presence of literary animals (e.g., by a child or an animal narratologist), would anticipate eventual resolution on the question of the *galgo*; but even these readers would, in retrospect, relegate the detail to apparent meaninglessness upon the unfolding of the story. It is the project of this paper to revisit that overly hasty dismissal.

The English-language critical literature only lightly covers the topic of the *galgo*. Flores explains the missing *galgo* as a symbolic representation of the world of the past that Don Quixote is about to abandon: “Cervantes, who in his opening sentence is juggling with the past [...], the present [...], and the future (the hidalgo, the *lanza en astillero*, the *adarga antigua*, and the *rocín flaco* will transform later on into a knight, a fighting weapon, a protective shield, and Rocinante, respectively), can then and there both mention and dispense with the past of the hidalgo (the greyhound) with which the future knight will have nothing to do” (Flores 1993, pp. 212–13).

Beusterien looks at the actual encounters with *galgos* in the narrative, leaving out those times when characters merely refer to *galgos* metaphorically or in passing conversation. He writes:

“Generally, Cervantes was interested in dogs. He wrote ‘El coloquio de los perros,’ the most provocative dog dialogue ever written. The opening line of Don Quijote reminds the reader of one of the protagonist’s former companions. Quijano has an old galgo corredor. When Quijote leaves on his first sally, he never mentions the dog again. Although at the end of his adventures Quijote does not return to that galgo that he left behind, the conclusion of Part II mentions his meeting with galgos. When Quijote reaches his

¹ In the prologue to Part I, the author is interrupted while sitting at his desk: “. . . wondering what I ought to say, one of my friends suddenly came in, clever, smart, and seeing me so buried in thought asked me why, and I didn’t hide anything from him . . .” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 7). Nowhere does it say that this unnamed friend, who gains unbidden access to the writer’s inner sanctum, was human.

village and arrives home for good (to die), some greyhounds chase a rabbit right between the feet of Sancho's donkey." (Beusterien 2010, p. 101)

This paper reconsiders the missing *galgo* in *Don Quixote* with a set of interlocking claims: first, that Cervantes initially established the groundwork for including a talking dog in *Don Quixote*; second, through improvisation Cervantes created a better *Don Quixote* by transplanting the idea for a talking dog to the *Coloquio*; and third, that Cervantes made oblique references to the concept of dogs having human intelligence within the novel. These assertions synthesize readings in Cervantes scholarship combined with the burgeoning field of animal narratology at the intersection of narratology and animal studies.

In constructing an argument, I make some simplifying assumptions, the first being that the immediate disappearance of the *galgo* was intentional. In the words of Bruce Wardropper: "In judging a work of art the critic must assume first the relevance of every detail" (Wardropper 1957, p. 588). The alternative is that Cervantes carelessly neglected to tie up the loose end of a missing *galgo* throughout scores of ensuing chapters; that Homer nods. Such inadvertent forgetting would form the basis for an intriguing psychoanalytic reading based on the *galgo*, following Johnson's procedure for approaching the question of the unconscious in texts: "... to look for gaps in the discourse which reveal the presence of something concealed beneath the visible surface, or, in El Saffar's phrase, something left unsaid" (Johnson 1993, p. 82). What, then, would it mean for Cervantes to have concealed the presence of the hunting dog, a symbol of wealth and nobility, even while elevating to mythical status the worn-out nag Rocinante? If unintentional, such an erasure would speak volumes about Cervantes in relation to his society's perception of the utility of animals—and yet it is much more satisfying to consider the erasure an intentional move that reveals something left unsaid about Cervantes's artistry.

I also assume that the term *galgo* refers to a dog. Gregorio Martínez Navarro suggests that the various English translators have gotten it wrong all these years, that absent the indefinite article ("*un*"), "*galgo corredor*" is an adjectival phrase describing Rocinante rather than a noun phrase referring to what he calls a "ghost greyhound," or "*galgo fantasma*" (Navarro 2006). While this would be a tidy solution to the mystery of the disappearing dog, we will proceed according to the commonly accepted translation, that our *hidalgo* was one of those *hidalgos* with both horse and hound, not a hound-like horse. As none of the items inventoried are preceded by an indefinite article, this strongly suggests that each item should be given similar footing as idiomatic yet independent noun phrases.

My last preliminary assumption is that the dog was not simply a throwaway detail illustrating the *hidalgo* type. The phrase "one of those gentlemen" ("*hidalgo de los de*") suggests that many *hidalgos*, not just Alonso Quijano, possess shield and rack, horse and hound. These possessions and animals act as class and status markers, making the listed items useful to describe a typical member of the Spanish lesser nobility of *hidalgo* gentlemen. Given that three of those items persist as entities throughout the novel, it would be capricious to single out the *galgo* as disposable. We should start with the assumption of the animal's importance, and then seek explanations that illuminate the text in new ways.

The body of the paper includes a brief timeline of the inferred dates of composition for the later works of Cervantes, including *Don Quixote* and the *Exemplary Novels*; followed by three interlocking claims:

1. Cervantes established the groundwork for a talking dog in *Don Quixote*. Although dogs and beasts speak in Cervantes' later works, the genesis of the Cervantine talking animal can be found first in *Don Quixote*. This creates an expectation of animal intelligence throughout the work, and there are indications within the text that allow for the possibility of the *galgo* as being a witness to the archival history of *Don Quixote*.
2. Cervantes improvised a different way forward. Despite the early potential for a talking-dog interlocutor or narrator, there are, as we know, no overt talking dogs in *Don Quixote*. Instead of cultivating a talking-dog story within *Don Quixote*, Cervantes may have transplanted the concept

to “The Colloquy of the Dogs,” or “*El coloquio de los perros*” (hereafter the *Coloquio*). We can identify the precise moment when the *galgo* was written out of the story as Don Quixote’s return from the first sally, when the housekeeper makes no mention of the *galgo* even while accounting for the remaining items of the opening quartet. Shortly thereafter, Sancho Panza was introduced, providing Don Quixote with a human interlocutor that could engage in rich dialogues with other human characters in a way that an animal companion could not.

3. Cervantes makes oblique references to anthropomorphic animal intelligence. The unusual phrase “greyhound of an author” (*galgo de su autor*) suggests an ironic nod to the discarded concept of a talking-dog narrator, prompting a review of Cervantes’ narrative strategies. The further appearances of *galgos* in the novel have hunting-dog connotations, leading to Don Quixote’s confrontation near the end of his life with *galgos* perceived to be wicked magicians. These *galgos* take on new resonance with consideration of the first two claims.

2. Background

Don Quixote was published in two parts: Part I in 1605, and Part II in 1615. In the interim, Cervantes compiled *Exemplary Novels* (Cervantes 2016), published in 1613. *Exemplary Novels* includes the *Coloquio*, a talking-dog story which El Saffar designates as one of those stories “comparable in greatness to *Don Quixote* itself.” Furthermore, El Saffar places the composition of *Coloquio*, and the other highly-regarded stories, as having been “written around the time when Part I was composed, that is, between 1602 and 1606” (Saffar 1976, p. 11). This creates an intriguing picture of other manuscripts sharing the same desk as the First Part of *Don Quixote*, and the presence within *Don Quixote* of interpolated stories supports the timeline. For example, the three-chapter interpolated story *El curioso impertinente*, translated by Raffel as “The Story of the Man Who Couldn’t Keep from Prying,” has been the subject of a longstanding debate about whether it forms an essential part of *Don Quixote*, or if (per Boussagol via Wardropper) it’s “a *novela ejemplar* which Cervantes published as part of his great novel because he had it on his hands” (Wardropper 1957, p. 587). Both points of view can be correct, in that Cervantes may indeed have had on his hands a fully formed idea for *El curioso impertinente*, and in deciding to interpolate it into *Don Quixote*, subsequently found ways to form thematic connections with the work as a whole.

Following the publication of *Exemplary Novels* in 1613, Cervantes’ desk is no tidier than it had been ten years earlier. At that point, he has yet to release the Second Part of *Don Quixote* (Cervantes 1999b) and his collection of plays in *Eight Interludes* (Cervantes 1996) in 1615, and the posthumously-published *Persiles and Sigismunda* (Cervantes 2009) in 2017. In the Second Part of *Don Quixote*, Cervantes no longer interpolates the impertinences of the First Part, and the narrator explains that the Arab historian Cidi Hamete Benengali “had decided not to introduce any separate, artful tales, but only such narratives as, to his mind, emerged out of the strictly historical facts” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 586). Meanwhile, *Persiles and Sigismunda* is almost entirely built on a carefully-wrought framework of interpolated stories from secondary characters. Even though the titular characters remain at the center, their story is revealed only at the end of the novel. The narrative is built around the stories of the people they meet during their adventures, and in this sense, *Persiles and Sigismunda* is the highest expression of the Cervantean aesthetic of interpolation, bringing together a diversity of perspectives from a range of characters without apology for the interruptions. Cervantes wanted to tell stories from different perspectives, and in *Persiles and Sigismunda* he formed the appropriate vehicle to do so.

The interpolated story *El curioso impertinente* in *Don Quixote* could have been easily transplanted into *Exemplary Novels*, which implies that such transplantations occurred during the simultaneous creation of both works. The argument to follow suggests that the *Coloquio* was a transplanted seedling from *Don Quixote* that found more fertile ground for germination in the context of *Exemplary Novels*, and that (to continue the gardening analogy) some of the *Coloquio*’s roots remained intact in *Don Quixote*’s soil.

3. Can I Get a Witness?

The history of the talking animal goes back at least to Aesop (see Ziolkowski 1983), and Carranza describes the influence of Aesop on Cervantes via the 15th century *Life of Aesop* published together with *Aesop's Fables* during Cervantes' lifetime (Carranza 2003, p. 148).

The most obvious example of a talking-animal story in Cervantes can be found in the final part of *Exemplary Novels*, the *Coloquio*, which gives voice to animals long desiring to transmit the contents of their prodigious memories; in the words of the talking dog Berganza: "... ever since I had the strength to gnaw a bone I have wanted to speak, to say things that settled in my memory, and there, being old and numerous, either moldered away or were forgotten" (Cervantes 2016, p. 368). This places us in a fictional world in which dogs not only speak, but also yearn to share the wisdom of their experiences with others.

Cervantes' final work, *Persiles and Sigismunda*, contains talking wolves: "one of them ... I swear it's true ... told me with a clear and distinct voice and in my own language: 'Spaniard, go away and look elsewhere for your fate, unless you wish to die here torn apart by our claws and teeth; and don't ask who it is telling you this, just thank Heaven you've found mercy even among wild animals'" (Cervantes 2009, pp. 40–41).

Yet the first appearance of a talking animal within the works of Cervantes appeared in neither the *Coloquio* nor *Persiles and Sigismunda*, but rather in the commendatory verses in the front matter of *Don Quixote*. The poem "On Rocinante," by El Donoso, the Motley Poet, begins in the voice of the first-person animal:

I am that Rocinante fa-,
Great-grandson of great Babie-,
Who, all for being lean and bon-,
Had one Don Quixote for an own-;
But if I matched him well in weak-,
I never took short commons meek-,
But kept myself in corn by steal-,
A trick I learned from Lazari-,
When with a piece of straw so neat-
The blind man of his wine he cheat—" (Cervantes 1999c)

*Soy Rocinante, el famo-
bisnieto del gran Babie-.
Por pecados de flaque-,
fui a poder de un don Quijo-.
Parejas corrí a lo flo-;
mas, por uña de caba-,
no se me escapó ceba-;
que esto saqué a Lazari-
cuando, para hurtar el vi-
al ciego, le di la pa- (Cervantes 1999a)*

In El Donoso's poem, Rocinante claims knowledge of his lineage back to Babieca, the legendary horse of the medieval warrior El Cid, and in learning the art of theft from a famous episode in *La vida de Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554), the horse also demonstrates a degree of cultural literacy. We also see the poetic device of a missing syllable at the end of each line, a recurring, anticipatory pause evoking the difficulty of human-animal communications. Then, in a commendatory sonnet from the poet Solisdán, Rocinante speaks with Babieca. In this final poem in the front matter, which Haley calls a "*coloquio de los caballos*" ("dialogue of the horses") (Haley 1984, p. 175), the horses speak in complete sentences, animal-to-animal:

B. "How comes it, Rocinante, you're so lean?"
R. "I'm underfed, with overwork I'm worn."
B. "But what becomes of all the hay and corn?"
R. "My master gives me none; he's much too mean."
B. "Come, come, you show ill-breeding, sir, I ween;
'T is like an ass your master thus to scorn."
R. He is an ass, will die an ass, an ass was born;
Why, he's in love; what's plainer to be seen?"
B. "To be in love is folly?"—R. "No great sense."
B. "You're metaphysical."—R. "From want of food."
B. "Rail at the squire, then."—R. "Why, what's the good?"

I might indeed complain of him, I grant ye,
But, squire or master, where's the difference?
They're both as sorry hacks as Rocinante." (Cervantes 1999c)

B. *¿Cómo estáis, Rocinante, tan delgado?*
R. *Porque nunca se come, y se trabaja.*
B. *Pues, ¿qué es de la cebada y de la paja?*
R. *No me deja mi amo ni un bocado.*
B. *Andá, señor, que estáis muy mal criado,*
pues vuestra lengua de asno al amo ultraja.
R. *Asno se es de la cuna a la mortaja.*
¿Queréislo ver? Miraldo enamorado.
B. *¿Es necedad amar? R. No es gran prudencia.*
B. *Metafísico estáis. R. Es que no como.*
B. *Quejaos del escudero. R. No es bastante.*
¿Cómo me he de quejar en mi dolencia,
si el amo y escudero o mayordomo
son tan rocines como Rocinante? (Cervantes 1999a)

On the heels of this dialogue begins the first part of *Don Quixote*. Given the context of the commendatory verses of Cervantes' alter-egos El Donoso and Solisdán, we enter the main narrative of *Don Quixote* with the foreknowledge that through poetry, animals can not only communicate clearly with each other, but also haltingly with a human intermediary. From this, our expectation should be that the animals we encounter possess a humanlike intelligence. In *Don Quixote*, the desire to communicate across species boundaries can be found in both horse and human. In 1.15, the narrator states that "had [the badly-beaten Rocinante] possessed a tongue to complain with, most assuredly neither Sancho nor his master would have been behind him" (Cervantes 1999b, p. 86). Later, Sancho ruminates about his yearning for animals to speak "as they used to in Guisopete [Aesop]'s time," so that he might "tell my donkey anything I felt like, and that way I could live with my bad luck"² (Cervantes 1999b, p. 148). The commendatory verses lay the groundwork for a talking-animal narrative, and yet the desires of both Sancho and Rocinante remain unfulfilled.

² Ormsby translates the phrase "*departiera yo con mi jumento*" (Cervantes 1999c) as "I could talk to Rocinante [sic]," mistaking a donkey (*jumento*) for a horse. Raffel's translation identifies the correct animal, but the phrase "tell my donkey" connotes the animal's passive listening rather than the presence of an Aesopian dialogue partner. According to Covarrubias' 1611 dictionary, the primary meaning of the verb "*departir*" is "*razonar, quando uno pregunta, y otro responde; pero quando uno se lo habla todo, no departe, por que no da parte*" (Covarrubias Horozco 1611, p. 647), or "to reason, when one asks, and another responds; but when only one speaks, one does not *departe*, because one does not *da parte* ['give part,' i.e. allow one's interlocutor to speak]" (translation mine). By this definition, and with his mangled Aesop reference, Sancho wished for an asinine dialogue. It may have been an unequal dialogue, as the following phrase "anything I felt like" ("*lo que me viniera en gana*") (Cervantes 1999c) indicates that Sancho was more interested in speaking his own mind than eliciting the donkey's perspective, but a dialogue nonetheless.

Given these Aesopian traces, we should consider the animals we encounter as sentient beings with the latent ability to communicate in human language, and it is in this spirit that we further investigate the whereabouts of the missing hound. If the *hidalgo* Alonso Quijano indeed had a *galgo* of quiet intelligence, that *galgo* would have been present to observe the activities described in the early chapters. On that premise, we can revisit the opening chapters from the perspective of the canine to imagine what the *galgo* would have seen.

The imagined perspective of the *galgo* comes into play with the idea of *Don Quixote* as a history. Brian D. Patrick writes: “*Don Quixote* presents itself as a (fictive) work of history, and historians generally narrate events of which their knowledge is textually mediated rather than first hand [. . .]” (Patrick 2008, p. 125). Yet history texts must originate in first-hand accounts. Human sources were present during Don Quixote’s adventures with the introduction of Sancho Panza. But who was present to bear witness to Alonso Quijano’s solitary ruminations and his subsequent transformation into Don Quixote?

At home, the *hidalgo* “lived with a housekeeper who was over forty, and a niece who hadn’t reached twenty, plus a boy for the fields and the market” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 13). Presumably, they would have been able to provide some account of the madness of Uncle Alonso. But would the housekeeper have watched silently as Alonso polished up his great-grandfather’s suit of armor, assembled a half-helmet, and tested its strength with a sword? Would the niece or the boy have observed the old man over the course of four days imagining names for his old horse, or for eight days while he thinks up his own title and name, or rehearsing his speech to Dulcinea del Toboso? The only one with the proximity, access, and sentience (per the laws of the Cervantine universe) to bear witness was none other than the *galgo*. In this parody of history, only the *galgo* could have testified as to the soliloquies and reveries of his master.

In the first sally, Cervantes adheres to the constraints of a story having a plausible canine narrator, carefully keeping Don Quixote within earshot of a watchful *galgo*. This suggests that Cervantes, as an improvisatory writer, initially toyed with the idea of a canine source for the historical account of a *hidalgo*-turned-knight.

The narrator uses an interesting turn of phrase when Don Quixote embarks upon his first sally:

“ . . . without telling anyone what he was up to or being seen by a single soul . . . ”
(Cervantes 1999b, p. 17)

“Y así, sin dar parte a persona alguna de su intención, y sin que nadie le viese . . . ”
(Cervantes 1999a, pt 1 chp. 2)

The first part of the phrase states that “*persona alguna*,” or “no person,” was told of his departure, which stands in contrast with the second part of the phrase: “*nadie le viese*,” or “no one saw him.” This offers a pair of clever loopholes—since the *galgo* is not a *persona*, we can imagine Don Quixote revealing to his dog the details of his impending departure. Subsequently, even if the dog did not visually observe Don Quixote’s departure, the dog may have yet borne witness using other senses.

Following Don Quixote’s unseen departure, the *galgo corredor* would have had little trouble tracking him throughout his out-of-doors adventures of the first sally from Chapters 2 through 6, including the visit to the inn; the knighthood ceremony in the stable and the fight with the muledrivers; Andrés being whipped by the farmer Juan Haldudo and the encounter with the Toledo merchants; Don Quixote’s return home; and the inquisition of the library. A *galgo* would make a plausible and consistent witness for these events. Although the concept of dogs-as-pets is a relatively modern invention, in terms of the evolved bond between dogs and humans we are close enough to Cervantes’ time to allow for the notion of a middle-aged man in his library forming a close bond with his dog, even one such as a *galgo* bred for hunting.

An objection may be raised—might the history have relied not on the *galgo*, but rather upon the testimony of the horse Rocinante? After all, the commendatory verses feature talking horses, not talking dogs. Also, Don Quixote asks the “noble chronicler of this extraordinary history” to

“not forget my good Rocinante, unendingly the companion of all my wanderings and my every journey” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 18). Such constant companionship would have made Rocinante an excellent witness. Yet when it comes to the earlier transformation of Alonso Quijano, it strains credulity to expect that a horse would be given access to a gentleman’s library or home. The text states that Alonso Quijano polished his great-grandfather’s suit of armor prior to naming Rocinante (Cervantes 1999b, p. 15), which implies that the horse could not have witnessed this event, nor overheard Alonso’s mutterings as inscribed in the novel.

Of course, we know full well that Cervantes did not, in fact, introduce a talking-dog narrator in *Don Quixote*. *Don Quixote* contains no interpolated story told by a talking dog, or by any talking animal. Before we mourn the loss of the *galgo*, we must identify where Cervantes may have turned away from the idea, how he did so, and what may have deterred him from taking this path.

4. Gone Galgo

Cervantes was an improviser. Roberto González Echevarría finds “a great deal of implicit improvisation” in Part I of *Don Quixote*, with “features of the novel itself that seem to betray their improvised construction” including several “notorious Cervantine oversights” (Echevarría 2015, p. 171). Ramón Menéndez Pidal writes that “Cervantes wanted the action to be fraught with all the trifling inconsistencies of improvisation” and that Cervantes “refuses to be bogged down by useless detail” (Pidal 2005, p. 76). Indeed, one might consider the entire question of the *galgo* to be a useless detail, which would be a reasonable inference were it not for the fact that Cervantes soon turned his pen to the talking-dog short story of the *Coloquio*. If we follow El Saffar’s timeline, the *Coloquio* was written simultaneously with the composition of *Don Quixote*. Thus, the *galgo* must be considered a useful detail, and rather than to make a blanket assertion that the detail doesn’t matter, we should use Cervantes’ improvisatory skill to explain how the animal was erased.

An improvisatory writer would soon chafe at the limitations involved with the labyrinthine plotting needed to have a hidden canine narrator following the protagonist. The concept of a silent, watchful dog stalking *Don Quixote* quickly introduces logistical difficulties and irresolvable complexities. That is, how would a dog possibly follow the adventures of his companion without getting involved in the story? Would a faithful dog have watched silently as his master engaged in armed combat? At some point, the dog in the shadows would need to partake in the hunger, pain, and blanket-tossing. My hypothesis is that Cervantes found a better solution in Sancho Panza. It’s much funnier to have Sancho tossed in a blanket than to subject a *galgo* to similar treatment. Then, we can surmise that Cervantes came up with a better solution for how to tell a talking dog story. Instead of having to choreograph the complex movements of a dog following a single master, he told the retrospective life story of a dog with several masters through a dialogue contained in the frame story of the *Casamiento*.

Given these better alternatives, we find Cervantes pulling a bit of sleight-of-hand to erase the *galgo* from the reader’s memory. After the first sally, the farmer brings Don Quijote home to their villages, where they hear the housekeeper “loudly proclaiming” to the priest and the barber: “He hasn’t been seen in three days, and neither has his horse, or his shield, or his lance, or his armor” (Cervantes 1999b, pp. 32–33). This recitation of missing items closely echoes the first line, except that the last item, the *galgo*, has here been replaced by the armor. Also, the housekeeper inverts the order of the first three items in the sequence. The initial set $S_0 = \{\text{lance, shield, horse, dog}\}$ has been replaced by $S_1 = \{\text{horse, shield, lance, armor}\}$. The narrator shuffles the top three cards, deals “armor” underneath, and slips the dog card up his sleeve. Here is the point of erasure, the very moment when the dog is taken out of play.

What, then, is the armor that takes the place of the *galgo*? Introduced in the first chapter at the very point where Don Quixote puts his notion to become a knight errant into action, the armor is the most singular and distinctive item among Don Quixote’s material possessions, the very object that defines his profile in the popular imagination, and it is an object granted a history of its own:

“The first thing he did was polish up his great-grandfather’s suit of armor, which for a century or so had been lying, thrown in a corner and forgotten, covered with mildew and quietly rusting away.” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 15)

“Y lo primero que hizo fue limpiar unas armas que habían sido de sus bisabuelos, que, tomadas de orín y llenas de moho, luengos siglos había que estaban puestas y olvidadas en un rincón.” (Cervantes 1999a)

Recall that the first line calls him “one of those gentlemen” (“*un hidalgo de los de*”) (Cervantes 1999b, p. 13), an abstraction that suggests the presence of any number of similar gentlemen having the same possessions—a lance in the rack, ancient shield, old nag, and racing greyhound. What sets Don Quixote apart from those other *hidalgos*—apart from the library—is this rusting suit of armor (“*armas*”). In the place of the unseen solitary *galgo*, which Beusterian observes to be “one of the first hunting dogs to be connected with purity of *casta*” (or “breed”) (Beusterien 2010, p. 23), Don Quixote unveils his unusual armor. It’s a curious coincidence to find that a suit of armor with a “metal headpiece that would cover just the top of his skull,” i.e., a *kippah*-like skullcap, had been hidden away “for a century or so” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 15) (or, “for some centuries,” “*luengos siglos*”)—i.e., since well before the time of the 1492 Edict of Expulsion which forced Spain’s Jews to choose between conversion or exile. This leads to an intriguing potential reading of the text that contrasts the pure-breed *galgo* with the Hebraized armor, thus commenting on the purity of blood, or “*limpieza de sangre*,” of Don Quixote, or even of Cervantes himself.³

In Don Quixote’s three-day absence, the housekeeper somehow notices that the “forgotten” armor is missing. This suggests that the armor had in fact not been forgotten, but rather conveniently ignored. The housekeeper never bothered to clean the armor at any point during her employment, but knew enough to include it in her inventory of missing items. She was aware of its existence, even as she tacitly participated in keeping the armor hidden and away from sight in a way completely unlike the lance in the rack and the ancient shield, those totemic items given prominence in the households of one of those typical *hidalgos*. Again, we discover echoes of the Jewish *conversos* forced to convert to Christianity, their hidden histories thrown in a corner, forgotten, and left to rust.

Regarding the *galgo*, the housekeeper says nothing. Since the housekeeper noticed the absence of Don Quixote’s horse, it follows that she might have noticed if his dog had also disappeared to follow its master. We might explain her failure to mention the dog in one of four ways: First, the missing *galgo* may have fallen not under her care; given that it was a hunting dog, it would be the responsibility of the “boy for the fields and the market” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 13). Second, the dog may have returned ahead of its master, and so the housekeeper did not connect the dog’s shorter absence with Don Quixote’s absence. Three, the narrator, translator, or historian purposefully omitted the dog from the story. Fourth, the dog had stayed home. Whatever the explanation, at this very moment, the *galgo* is gone.

³ It remains an unresolved question as to whether Cervantes was of *converso* ancestry (i.e. a “convert” from Judaism to Christianity), with the argument generally divided between those who support the *converso* claim based on textual evidence within Cervantes’ writings and those who reject the claim from a lack of supporting historical evidence. Lokos outlines the history of the argument (Lokos 1999), notably including the modern-day cultural resistance to the idea of a *converso* history for Cervantes’ family. González Echevarría raises the *converso* question to dismiss it: “I am not convinced by the hypothesis, timidly advanced by [Manuel] Durán, that his teacher Americo Castro and other students of his proposed on very flimsy evidence, of a *converso* Cervantes – one, that is, whose purportedly Jewish background would have made him marginal. [...] Castro’s theories are, to my mind, too dependent on the racial hatreds and atrocities of the twentieth century to be applicable with little proof to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries” (Echevarría 2005, p. 13). Durán weighs the lack of proof against Cervantes’ overall tone as a writer: “A critical, ironic bent, plus an affinity for the ideas of Erasmus seem to point in the direction of a *converso* ancestry. The documentary proofs are lacking. Yet some of the best modern Hispanists, Americo Castro and Stephen Gilman among them, lean towards the idea that Cervantes came from a *converso* family” (Durán 2005, p. 32). McGaha surveys the literary and biographical evidence regarding Cervantes’ heritage, including speculation as to the place and circumstances of Cervantes’ birth, and although he remains skeptical of many of the claims based on the historical record, he nevertheless finds that “the most convincing evidence of Cervantes’ *converso* background is the attitudes he displays in his work” (McGaha 2004, p. 174). To the body of textual evidence in favor of the *converso* designation, we may include the contrast between *galgo* and armor.

5. Hunting Dogs

At this point, we can consider other *galgo* occurrences in the text for indications of anthropomorphic animal intelligence. The novel's second mention of *galgo* appears to be an insult:

"...and if indeed there's anything worthwhile missing, I'd blame it on its dog of an author, rather than on any deficiency in the subject itself." (Cervantes 1999b, p. 53)

"... y si algo bueno en ella faltare, para mí tengo que fue por culpa del galgo de su autor, antes que por falta del sujeto." (Cervantes 1999a, pt 1 chp. 9)

The translation "dog of an author" (Raffel), or even "hound of an author" (Ormsby), subsumes the specific *galgo* breed into a larger category. That "*galgo*" is an interdenominational insult seems a reasonable conclusion given that dog-related terms in the Spanish language carry negative linguistic connotations that Beusterien suggest were "inherited from the Semitic repulsion toward the dog" (Iser 2007, p. 99); and indeed, dog-related insults were commonplace on opposite shores of the Mediterranean. In "The Bagnios of Algiers," Cervantes' play inspired by his five-year captivity in Algiers, there are 20 occurrences of the word "*perro*" ("dog") and three occurrences of "*galgo*" (Cervantes 2017) (also translated in the English text as "dog" (Cervantes 2010))—all insults leveled at humans. Nevertheless, the breed specificity marks "*galgo*" as an odd insult, particularly given how it recalls the *hidalgo*'s *galgo*.

The "*galgo de su autor*" comment arrives during a momentous narrative transition. After the first author runs out of source material and abandons the narrative in the middle of a climactic battle in Chapter 8, we then meet a second author in Chapter 9 who discovers a bundle of old notebooks in the Alcaná marketplace at Toledo. The second author has the notebooks translated, revealing the continuation of the history as recorded by the Arab historian Sidi Hamid Benengeli. This transfer of narrative control represents a key moment in what Haley calls the "supplementary story" (Haley 2005, p. 241) of *Don Quijote*:

"The characters in this corollary tale are all involved in the mechanics of telling and transmitting Don Quijote's story. Their adventures, not as violent as Don Quijote's but no less exciting for that, are the search for source materials in Manchegan archives, the creation of a continuous narrative from fragmentary and sometimes overlapping sources, the translation of the continuous narrative from Arabic to Castilian, the recasting of the translation and the publication of the revision, with intrusive commentary at every stage." (Haley 2005, p. 242)

Mancing writes: "Few issues in Cervantine scholarship have attracted more attention than the identification of the narrative voices in the novel and the clarification of relationships among them" (Mancing 2003, p. 118). Mancing identifies the presence of an editor who "undercuts his historian's authority and reliability by describing him as a lying dog of a Moor" (Mancing 1981, p. 66); and moreover, he identifies that editor as none other than the direct authorial presence of the historical Cervantes "who reconstructs the 'history' of Don Quijote, searches the archives of La Mancha, takes note of oral tradition, and pieces together a coherent story", acting as both the narrator of the fictional work starting in Chapter 1, as well as the *segundo autor* ("second author") introduced in Chapter 8 (Mancing 2003, pp. 129–30).

Haley calls this presence an "intermediary," the "shadowy figure who materializes at the end of chapter 8 to join the first author's fragment to the second author's contribution and appears again in the final chapter of part I to supply the concluding remarks" (Haley 2005, p. 244). In contrast to the first author's gullibility in relation to his unexplained sources, the editor displays relative sophistication; what the first author designates as "true" ("*verdadera*") history, the editor calls a "curious" ("*curiosa*") and "pleasant" ("*apacible*") history (Cervantes 1999b, p. 49). In doing so, the editor acts as librarian, recategorizing the book from history to fiction (Haley 1984, p. 179), and then the editor—much like the

galgo—quickly disappears, a “persona invented expressly to tell the beginning of the story, [who] is discarded once the story is underway” (Haley 1984, p. 173).

Parr finds the intermediary narrator active throughout the entire text. The editor “obviously knows more and is therefore more powerful than either the first or second author—[and] can immediately be seen, retrospectively, to demote the first narrative voice, which we had innocently assumed to be the frame narrator, to subordinate or intradiegetic status.” (Parr 2004, p. 127). In an extended analysis drawing on narratological concepts from Genette (1980) and Bal (2009), Parr designates this editorial voice as the “supernarrator” (Parr 1988, p. 11), offering evidence that the supernarrator remains distinct from the second narrator based on their respective attitudes toward Cidi Hamete. The second narrator “was censorious of the Moor” (Parr 1988, p. 16), while the supernarrator had a “more accommodating attitude toward the Moorish historian (Parr 1988, p. 17). Following Parr’s analysis, based on the attitude expressed toward Cidi Hamete we can identify the voice behind “*galgo de su autor*” as the second narrator rather than the supernarrator.

If you’re looking for talking dogs, “*galgo de su autor*” is a tantalizing clue. Stated plainly, what if we took the phrase “*galgo de su autor*” literally? The identification of the author as a *galgo* would signal the presence of a heretofore unheralded component of the novel’s narrative apparatus. F.W. Locke, cited by Mancing, suggests that there was “an even more remote source for Cidi Hamete Benengali’s manuscript” (Mancing 1981, p. 66). Along those lines, we can speculate that the *galgo* may have shadowed Don Quixote during some part of his adventures and then related those recollections through a human interlocutor—either the first narrator, Cidi Hamete Benegeli, or some other unseen source. Alas, if there was a talking dog in the archives, Cervantes does not reveal it.

That still leaves the question of why the second narrator used the unusual term “*galgo*” instead of any other term connoting “dog.” Perhaps Cervantes was discarding the *galgo* card still hidden in his sleeve. In this analysis, Cervantes had taken the first steps in the opening chapter toward allowing a talking dog to follow Don Quixote and serve as his noble chronicler. Yet by the second sally, he had introduced a better interlocutor for Don Quixote’s counterpart (Sancho Panza); and with the shift to the second narrator, he put into service a better chronicler (Sidi Hamete Benegali); and at some point during the composition of *Don Quixote* he conceived of a better vehicle for a talking-dog narrator (the *Coloquio*). With the housekeeper’s sleight-of-hand, Cervantes removes the dog from contention as a sidekick, and with the second narrator’s “*galgo de su autor*” comment, Cervantes bids an ironic farewell to the discarded idea of a talking-dog narrator.

Henceforth, the *galgos* in the novel have hunting-dog connotations: the galley slave compares himself to a *galgo* on a leash (Cervantes 1999b, p. 129, pt 1 chp. 22), much as a hunting dog would be kept on a leash prior to releasing its prey (see Figure 2); the Knight of the Grove observes that even the poorest squire has “a hack and couple of *galgos* and a fishing rod to amuse himself,” to which Sancho Panza responds that he has *galgos* “enough and to spare in my town” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 423, pt 2 chp. 13); and Don Diego de Miranda describes his pursuits as “hunting and fishing, but I keep neither hawks nor *galgos*, nothing but a tame partridge or a bold ferret or two” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 439, pt 2 chp. 16). Finally, in the penultimate chapter of the Second Part of *Don Quixote*, we have the last appearance of *galgos* interrupted in the course of hunting a hare. Don Quixote takes these *galgos* to be a bad omen (“*Malum signum!*”), and Sancho, by this time knowing his master well enough to draw out the symbolic implications of Don Quixote’s cryptic remark, provides a reassuring interpretation that casts the *galgos* as wicked magicians chasing a transformed Dulcinea (Cervantes 1999b, p. 738, pt 2 chp. 73). Yet Don Quixote is ultimately correct in his prophecy—Dulcinea does not come, and he soon dies. In the end, the *galgos* catch Don Quixote, dispelling his carefully constructed delusions.



Figure 2. Francisco de Goya, *Perros y útiles de caza o Perros en trailla* (1775). Oil on canvas. 112 × 174 cm. Museo del Prado (Madrid, España) Public domain (Goya 1775).

With his reaction to the hunting dogs, we may reconsider Don Quixote's relation to his own *galgo*. At the beginning of the novel, he was introduced as a keen huntsman ("*amigo de la caza*") who then, by reading tales of chivalry, "almost forgot to keep up his hunting" ("*olvidó casi de todo punto el ejercicio de la caza*") (Cervantes 1999b, p. 13). At the start of Chapter 2, he leaves behind his previous life, including his dog and the exercise of hunting. By the end of the novel, he treats as deeply disturbing the appearance of *galgos* acting in the violent capacity of hunting dogs. With this personal transformation, we may discover a "critique of the hunt . . . consonant with humanists who abhor the cruelty and excess of this aristocratic pastime" (Scham 2014, p. 108).

This emerging stance against the cruelty of hunting by dogs also extends to cruelty directed toward dogs. In the Prologue to Part II of *Don Quijote*, Cervantes relates two tales that he wishes the reader to personally convey to Avellaneda, a contemporary of Cervantes. Between the 1605 publication of Part I and the 1615 publication of Part II, Avellaneda stole Cervantes' characters to create his own derivative work, the so-called "false Quijote." In the first tale intended for Avellaneda, a madman traps a dog on the street, shoves a reed pipe into its hindquarters, and inflates the dog into the shape of a ball (see Figure 3). The madman addresses the people watching: "You think it's easy, your graces, swelling up a dog like that?" Cervantes echoes the question: "Do you think it's easy, your grace [i.e., Avellaneda], making a book?" (Cervantes 1999b, p. 361)

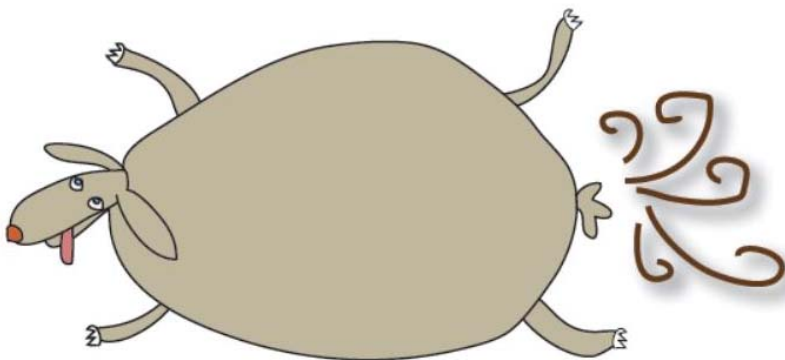


Figure 3. Tamara Schneider, *Perro como una pelota*. © 2017 Tamara Schneider. Used with permission.

Beusterien interprets the inflated-dog anecdote: “Cervantes tells this story because he wants his reader to know that Avellaneda’s sequel has taken his ‘dog,’ the first part of *Don Quijote*, and blown it up out of proportion, exaggerating the character of Quijote, for example, in unsightly ways” (Beusterien 2010, p. 102).

If the swollen dog represents Part I, a beaten dog represents Part II. In the second story, a madman who drops heavy rocks on dogs’ heads is soundly beaten in return by the owner of one such dog, a whippet, or *podenco*, a smaller relative to the *galgo*. Cervantes delivers the moral: “Maybe the same fate [i.e., a severe beating] will befall our historian, and he won’t drop his clever load into any more books, because when they’re bad, books are even harder than stones” (Cervantes 1999b, p. 361). The second story also mentions briefly two other dog breeds: mastiffs, or *alanos*, and terriers, or *gozques* (see Figure 4). Fearing another beating, the madman mistakes all dogs for *podencos*, and thus refrains from dropping stones on any *perro*.

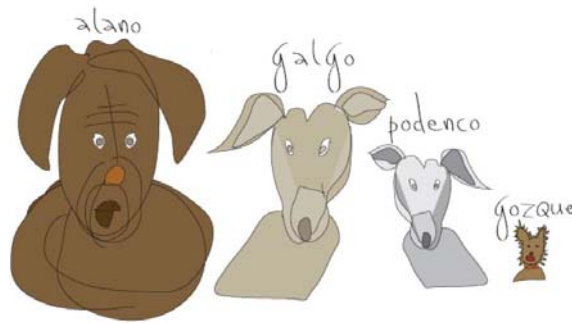


Figure 4. Tamara Schneider, *Dog breeds in Don Quijote*. © 2017 Tamara Schneider. Used with permission.

These sympathetic portrayals of the zoomorphic books-as-dogs representations of *Don Quijote* paint Cervantes as a defender of the canine species. Yet as the human companion to a sentient animal, the character of Don Quijote left much to be desired. Taking the lead of Haraway in taking dog-human relationships seriously (Haraway 2003), we should also consider the perspective of the abandoned *galgo*. The realistic post-history of Don Quijote’s dog would not be that depicted in contemporary works by Estefanell (2004) and Carvajal (2005) imagining Don Quijote’s *galgos* accompanying the knight-errant on new adventures. Instead, it would be more fitting to see the melancholy depiction of a morose, forlorn *galgo* wondering why its master curtailed their time together in favor of flipping through inky sheets of rolled wood pulp; lamenting the fate of being abandoned to the care of an indifferent housekeeper, Alonso’s young niece, or the boy from the fields; and finally, dying as an unwanted dog in the overpopulated countryside. When Don Quijote finally returns home to die as Alonso Quijano, there is no Homeric reunion between a brave Odysseus and his faithful Argos. Don Quijote’s last encounter with *galgos* is a *malum signum*.

6. Conclusions

Flores (1993) treats the *galgo* as a symbol of the past that had been left behind, and yet the past is not so easily repressed. Cervantes calls forth *galgos* at transitional moments in the novel with the switch from the first to the second author, and then upon the impending death of Don Quijote. In the prologue to Part II, Cervantes portrays both parts as dog-shaped books, with one of those dogs being a smaller relative of the *galgo*, the *podenco*. These are the indications that the *galgo* remained present in the mind of the author throughout the composition of the novel.

If we accept Cervantes as an improvisatory genius, then we must accept that earlier portions of *Don Quijote* were laden with infinite possibility. That is to say, if he started the novel with a *galgo*, there would have been many possibilities for him to play out the idea. We cannot assume that his

initial intention was identical to his final expression a decade later. In its initial stages, the careful staging of the story left the way clear for an animal witness. That Cervantes chose a different path does not forestall the possibility that the earlier path had been strongly considered. We may excavate the traces of a talking-animal story within *Don Quixote*, reconstructing how through careful thought and experimentation Cervantes may have picked through and determined that the best option for *Don Quixote* was to trade the *galgo* for a suit of armor; and the best way forward for the idea of a talking-dog narrator was to come in the form of the *Coloquio*.

Cervantes' works have become objects of intense study by practitioners of narratology such as Parr and El Saffar. Following the lead of Beusterien, we can also anticipate further interest in Cervantes by scholars in the burgeoning field of animal studies. Now, with the emergence of animal narratology at the vibrant intersection of narratology and animal studies, we should hope for a resurgence of interest in Cervantes as a means of investigating the mechanisms by which animals are made to speak, and the ways in which humans speak on behalf of animals.

Lastly, I turn to "Las Meninas" (see Figure 5), the Velázquez painting so often referenced by Cervantes scholars including Gonzáles Echevarría (2015), Parr (2004), Ortuño (2012), Beusterien (2013), and others. The work, which so perfectly captures the interrelationships between creator, subject, and audience, has become a common visual entry point for grasping the logic of *Don Quixote*. Connolly describes "mystical ekphrasis" as "a mode of interpretation in which an image that occurs to the reader and that may have inspired the text, but for which there is no conclusive evidence, is used imaginatively to interpret the text" (Connolly 2017, p. 102). By that definition, the frequent reference to "Las Meninas," a work that chronologically could not possibly have inspired Cervantes, embodies an impossible variety of mystical ekphrasis. With animal narratology now being applied to Cervantes, "Las Meninas" has lost none of its impossibly mystical power, for there in the foreground of the painting, closest to the viewer and perfectly aligned with the corner of Velázquez's framed canvas on which he paints, we see a silent, trodden-upon figure patiently waiting with closed eyes—there, too, we find a dog.



Figure 5. Diego Velázquez. *Las meninas* (1656), Galería online, Museo del Prado, Madrid, Spain. Public domain. (Velázquez 1656).

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Article

Narrative Transformed: The Fragments around Franz Kafka's "A Report to an Academy"

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Abstract: Franz Kafka's "A Report to an Academy", in which the ape-turned-human Rotpeter provides a narrative account of his life, has been scrutinized with regard to its allegorical, scientific, and historical implications. This article shifts the focus toward the narrative set-up by closely reading the transformation that can be traced in the sequence of several narrative attempts found in Kafka's manuscripts. Analyzing the fragments around this topic, I show how Kafka probes different angles—from a meeting between a first-person narrator and Rotpeter's impresario and a dialogue between the narrator and Rotpeter, via the well-known "Report" itself, on to a letter by one of Rotpeter's former teachers—that reveal a narrative transformation equally important as the metamorphosis from animal to human. The focus on the narrative constellations and on the lesser-known constitutive margins of the "Report" help to better understand, moreover, the complex relationship between immediacy and mediation, the ethnological concern of speech for the self and the unknown animal other, and poetological questions of production, representation, and reception.

Keywords: animal narrators; human-animal studies; Franz Kafka; manuscripts; speaking-for; narrative representation; literary representation

1. Introduction

Franz Kafka's famous text narrated by an ape who has become human, "A Report to an Academy" ("Ein Bericht für eine Akademie"), was penned one hundred years ago, in 1917 [1–5]. It is one of the few texts that the Prague author prepared himself for publication, first in the periodical *The Jew (Der Jude)*, along with "Jackals and Arabs"/"Schakale und Araber", under the title "Two Animal Stories"/"Zwei Tiergeschichten") in 1917, and together with twelve other pieces in the collection *A Country Doctor (Ein Landarzt)* in 1919/1920. In this report or monologue, the former ape Rotpeter provides a narrative account to a learned society about his life. He was shot and captured by a hunting expedition in the West African bush, transported to Europe in a cage on a ship, where he finds himself without the ability to move freely, and where he learns to imitate the habits of the crew. When he arrives in Hamburg, he needs to choose between a life in the zoo or as a variety show artist. Deciding for the latter, he systematically learns to become human with the help of several teachers, but he also loses the memory of his experiences as an ape.

While the "Report" has been studied extensively with regard to its anthropomorphic-allegorical, scientific, and historical implications [6], it is striking that Rotpeter's speaking abilities as such and the complicated narrative set-up find less attention. In this article, I propose to take seriously questions surrounding animal voice, human knowledge, and poetological implications by following those scholars who are not only looking at the "Report" itself but also at the fragments in Kafka's known manuscripts that speak about or feature Rotpeter, such as Gerhard Neumann [7,8] and Annette Schütterle [9]. After all, the published version of the report or monologue includes only

two parts of altogether five known narrative segments mentioning or featuring Rotpeter. Spread over two octavo notebooks (D [4] and E [5]), Kafka probes several narrative constellations that alter who speaks for whom, with whom, or to whom. As a matter of fact, he is even foregrounding these largely formal questions in the lesser-known pieces. Preceding the “Report” in the notebooks (and thus written before it), there are a first-person narrator’s account of meeting the former ape’s impresario (segment I) and a conversation between this visitor and Rotpeter himself (II). Following the segments in the manuscripts that Kafka would later publish under the title “A Report to an Academy” (III and IV), we find a short reader’s response (written after the well-known “Report”) in the form of a letter by one of Rotpeter’s teachers (V).

I argue that the thematic metamorphosis from ape to human is accompanied by an equally important formal, narrative transformation, which is akin to the poetological structure of literary production, representation, and reception. This progression can be traced alongside of the sequence of the five narrative segments in the manuscript, including the three lesser-known ones that frame the “Report”. Three issues are therefore at stake. The first issue is the relationship between immediacy and mediation, as well as between nature and culture, or *Fürsorge* (here meant as immediate, physical care for another) and *Fürsprache* (a mediated cultural speaking-for someone or something before another person or institution). The second issue concerns the unusual ethnological approach of blurring speech for the self and for the unknowable (animal) other. The third issue relates to core questions for literature itself, because the former ape’s unique *presentation* (the “Report”) is framed by questions of preparation or *production* and *reception*. In short, the performative aspects of the report become even more forceful in their narratological, ethnological/anthropological, and poetological implications when the sequence of fragments is read closely and chronologically as the research by a narrator-character (I and II), the sheer presentation of the former ape (III and VI), and a reader’s reaction (V).

2. Before the Report: Impresario and Narrator (Segment I)

In the middle of a productive writing phase, Kafka used a pencil as writing utensil and blue, small octavo notebooks common in schools (16.4 cm and 9.8–9.9 cm), not the usual larger quarto notebooks or loose leaves ([4], p. 169). Several of the altogether twelve known octavo notebooks allow us to trace Kafka’s complicated writing process that repeatedly shows his struggles with finding narrative beginnings and ends, as well as his strategies of re-writing topics in order to find the narrative perspective he deemed worthwhile publishing. In addition to “A Report to an Academy” these texts include “The Hunter Gracchus” (“Jäger Gracchus”) and “An Imperial Message” (“Eine kaiserliche Botschaft”), among others. The focus in the following four parts of this paper is exclusively on those segments directly talking about or featuring Rotpeter, not those before, in-between, and after that have connected motivic complexes, as Schütterle has shown in great detail, following the *critique génétique* [9].

Written before the “Report”, the first two segments show the complex interplay between notions of mediacy and immediacy to relate the phenomenon and story of Rotpeter. It appears as though Kafka was carefully approaching the topic by first letting two humans speak about Rotpeter in his absence and then staging a dialogue between a human and an ape before giving full narrative agency to Rotpeter in the “Report” itself. Both in the storyworld (segment I) and in terms of narrative representation (segment II) these fragments transgress human and animal behavior and speech.

The first segment begins: “We all know Rotpeter, just as half the world knows him” ([1], p. 259). (“Wir alle kennen den Rotpeter, so wie ihn die halbe Welt kennt” ([3], p. 384)). Rotpeter himself is thus preceded by his high degree of popularity, because “we”—the narrator and the reader—have presumably heard of him, as much as every other person. The entire first segment, which encompasses about four octavo notebook pages and slightly less than two print pages in the German critical edition, will not feature Rotpeter and not mention his former ape-hood at all. Instead, the first-person, homodiegetic narrator [10] recounts his grotesque meeting with Rotpeter’s professionally accomplished impresario, Herr Busenau, which bears semblance to slapstick:

Hardly had he caught sight of me—me the unknown, the unimportant guest—when he, possessor of highly distinguished medals, king of trainers, honorary doctor of great universities, jumped up, shook me by both hands, urged me to sit down, wiped his spoon on the tablecloth, and amiably offered it to me so that I might finish his omelet ([1], pp. 259–60).

Kaum erblickte er mich, den fremden bedeutungslosen Gast, sprang er, der Besitzer höchster Orden, der König der Dresseure, der Ehrendoktor der großen Universitäten, —sprang er auf, schüttelte mir die Hände, nötigte mich zum Sitzen, wischte seinen Löffel am Tischtuch ab und bot mir ihn freundschaftlichst an, damit ich die Eierspeise zuende esse ([3], pp. 384–85)

Kafka added the comparison “like a bendable figure” (“wie ein Gummimännchen” ([4], pp. 82–83)) to the act of jumping up, but he crossed it out. The unexpectedly personal act of offering his own meal to the visitor, combined with the unnatural, comedic motion, turns into the even more personal and physical act of attempted feeding: “He would not accept my grateful refusal and promptly tried to feed me. I had some trouble calming him down and warding him off, as well as his spoon and plate” ([1], p. 385). (“Meinen ablehnenden Dank ließ er nicht gelten und wollte nun anfangen selbst mich zu füttern. Ich hatte Mühe ihn zu beruhigen, und ihn mit Teller und Löffel zurückzudrängen” ([3], p. 385)). This nurturing attempt is a means of intimate care: a kind of *Fürsorge* in the apt German. *Fürsorge* is here understood as actively caring for someone who needs help or support [11], but with a particular focus on forms of physical care. The last third of the first fragment, which is related in the impresario’s direct speech, is equally concerned with appreciation for the guest’s kind arrival and questions of care, but for the sensitive nature of (the absent) Rotpeter, who does not want to be approached. The impresario stresses that “[s]eeing people is often repugnant” to Rotpeter ([1], p. 260) (“es widersteht ihm oft Menschen zu sehn” ([3], p. 385)), including the own impresario, who needs to withdraw after the performance while Rotpeter drives home alone.

The comical, even absurd, physical encounter between two grown men who talk about Rotpeter as a sensitive artist, hints at an important relation in all segments at scrutiny here and in some other animal stories by Kafka: The relation between natural, physical care—a type of *Fürsorge*—and cultural, spoken support—*Fürsprache* or speaking-for. *Fürsprache* is here meant as the communicative scenario in which someone speaks for someone or something in front of another (a person, a group, or an institution)—a crucial concern in Kafka’s oeuvre [12,13]. The impresario’s name is a case in point for the interrelation between immediate care for another and mediated speech: If taken as a telling name (“Busen” means bosom), Busenau reveals maternal care and physical nourishment, while the title impresario denotes the verbal and business promotion of an artist.

The word that best captures this first textual segment in relation to the “Report” is *before* (“vor”) in both the temporal sense and the spatial sense. The impresario is speaking before Rotpeter appears as a speaking subject on the pages of the octavo notebook (in segments II, III, and IV) and on the stage within the storyworld. The word “vor” itself comes up in several compound constructions throughout the segment. Perhaps coincidentally, but noteworthy regardless, the meeting between the first-person narrator and the impresario happens before noon (“Vormittag” ([3], p. 384)), even though the impresario is already wearing his evening suit for the performance (“Vorstellung” ([3], p. 385)). Less coincidental appears to be the location of their meeting in the “anteroom” ([1], p. 259) (“Vorzimmer” ([3], p. 384)) of Rotpeter’s apartment (all emphases mine).

Kafka’s first fragment on the topic of Rotpeter is fully in the human world, with a first-person narrator and human characters. There is only one subtle hint that Rotpeter, about whom the text speaks, was or is an animal: His impresario is, among other things “king of trainers” (“der König der Dresseure”). Kafka is eroding the boundaries between animal and human not in terms of narrative discourse, but through the impresario’s attempted feeding of the guest within the storyworld. The impresario is also not speaking *for* Rotpeter, but *about* him, setting the stage, as it were, for the appearance of the famous performer. At the end of the first fragment, he describes how Rotpeter wants

to be left alone after each performance yet how he, as his trainer, always keeps an eye on him: “But I, who of course dare not let him out of my sight, always rent the apartment opposite his and watch him from behind curtains” ([1], p. 260). (“Ich aber der ich ihn natürlich nicht ohne Aufsicht lassen darf, miete immer die gegenüberliegende Wohnung und beobachte ihn hinter Vorhängen.” ([3], p. 385)). Although in the guise of protection here, the omnipresent gaze at Rotpeter (as well as at numerous other Kafka protagonists including Karl Roßmann, Josef K., and K. in the novels), is ultimately a power tool to discipline behavior.

This positioning opposite of Rotpeter is picked up in the second segment, but in the form of a narratological decision that brings the reader a step closer to the animal mind: It is an interspecies dialogue between the guest and Rotpeter, who speaks for the first time. The narrative stage is thus newly arranged directly after the words “behind curtains” (“hinter Vorhängen”) and following a graphic analogue to heavy draperies that both close and open in the manuscript in the form of multiple penciled lines across the page.

3. Opposite of Rotpeter: A Conversation (Segment II)

The second fragment, or Kafka’s second known attempt to find a suitable narrative configuration for the topic surrounding Rotpeter, encompasses slightly less than eight octavo notebook pages. While the first segment is marked by a temporal and spatial *before* or *in front of* (“vor”) the speaking Rotpeter, it is now that of *opposite of* (“gegenüber”) the phenomenon at hand. Narratologically and thematically, this segment gives a stronger sense of immediacy to convey Rotpeter’s life than the previous one. A further transformation will occur in the following two segments—part of the “Report” itself—, in which the former ape directly writes or speaks *to* (“an”) or, more precisely, *for* (“für”) an academy. In the fifth and last known textual segment, the narrative perspective changes again to a reader of the “Report”, who addresses Rotpeter from a distance.

Formally, the second segment bears resemblance to a drama, as a conversation between Rotpeter and an interlocutor that begins *in medias res*. The verbal exchange had been going on for an indeterminate amount of time and there is no mediating impresario in the storyworld and no heterodiegetic narrator. Although it not directly said, one can assume that the interlocutor is the first-person narrator from the first segment, who has now been received by Rotpeter himself, after the preparatory conversation with the impresario. The segment begins with him saying:

“When I sit opposite you like this, Rotpeter, listening to you talk, drinking your health, I really and truly forget—whether you take it as a compliment or not, it’s the truth—that you are a chimpanzee. Only gradually, when I have forced myself out of my thoughts back to reality, do my eyes show me again whose guest I am.”

“Yes.” ([1], p. 260)

“Wenn ich Ihnen, Rotpeter, hier so gegenüber sitze, Sie reden höre, Ihnen zutrinke, wahrhaftig—ob Sie es nun als Kompliment auffassen oder nicht, es ist aber nur die Wahrheit—ich vergesse dann ganz, daß Sie ein Schimpanse sind. Erst nach und nach, wenn ich mich aus den Gedanken zur Wirklichkeit zurückzwinge, zeigen mir wieder die Augen wessen Gast ich bin.”

“Ja.” ([3], pp. 385–86)

This verbal exchange establishes that Rotpeter is an ape, even though his speaking abilities—the dialogue partner is “listening” to him “talk” and Rotpeter’s striking “yes” is both his answer and the first word we read from him—obscure this fact. For the interlocutor, it is only the visual perception and the perceived “reality” that makes this clear. A sense of immediacy is set in scene because there are no stage directions or other narrative frames. Instead of quotation marks, which typically assign words to the storyworld and set them apart from the discourse world, Kafka used lines across the

octavo notebook page to offset the speaking parts, offering the impression of a direct verbal exchange from two speaking agents sitting opposite of one another.

In their conversation, an element from the previous segment—a meal as source of care—is brought up when the interlocutor asks: “Is something wrong? Shall I call the trainer? Perhaps you’re in the habit of taking a meal at this hour?” ([1], p. 260). (“Fehlt Ihnen etwas? Soll ich den Dresseur rufen? Vielleicht sind Sie gewohnt um diese Stunde eine Mahlzeit einzunehmen?” ([3], p. 386)). Eating is now described in human terms for Rotpeter, which stands in ironic contrast to the impresario’s attempt to feed the human guest—an action reserved for animals and babies. Moreover, the topic of Rotpeter’s aversion to human beings and the issue of immediate physicality come up, but here they are expressed by Rotpeter himself (not related by the impresario or performed by him with the human guest), when Rotpeter says: “Sometimes I’m overcome with such an aversion to human beings that I can barely refrain from retching” ([1], p. 260). (“Manchmal überkommt mich ein solcher Widerwille vor Menschen, daß ich dem Brechreiz kaum widerstehen kann.” ([3], p. 386)). He goes on to explain that it is not about the individual, but about human beings in general. The human smell that mixes with the smell of his former self nauseates him in particular. As proof, he asks his opposite to not only trust his words as verbal mediators, but to test immediately on his body, inviting him to merge human conduct (to listen) and animal behavior (to smell for himself): “Here, on my chest! Put your nose deeper into the fur! Deeper, I say!” ([1], p. 261). (“Hier auf der Brust! Tiefer die Nase ins Fell! Tiefer, sage ich.” ([3], p. 386)). The closeness to the chest—subtly prefigured in the first segment with the impresario’s name “Busenau”—serves as a means toward both empathizing with the animal experience and being estranged from it.¹

Not only is the primal sense of smell foregrounded, but also the sense of vision when, in another intimate physical interaction, Rotpeter offers to show the site where the second bullet entered him (the first being on the visible cheek): “I’ll take my trousers down so you can see that scar, too” ([1], p. 261). (“Ich werde die Hose ausziehen, damit Sie auch diese Narbe sehn.” ([3], p. 387)). Immediate olfactory and visual perceptions add to the verbal explanations, even though the fully cultural, civilized, and town-dwelling interviewer needs to counter with regard to the first that he has lost parts of a natural sense of smell.

The play with the dynamics between mediation and immediacy is most prominently shown in the passage in which Rotpeter begins to tell the story of his capture in a cage, without any way out, after showing his wounds.. Although Kafka crossed out the most revealing parts, I include them:

~~“Here then was where the bullet entered; this was the severe, decisive wound. I fell from the tree and when I came to I was in a cage between decks. Sir, you have never been an ape and you have never been in a cage, so I cannot make anything of this comprehensible for you.”~~

~~“Difficult fate. I can commiserate with you even as a none-ape.” ([1], p. 261 and my translations)~~

~~“Hier also war der Einschuß, das war die entscheidende schwere Wunde, ich fiel vom Baum und als ich aufwachte war ich in einem Käfig im Zwischendeck. Mein Herr, Sie sind niemals Affe gewesen und waren nie in einem Käfig, ich kann Ihnen also davon nichts begreiflich machen.”~~

~~“Schweres Schickal. Das kann ich auch als Nichtaffe mitfühlen.” ([3], p. 387; [4], pp. 96–97)²~~

¹ This transgression between human and non-human experience in the storyworld is akin to the process that Lars Bernaerts et al. posit for animal narratology, namely “as the result of a *double dialectic* of empathy and defamiliarization” ([14], p. 69; see also part 4 of this paper).

² Please note that parts of the block quote are strike through (as they are in the octavo notebooks).

When the human calls himself, and is seen as, a non-ape, the limits of understanding another (animal) being's concerns are expressed. At the same time, the interlocutor feels empathetic and thus stresses an aspect of immediacy. The continuation of this passage similarly underlines the restrictions of fully immersing oneself in the experience of another species. The human interlocutor exclaims: "In a cage! Between decks! It's one thing to read your story, and quite another to hear you tell it!" ([1], p. 261). ("Im Käfig! Im Zwischendeck! Anders liest man davon und anders faßt man es auf, wenn man Sie selbst es erzählen hört." ([3], pp. 387–88)). Rotpeter's reply begins: "And yet another, sir, to have experienced it" ([1], p. 261). ("Und noch anders, wenn man es selbst erlebt hat mein Herr." ([3], p. 388)). The emphatic reactions by the interlocutor lead to the center of questions surrounding different forms of narrating and mediating the transformation of the ape. The progression from reading about the issue (and the narrator-interviewer says he has "read everything that's been printed" about it, ([1], p. 261)), via direct communication with Rotpeter, on to personal experience (impossible for the interlocutor) is a progression from mediacy to immediacy. It resembles the progression from the double mediation in these first two segments (the conversation about the absent Rotpeter and the conversation with him) to the immediacy of letting Rotpeter exclusively speak for himself in the famous "Report".

4. For the Academy: Rotpeter's Report (Segments III and IV)

After the abrupt end of the second text fragment, mid-sentence, and following two further short texts without any direct thematic relation to the Rotpeter topic, we find the beginning of Rotpeter's famous monologue or address. The two known fragments that became parts of the "Report" were written down in the fourth octavo notebook (D) and comprise roughly eleven and a half and thirteen notebook pages, together slightly more than nine print pages in the critical edition of the published version. About five and a half pages in the critical edition follow and these parts have not been found among Kafka's manuscripts. At least one notebook between the fourth and the fifth known ones is likely missing. In the following analysis, I will therefore refer to the published version with the title "A Report to an Academy" ("Ein Bericht für eine Akademie") [1,2].

One apparent detail, already in the title, is especially important to understand the peculiar narrative dynamics: the preposition "for" (*für* in the original German), even though "to" (*an*) seems more appropriate for many—and is rendered in the common translations into English as such. The Kafka-reader Walter Benjamin, too, writes the incorrect preposition in his own notes.³ Once the focus is on the function words in the title, it is also worth mentioning that it is "a" and not "the" report (*ein*, not *der Bericht*), in line with the general tendency of indeterminacy in several stories of the collection *A Country Doctor* (*Ein Landarzt*) ([16], pp. 224–25). What does it mean to deliver a report *for* an academy—and to do this in front of an audience? Rotpeter, who addresses the audience as "Honored Members of the Academy!" ([1], p. 250) ("Hohe Herren von der Akademie!" ([2], p. 299)) speaks or writes for the institution insofar as he fulfills the request to report about the life he "formerly led as an ape" ([1], p. 250) ("äffisches Vorleben" ([2], p. 299)). He tries to show, as far as possible, "the line an erstwhile ape has had to follow in entering and establishing himself in the world of men" ([1], p. 251) ("die Richtlinie [...], auf welcher ein gewesener Affe in die Menschenwelt eingedrungen ist und sich dort festgesetzt hat" ([2], p. 300)). While there is no doubt that the genre is a report, its mode of delivery cannot be unambiguously discerned. If delivered as a speech, it would mean that the humans sitting opposite of Rotpeter would hear his literal voice—and several pathos-filled remarks, ending with exclamation points, would support such an analysis. If delivered as a written response, the recipients would not face him directly, but read his textually mediated voice—and Kafka's change of the phrase *make a report*/"Bericht [...] erstatten" to something closer to *submit a report*/"Bericht [...] einzureichen"

³ Benjamin writes "Bericht an eine Akademie: hier erscheint Menschsein als Ausweg. Gründlicher kann es wohl nicht in Frage gestellt werden" ([15], p. 119).

in the octavo notebook ([4], pp. 110–11), as well as the later response by the teacher to a written version of the report (segment V), would call for such an analysis.

Whether spoken or written, the report presupposes a silently listening or reading audience. This audience is addressed directly a few more times, for example when Rotpeter exclaims “your life as apes, gentlemen, insofar as something of that kind lies behind you, cannot be farther removed from you than mine is from me” ([1], p. 250). (“Ihr Affentum, meine Herren, soferne Sie etwas Derartiges hinter sich haben, kann Ihnen nicht ferner sein als mir das meine” ([2], p. 300)). Those words signal, in a subtle manner, that Rotpeter does not only speak about and for himself, but also for those who have invited him to speak: humans and, at the same time, academics or members of an academy, and thus representatives of human knowledge.

Rotpeter, like the audience, only has access to his ape past through the narration of others (“fremde Berichte” ([2], p. 301)), i.e., reports by those who have accompanied him, and who told him how he was caught by an expedition of the Hagenbeck company and sent from the Gold Coast via ship to Hamburg. The memories of his youth, he tells the academy, had to vanish in order for him to become human. When Kafka lets Rotpeter speak or write about the time the former ape cannot remember, he unsettles the relationship between who is able and authorized to speak: former ape or man, object of study or institution of learning. The segments Kafka ended up publishing as the “Report” question who gets to speak for whom and who gets to transmit the knowledge of Rotpeter’s origin (“Ursprung” ([2], p. 299)) and, by extension, the origin of human beings. To put it differently, the transition from animal nature into human culture is not directly accessible by the one who has experienced it during his lifetime. Rotpeter has to use the past tense and the linguistic tools available to him after becoming human. Ironically, he needs to express himself in a human system of communication, which is precisely what removes him from his ape-hood. In his own words:

Of course what I felt then as an ape I can represent now only in human terms, and therefore I misrepresent it, but although I cannot reach back to the truth of the old ape life, there is no doubt that it lies somewhere in the direction I have indicated. ([3], p. 253)

Ich kann natürlich das damals affenmäßig Gefühlte heute nur mit Menschenworten nachzeichnen und verzeichne es infolgedessen, aber wenn ich auch die alte Affenwahrheit nicht mehr erreichen kann, wenigstens in der Richtung meiner Schilderung liegt sie, daran ist kein Zweifel. ([2], p. 303)

Rotpeter does, however, recall the visceral mode of thinking that lies in the ape-nature, stating that “apes think with their bellies” ([1], p. 253) (“Affen denken mit dem Bauch” ([2], p. 304)). His full memory, he tells the academy, gradually sets in only when waking up after having been shot twice, between decks on the ship and trapped inside a cage. There he soon begins observing the crew and finds it easy to imitate their behavior. Spitting, smoking a pipe, and drinking schnapps are the first acts (with the latter a rather difficult task) toward becoming human. Rotpeter also mentions that his teacher on board realizes he has to fight against his own ape nature, although Rotpeter has, of course, the harder part ([1], p. 257; [2], p. 310). After learning the bodily gesture of the handshake, Rotpeter also learns his first word—“Hallo!”—, which is his big break “into the human community” ([1], p. 257). Following his close observations and the acts with which Rotpeter bids farewell to his ape-nature on the steamer, he has to choose between the zoo and the variety stage in Hamburg. Picking the latter (because the zoo would have only meant another cage), he continues his learning with a number of teachers and reaches “the cultural level of an average European” ([1], p. 258) (“die Durchschnittsbildung eines Europäers” ([2], p. 312)), while also performing with great success. At night, though, “a half-trained little chimpanzee” waits for him and he takes “comfort from her as apes do.” ([1], p. 159) (“eine kleine halbtrainierte Schimpansin und ich lasse es mir nach Affenart bei ihr wohlgehen” ([2], p. 313)). The animal nature is still a part of his otherwise human life and routine.

Lars Bernaerts et al. [14], have established a framework for narratology beyond the human that helps us understand the stakes of the “Report” as Kafka’s closest attempt at conveying Rotpeter’s

animal experience. They argue that non-human storytelling should not be analyzed only through a single concept, such as “estrangement” (in Victor Shklovsky’s formalist approach [17]) or “the unnatural” (suspending the conventions of natural narrative, see Alber et al. [18]). For Bernaerts et al., we should view the phenomenon “as the result of a *double dialectic* of empathy and defamiliarization, human and non-human experientiality” ([14], p. 69). Rotpeter’s speech unsettles the human and non-human experience on the fundamental narratological level, while making the unnatural transformation from animal to human its very topic, therefore engaging the readers and listeners to a double challenge of their conception of the human. David Herman [19] discerns that acts of self-narration across species raise questions around the politics and the truth status of narrative representation. The mere fact that Kafka gives voice to the (former) ape in this text, without any human narrator or dialogue partner, after having probed these two alternative narrative constellations, demonstrates the potent reduction of external narrative intervention to present Rotpeter’s transformation to an academy as well as to the implied and real readers.

The focus on animal narratology therefore provides a foundation for the numerous suggestive angles from which the published “Report” has long been scrutinized. Allegorical interpretations focus on issues such as colonialism, conformism, the assimilation of Jews in Western society, and the values of art and education, as Naama Harel aptly surveys ([6], p. 54). Historical approaches concentrate on the treatment of apes in the name of the explicitly named Hagenbeck company at that time, which was the leader in animal trade ([20], pp. 293–301) and also involved in “human zoos” (*Völkerschauen*) [21], on the research of the zoologist Alfred Brehm, or on Wolfgang Köhler’s investigations in *The Mentality of Apes* from 1917 [22], like the fictional Elisabeth Costello in J. M. Coetzee’s *The Lives of Animals* [23]. Analyses with a scientific context zoom in on the special treatment of Darwin’s evolutionary theory, which Kafka had read in his youth ([24], p. 60). And possible motivic influences from the fictional art world include E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “News of an Educated Young Man” (“Nachricht von einem gebildeten jungen Mann”), which contains a letter of the educated ape Milo to his girlfriend Pipi in North America ([20], pp. 271–77; [25], p. 421).

From an anthropological standpoint (and specifically from that of biological anthropology, which studies the passage from nature to culture of humans), Rotpeter’s speech for the academy poses particularly intriguing questions. As Gerhard Neumann has shown, the interest of determining the boundaries between nature and culture, animal and human life (as well as between economy, politics, and administration), becomes pertinent around 1900 and is taken up from an animal’s perspective in fictional texts such as Kafka’s “Investigations of a Dog” (“Forschungen eines Hundes” ([26], p. 80; [27])). According to Giorgio Agamben, who has attempted to measure the zone between naked body and social law, and who frequently refers to Kafka, “*man is the animal that must recognize itself as human to be human*” ([28], p. 26). Rotpeter is not aping humans, which would imply that he is still an ape, but rather he needs to act and perform as human to be human.⁴ As Rotpeter himself says, in a contradictory way: “I repeat: there was no attraction for me in imitating human beings; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason” ([1], p. 257). (“Ich wiederhole: es verlockte mich nicht, die Menschen nachzuahmen; ich ahmte nach, weil ich einen Ausweg suchte, aus keinem anderen Grund” ([2], p. 311).

At the end, Rotpeter stresses before the members of the academy that his goal is “not appealing for any man’s verdict”, but “only imparting knowledge” and “only making a report” ([1], p. 259). (“Im übrigen will ich keines Menschen Urteil, ich will nur Kenntnisse verbreiten, ich berichte nur, auch Ihnen, hohe Herren von der Akademie, habe ich nur berichtet.” ([2], p. 313)). This explicit statement shows a strategic imitation of the linguistic and performative conventions for speaking to and for a learned society. It omits the more causal and bodily interactions that the first two segments worked

⁴ The special punch line in Kafka’s published text is, according to Neumann, that it leaves open if it is mimesis (the artistic representation of aspects of the real world) or mimicry (the act of simulating the appearance of humans) that allows the ape to make his way into life as a human being ([26], p. 92).

through: the impresario's attempt at feeding the guest and Rotpeter's showing of his wounds to the interlocutor or his invitation to smell the fur. The emphasis on Rotpeter's wish not to be judged by those who listen to or read the report, though, stands in contrast to what Kafka probes in the fifth segment.

5. After the Report (Segment V) and the Ensemble of Segments

While the monologue or report omits any kind of reaction on the side of the academy-audience, and thus any immediate response, Kafka himself anticipated—and wrote down—an explicit reader-reaction. The last known textual segment on the topic of "Rotpeter" is the beginning of a letter, sent from a distance to Rotpeter. This distance is both temporal and spatial and can be understood in a dual sense. On the level of the material writing, and thus the dynamic writing process, it is the only known segment that is not in the fourth octavo notebook (D), but in the fifth (E). On the thematic level, the letter is a spatially distant and temporally delayed reaction to the now published report. The writer of the letter is, however, not a member of the academy, an anonymous reader, a fan, or a journalistic reviewer, but he is one of Rotpeter's first teachers, whose regressive behavior is opposed to Rotpeter's progressive becoming-human. This teacher was explicitly mentioned in the "Report":

My ape nature fled out of me, head over heels and away, so that my first teacher was almost himself turned into an ape by it, had soon to give up teaching and was taken away to a mental hospital. Fortunately he was soon let out again. ([1], p. 258)

Die Affennatur raste, sich überkugelnd, aus mir hinaus und weg, so daß mein erster Lehrer selbst davon fast äffisch wurde, bald den Unterricht aufgeben und in eine Heilanstalt gebracht werden mußte. Glücklicherweise kam er wieder bald hervor. ([2], pp. 311–12)

Note the fluid reversal of roles as described by Rotpeter. While he gradually loses his ape nature, the teacher gains parts of an ape nature. No longer suitable in society, he is taken away to a mental institution for a short while. This stay in the sanatorium is the narrative thread that is prominently woven into the fifth segment, when the teacher responds (to quote the entire segment):

Dear Mr. Rotpeter,
I have read the report, which you have written for our academy of sciences, with great interest, indeed with increased heart rate. It is no wonder because I am, after all, your first teacher whom you remember with such friendly words. Perhaps with a bit more consideration, it could have been avoided to mention my stay in the sanatorium, but I recognize that your entire report in its marked [tone]frankness in its ruthless veracity could not have suppressed this small detail once it had randomly come to your mind while writing, even though it embarrassed me a bit. But that's not what I actually wanted to talk about here; my concerns lie elsewhere. (My translation)

Sehr geehrter Herr Rotpeter,
ich habe den Bericht den Sie für unsere Akademie der Wissenschaften geschrieben haben mit großem Interesse, ja mit Herzklopfen gelesen. Kein Wunder, bin ich doch Ihr erster Lehrer gewesen, für den Sie so freundliche Worte der Erinnerung gefunden haben. Vielleicht hätte es sich bei einiger Überlegung vermeiden lassen, meinen Sanatoriumsaufenthalt zu erwähnen, doch erkenne ich an, daß Ihr ganzer Bericht in seinem ihn so auszeichnenden [Ton]Freimuth in seiner rücksichtslosen Wahrhaftigkeit auch die kleine Einzelheit, trotzdem sie mich ein wenig kompromittiert, nicht unterdrücken durfte, wenn sie Ihnen einmal bei der Niederschrift zufällig eingefallen war. Doch davon wollte ich eigentlich hier nicht reden, es geht mir um anderes. ([3], pp. 415–16; [5], pp. 58–61)

The teacher reviews the report in a tone between curiosity and admiration, and in a zone between expostulation and retraction: He acknowledges the personal cost of Rotpeter's lack of circumspection

(i.e., to mention his time in a sanatorium), but then claims this is not the reason for writing the letter. Here again, he imitates Rotpeter, though not in his former ape-nature but insofar as both Rotpeter's report and the response-letter reflect their creators' passionate personal thoughts rather than delivering an objective response as requested by the academy or even mentioning the real reason for writing the response-letter, thereby creating irony. Kafka's deletion of Rotpeter's tone as marked by "ruthless veracity" ("rücksichtslose[] Wahrhaftigkeit") reveals that the unfiltered stream of information toward a quest for some kind of truth about himself could be tied to a regime of power over those who do not get to speak to (let alone for) the academic institution, such as the former teacher. Because the fragment ends before even the letter's main reason is announced, it is foregrounding a side concern—here the *personal* reaction to the report—and not the stakes of or a substantial response to the report. Kafka often places such side concerns front and center in his texts, and subtly directs the attention to *how* things are represented as equally important to *what* is said.

As a way to extend my analysis and to conclude, I will briefly mention two further texts by Kafka, which probe the ways and limits of how one can speak about and for animals: "The Village Schoolmaster", published as "The Giant Mole" ("Der Dorfschullehrer"/"Der Riesenmaulwurf"), and "Josephine the Singer, or the Mouse Folk" (Josefine, die Sängerin oder das Volk der Mäuse"). I will then describe how the fragments surrounding "A Report to an Academy", as an ensemble, mirror the process of literary communication itself, and allow us to reflect on the potentials and limits of narrating the animal experience from a variety of perspectives that include literary production and reception.

In contrast to the heterodiegetic narrators in Kafka's novel fragments (who are not part of the narrated world yet undermine the events in a subtle and ironic manner), the animal stories predominantly use homodiegetic narrators: a former ape, a businessman in "The Village Schoolteacher" (talking about a pamphlet by a teacher about the wondrous appearance of a giant mole), and a member of the mouse folk in "Josephine" (talking about the titular mouse's mysterious song). They investigate, from a lay-researcher's perspective, the curious appearance of animals: the former self, a distant and rumored subject of study, or an outstanding member of the community.⁵ The narrators claim to describe their observance-based knowledge for society, science, and art, respectively. What "The Village Schoolteacher" and "Josephine" focus on is a specific *form* of presentation: pamphlet and song. Yet what these forms precisely reveal, i.e., their content, remains largely obscure for their reader. The giant mole as an object of examination is progressively more eclipsed by a complex verbal fight about who gets to speak about it as an authority: the village schoolmaster or the narrator. And the narrator of "Josephine" makes clear that the mouse singer's aura has to be experienced and the immediate effect of her song has to be heard to be known; they cannot be mediated through narration. These stories therefore center on the limits of formally representing animals.

While Kafka gives voice to the (former) animal in the "Report", as object and subject of examination, and lets him narrate his own story as best as he can, the ensemble of fragments in the segments in the manuscripts, display different narrative perspectives to relate aspects of Rotpeter's life. Moreover, the *sequence* of segments resembles the process of literary communication itself—preparation or production, representation, and reception—, and thus gives us a glimpse at different facets of literature's potentials and limits for the author and for the recipient. Segments I and II read as though Kafka was trying to conceive of (and draft) ways to narrate Rotpeter's life, first with a human narrator and then in the dialogue between a human and the animal. Segments III and IV, as well as other lost notes, comprise the "Report" by Rotpeter, which curiously fuses the stories of humans about his youth and capture, on which he needs to build, and his own, remembered experience since the

⁵ Kafka's late story "Investigations of a Dog" ("Forschungen eines Hundes"), narrated from the first-person perspective of the dog narrator who self-consciously reflects on his own life and experiences, features an animal as lay-researcher as well. The main different to the "Report" is the lack of educational or developmental progress as a basis for the research. Instead, the dog episodically relates a few research projects that fail to make any advances in knowledge.

capture. Segment V, finally, adds the perspective of a teacher and is a first reader-reaction or reception of the report.

Most collections of Kafka's stories only publish the "Report", as Kafka chose to publish in his lifetime, not the fragments he drafted beforehand and afterwards.⁶ Yet when compiling the (German) critical edition, the editors faced a dilemma in picking a mode of representing the connection between those texts authorized by Kafka and those found in the manuscripts, as Gerhard Neumann has detailed. "A Report to an Academy" serves as an example for Neumann to expose the tension between the creative flow of writing ("Schrift") on the one side and the idea of a finished work ("Werk") on the other side ([7], p. 3). By extension, this dilemma is the relationship between the physical, private act of writing down thoughts and the cultural act of publishing the work. Neumann argues that, from the point of view of the hermeneutic scholar, the segments across the fourth octavo notebook mesh the human self and the animal other, even make the animal an agent of speaking-for the human in front of the academy ([7], p. 6). From the point of view of the editor, the difficulty arises if the authorized (published) text is the "truth" and the peripheral texts are not, or if it is only in the discarded texts that the author truly speaks, without any distortions based on the speech of others ([7], p. 12). Ultimately, the question of who speaks for whom is one that links the problem of editorship and the concerns for the hermeneutic scholar in the texts featuring Rotpeter. Neumann even compares the role of the editor with that of an ethnologist who needs to translate the exterritoriality of a foreign sphere into the own cultural sphere ([7], p. 15). In a schema on the relationship between edition and hermeneutics, he places "intimacy" (the self, the core of literary production) and "the public" (the others, the field of reception) on the ends, and in-between "speech, conversation, diary, letter" as accompanying the production and "speech, conversation, review, interpretation" as accompanying the reception (see schema in [7], p. 21).

Those points and the process of literary communication are mirrored in the five known segments with surprising neatness. First, there is the introductory dialogue between the impresario and the first-person narrator, which foregrounds a physical, even intimate approach to the topic of Rotpeter in the encounter between two men, even though the ape himself is not yet involved directly. It follows, second, the dialogue between Rotpeter and an interlocutor, which displays the tensions between medicacy and immediacy, physicality and speech, as well as *Fürsorge* and *Fürsprache*. Both segments appear to be part of the productive probing or preparation for Kafka himself, until he found the narrative perspective he would later choose for publication: the third and fourth fragments. The "Report" restages, as a lecture or script, Rotpeter's communication with and about humans in a formal institutional setting. It is Kafka's closest attempt to represent the animal mind in the *double dialectic* of human and non-human experientiality. Fifth, the short written reaction by a witness of Rotpeter's transformation touches on the field of reception, even though the letter is not a public review, but a private response.

Kafka's fragments around "A Report to an Academy", in sum, offer multiple perspectives on the possibilities and limits of eroding the boundaries between human and animal other narratologically and thematically, while also exposing the process of literary production, representation, and reception. Immediate perceptions (hearing, seeing, and smelling) are juxtaposed with mediated speech, and the impossibility of fully immersing the listener or reader in the animal experience is on display. At the same time, the shifting narrative angles offer a rich source for questioning the anthropological passage from nature to culture and the poetological stakes of animal narratology.

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⁶ It is worth noting that Kafka's own act of publishing the "Report" reproduces, in a sense, Rotpeter's act of speaking to an audience, here a literary one.

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**Nonhuman Others in Animal Narratology,
or Under-Examined Species**



Article

Insects and the Kafkaesque: Insectuous Re-Writings in Visual and Audio-Visual Media

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Abstract: In this article, I examine techniques at work in visual and audio-visual media that deal with the creative imitation of central Kafkan themes, particularly those related to hybrid insects and bodily deformity. In addition, the opening section of my study offers a detailed and thorough discussion of the concept of the “Kafkaesque”, and an attempt will be made to circumscribe its signifying limits. The main objective of the study is to explore the relationship between Kafka’s texts and the works of contemporary cartoonists, illustrators (Charles Burns), and filmmakers (David Cronenberg) and identify themes and motifs that they have in common. My approach is informed by transtextual practices and source studies, and I draw systematically on Gerard Genette’s *Palimpsests* and Harold Bloom’s *The Anxiety of Influence*.

Keywords: Kafka studies; adaptation studies; narratology; intertextuality; intermediality; mimesis; emulation; imitation; repetition; parody

1. An Introduction to the *Kafkaesque*

unlike a proper name, which moves from the interior of a discourse to the real person outside who produced it, the name of the author remains at the contours of texts—separating one from the other, defining their form, and characterizing their mode of existence.

(Foucault 1980, p. 123)

In his seminal essay *What Is an Author* (1969), Michel Foucault argues that the main function of an author’s name, as opposed to a proper name, is to delineate the confines of an author’s oeuvre and draw a line between her texts and those composed by other writers. John Searle on the other hand, in his treatise on *Proper Names* (1918) and their linguistic properties, is more concerned with the referential function of both proper and authorial names. Names, as he maintains, have no meaning per se and do not act as definite descriptions. Their main purpose is not to describe but to refer to an individual who is the bearer of that name. That same individual, however, is marked by a set of characteristics that the proper name inevitably evokes when it is pronounced or when it appears in writing. As Searle argues: “proper names do not normally assert or specify any characteristics, their referring uses nonetheless presuppose that the object to which they purport to refer has certain characteristics” (Searle [1958] 1970, pp. 170–71). Names themselves are meaningless, yet they tend to assimilate the traits and distinctive features of the person to whom they refer. “They function not as descriptions, but as pegs on which to hang descriptions” (Searle [1958] 1970, p. 172). Michel Foucault on the other hand famously posits a difference between a proper and an author’s name by calling attention to the intrinsic relationship between the name of an author and her corpus. For Foucault, the name of a writer acts as a border patrol agent of sorts, guarding the invisible boundaries of texts written by different authors and preventing “intruders” to enter the textual territory they safeguard. The aim

of an author's name for Foucault is the protection of private property. Without the contribution of a name to police those margins, the classification of texts would not be possible:

These differences indicate that an author's name is not simply an element of speech (as a subject, a complement, or an element that could be replaced by a pronoun or other parts of speech). Its presence is functional in that it serves as a means of classification. A name can group together a number of texts and thus differentiate them from others. A name also establishes different forms of relationships among texts.

(Foucault 1980, p. 123)

What Foucault alludes to here are the possessive qualities of names. By adding an apostrophe and the letter "s" at the end of a name, we no longer refer to an individual but to her possessions, which in the case of an author include her writings. The phrases "Lacan's texts" and "Lacan's house" no longer refer to the author Lacan but to certain objects that belong or belonged to him. By slightly transforming an author's name, we perform an act that affects its reference. Similarly, when certain suffixes are added at the end of a name, the name itself becomes an adjective. By attaching the suffix "-ian", for instance, to the stem of an author's name (Freud-ian, Lacan-ian, Kafk-ian and Kafka-ian), the newly formed derivative does indeed define the borders of an author's oeuvre, as Foucault claims, but it does so only when accompanied by certain nouns (text, corpus, oeuvre): "the Freudian corpus", "the Lacanian oeuvre" etc. Furthermore, the same suffix in conjunction with an author's name conveys a distinctive quality at play in the texts of an author, which can be used as a means of comparison: "the Orwellian surveillance state". The suffix "-ean" operates in a similar manner, as in: "Derrid-ean" (the Derridean oeuvre, a Derridean notion).¹

Words ending in "-esque" represent a further class of suffixes capable of turning a name into an adjective. The online Merriam-Webster definition of the same suffix reads as follows: "in the manner or style of" (Online Merriam-Webster 2017a). As opposed to the suffixes discussed above, adjectives ending in "-esque", the stem of which contains a name, are not suitable in delineating an author's oeuvre (the phrase "the Kafkaesque corpus" is rather misleading). Their function is restricted to the denotation of properties that are at play in works composed by an author. Many adjectives composed of an author's name and the suffix "-esque" have found entrance into the English language, as in Dantesque, Chaplinesque, Dylanesque, and even Jordanesque (from Michael Jordan), yet the most well-know of all of them is arguably the derivative Kafkaesque which Robert Crumb and David Zane Mairowitz labeled *The Adjective*: "At best, an identifiable mood pervades his work, mysterious and difficult to pinpoint. Which has allowed the 'pork-butchers' of modern culture to turn him into an Adjective" (Crumb and Mairowitz 2010, p. 5).

However, what does Kafkaesque really mean and what qualities in Franz Kafka's work does it transmit? What is the relationship between Kafka's name and its adjectival form? The online Merriam-Webster dictionary provides a definition that seems to comprise the basic meaning of the word in everyday language: "of, relating to, or suggestive of Franz Kafka or his writings; especially: having a nightmarishly complex, bizarre, or illogical quality: Kafkaesque bureaucratic delays" (Online Merriam-Webster 2017b). Most English and German dictionaries define the word along similar lines, yet some critics and artists have offered more elaborate views on the subject. The critic Rainer Nägele, for example, delimits the concept ex negativo by outlining what it excludes and claims that the Kafkaesque is never "uncanny" (Nägele 2006, p. 21). His study counters Tzvetan Todorov's assertion that "Kafka's narratives relate both to the marvelous and to the uncanny" (Todorov 1973, p. 172) and he sets out to prove that the Kafkaesque does not include any "uncanny" notions. Frederick Karl provides another definition of the Kafkaesque in his critical Kafka biography *Representative Man* (Karl 1991), delineating the concept as follows: "For *Kafkaesque* at its most meaningful and exalted

¹ The word "Kafk-ean" is rather uncommon but not entirely absent in critical essays: "The Kafkean Law" (Žižek 2008, p. 87).

denotes a world that has its own rules, its own guidelines, its own forms of behavior that cannot be amenable to human will" (Karl 1991, p. 757). Kafkaesque, as Karl goes on to argue, "has become the representative adjective of our times". (Karl 1991, p. 757). Yet the *Adjective*, as Crumb and Mairowitz argue, implies much more:

Because his novels *The Trial* and *The Castle* deal with the inaccessibility of higher authority, "Kafkaesque" has come to be associated with the faceless bureaucratic infrastructure which the highly efficient Austro-Hungarian Empire bequeathed the Western world. In any case, it is an adjective that takes on almost mythic proportions in our time, irrevocably tied to fantasies of doom and gloom, ignoring the intricate Jewish Joke that weaves itself through the bulk of Kafka's work.

(Crumb and Mairowitz 2010, p. 5)

Crumb and Mairowitz foreground the multi-faceted dimension of the term as an underdetermined signifier that struggles to express, at least at the vernacular level, the convoluted and ineffable overall quality of Kafka's oeuvre. Many critics and *Kafka-ists* (another interesting suffix in conjunction with an author's name), however, expose the multivalence of the concept that can be deployed to designate a plethora of meanings. The following definitions of the Kafkaesque taken from the recently published selection of essays entitled *Mediamorphosis: Kafka and the Moving Image* (2016) highlight the wide array of meanings that critics attribute to the term. According to Martin Brady and Helen Hughes, Kafkaesque characterizes more than just dream-like qualities:

On the one hand there is the strongly visual use of language—metaphor, analogy, a meticulous naturalism in the description of architectural space and landscape, for example—and on the other the restricted viewpoint of the protagonists. Together these make for the disconcerting world-view generally labelled "Kafkaesque."

(Brady and Hughes 2016, p. 182)

Shai Biderman relates the term to linguistic properties: "Kafka's style of writing is indicative to his control over the linguistic medium, and, as such, is an archetypal condition of the Kafkaesque" (Biderman 2016, p. 204). The combination of humor and horror falls into the same category as well, as Iris Bruce suggests: "What is thoroughly Kafkaesque in these scenes is the combination of humor and horror in Cronenberg's exploration of deeply rooted anxieties, which include the fear of losing control over one's body, of succumbing to irrational animalistic impulses, of being entirely at their mercy, which we see in Gregor as well" (Bruce 2016, p. 216). What becomes evident here is the fact that the Kafkaesque has no fixed meaning as an adjective that defines the essential quality of Kafka's texts. It means whatever an interpreter associates with Kafka's stories. It comes as no surprise, then, that many critics avoid the term because of its ambiguousness and ubiquity, and prefer the more neutral "Kafkaian", "Kafkian", and "Kafkan" (an abbreviated form of the "-ian" adjective ending that appears multiple times in the aforementioned *Mediamorphosis* selection of essays) when referring to distinctive properties of Kafka's texts, whatever those might be, all of which seem to act as synonyms of the Kafkaesque.

It is significant to note that adjectives ending in "-esque", as evidenced by the case of the Kafkaesque, conform to Searle's theory of proper names. Their function is not to define or describe. Rather, they serve as "pegs on which to hang descriptions. Thus, the looseness of the criteria for proper names is a necessary condition for isolating the referring function from the describing function of language" (Searle [1958] 1970, p. 172). The impossibility of pinning down the meaning of the Kafkaesque, its "looseness", resembles the properties of proper names whose aim is to refer (in this case to the author and/or her work) and not to describe (the same author and/or her work). The Kafkaesque does not act as a conventional adjective but rather as a name. It refers to Kafka's work, just like his name does, but it is the reader who assigns meanings and "hangs descriptions" to its derivatives. In the vernacular, on the other hand, the Kafkaesque appears to have broken the chains

that bound it to its origin, Kafka's proper name and his texts. In German, it is known as "kafkaesk" and it was initially employed, as Thomas Anz states, in instances relating to imitations of Kafka's texts and distinctive properties of his stories. Yet "kafkaesk" became (in)famous once it entered the vernacular, in its social application, and since then, as Anz remarks, it is only remotely connected to Kafka's literary work (Anz 1992, p. 14). Owing to that phenomenon, its meaning appears to be more stable among individuals who have not read Kafka's texts but still use the word to express "a nightmarishly complex, bizarre, or illogical quality".

Now that a theoretical frame for the concept of the Kafkaesque has been established, it is time to explore some of its (mimetic) manifestations in cartoons, comics, and films in which a central visual quality of the Kafkaesque comes to the fore. In the following sections, I focus on narratives in which the Kafkaesque is linked to hybrid insects and to a lesser extent to the theme of bodily deformity. My analysis is not concerned with graphic or cinematic adaptations of Kafka's text, but with stories that indirectly draw on Kafka's visual vocabulary. I argue that unspecified, grotesque insects, especially when they boast manlike features, often hint at one of Kafka's most influential stories: *The Metamorphosis* (1915). Their appearance, in other words, acts under certain circumstances as a Kafka-reference. The first section of my essay discusses gag-cartoons and their affinity with the genre of parody with which they share multiple formal characteristics. Given their reliance on visual cues to tell a story and their limited narrative means, cartoons that draw on Kafka's texts often seek to emulate a visual quality that is easily discernible by readers, which is why the insectoid corporeality of the protagonist in *The Metamorphosis*, Gregor Samsa, is almost always a point of reference. The second section centers primarily on Charles Burns' graphic novel *Black Hole* (1995–2005) and his animation *Fear(s) of the Dark* (2007) in which the imitation of Kafka's style is not as direct as in cartoons but equally evident and effective. The third part examines David Cronenberg's film *Naked Lunch* (1991) and the themes of hybridity that the director deploys in his attempt to create a narrative based on two major sources: William S. Burroughs' novel of the same name, of which the film claims to be an adaptation, and Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*. The concluding section foregrounds the relationship between an author and her powerful forerunners as well as the struggles of the former to come to terms with the "influence" of the latter.

2. Defining Cartoons against the Backdrop of Parody

Imitation, according to Pierre Fontanier, is a figure that "consists of imitating a turn of phrase, a sentence construction, from another language; or a turn of phrase, a sentence construction, that is no longer in use. In the first case, it is called *Hellenism*, *Latinism*, *Hebraism*, *Anglicism*, etc., depending on whether it comes from the Greek, Latin, Hebrew, or English, etc. . . . In the second case, it may be called by the name of the author who provided the model for it. Thus, we give the name *Marotism* to any affected imitation of Clément Marot's style."

(Genette 1997, pp. 73–74)

By citing Pierre Fontanier's definition of the term imitation, Gerard Genette, in his hugely influential work on transtextual relations *Palimpsests* (1982), highlights the suffix "-ism" that can be appended to the stem of an author's name in order to express a quality, a mode of writing, a doctrine, or even a movement that springs from her work (Marx-Marxism, Balzac-Balzacism). As opposed to the suffix "-esque", however, the derivation produces not an adjective but a noun. A Marotism or a Balzacism, as Genette states by placing emphasis on the indefinite article, conveys features at play in the work of authors to whose names the suffix "-ism" has been added only then, when those features seek to emigrate, when they appear in texts not written by them but by "imitators" of their style: "Strictly speaking, an Anglicism is identified only as it comes into contact with another language, at the moment it steps out of the English language, and a Marotism when it wanders out of Marot's work" (Genette 1997, p. 76). In this sense, there is nothing Kafkaesque in Kafka's novels and short

stories because everything in them is Kafkaesque. It is only in relation to other works that one can speak of it and identify it as a distinctive mode of Kafka's style. Kafkaesque is a style, a quality, a situation, a mode or writing etc. when it migrates to texts not written by Kafka himself. The name of an author might well serve as a guardian or rather a doorkeeper, as Foucault argues, yet the distinctive qualities of their oeuvre truly comes to light through an act of trespassing. To put this another way, a Marotism, Balzacism, Kafkaism (another synonym for the Kafkaesque) and similar modes of imitation and appropriation can trick Foucault's border patrol agents and cross the limits that circumscribe an author's textual, visual, or audio-visual domain.

The imitation of the Kafkaesque in gag cartoons, to which I now turn my attention, requires a visual quality of the *Adjective* because of the narrative constraints of the medium. As opposed to conventional graphic novels and comic strips that are by definition sequential, cartoon-artists have at their disposal a single panel in which they operate with two signifying systems: images and words. Due to that limitation, the presence of hybrid insects is very common in cartoons that allude to Kafka's stories as the following cartoon by Judy Horacek² demonstrates (Figure 1). The drawing of a bug sitting on a sofa during a psychoanalytic session and the addition of Kafka's name in the speech balloon facilitate the identification of the text on which the cartoon's punch line is based. In some cases, the iconic face of the author is portrayed as well, but even such cases often refer to *The Metamorphosis* (Figure 3). Illustrators that draw on Kafka's texts and his physical appearance proceed on the assumption that readers are familiar with the hypotext (Kafka's *The Metamorphosis*) at which they are hinting³. In other words, the cartoon itself will fail to deliver its punch line if readers are not acquainted with Kafka's short story, and that forces illustrators to draw on well-known and popular hypotexts.



Figure 1. Cartoon by Judy Horacek.

² I would like to thank Judy Horacek, Pat Bagley, and Jiri Sliva for kindly giving me permission to publish their sophisticated cartoons (Figures 1–3).

³ The term *hypotext* has been coined by Genette and designates the text upon which the mimetic text, the *hypertext* (the cartoon in our case), is grafted.

The cartoons under consideration here have a strong parodic quality given their reliance on a highly influential hypotext, and the genre of parody, as Genette argues, is the mimetic genre par excellence.

The most rigorous form of parody, or *minimal parody*, consists, then, of taking up a familiar text literally and giving it a new meaning, while playing, if possible and as needed, on the words . . . The most elegant parody, since it is the most economical, is then merely a quote deflected from its meaning or simply from its context, or demoted from its dignified status.

(Genette 1997, pp. 16–17)

When a parody draws upon a celebrated text, it does so because the latter is recognizable by a wide audience. By tinkering with single words, phrases, or entire sentences from the parodied work (replacing the letter “b” with the letter “p” in the verb “to be” and adding an additional “e” at the end of the same verb in Shakespeare’s famous quote: “to be or not to be” for instance), the writer creates a pun that is funny only due to its reference to the hypotext, and that is the main reason why the parodist has to stay as close to the source text as possible. If readers are not familiar with the referenced work or are unable to recognize the reference, the pun will remain inaccessible to them. While this kind of strictly textual parody is possible in visual media as well, at least in those that employ images and words, it is very rare because a medium that rests on both visual and linguistic cues is at its most effective when both levels are at work. The following political cartoon by Pat Bagley, posted on his Twitter account on 5 March 2016, demonstrates nicely how this type of parody utilizes visual and textual components to generate a pun (Figure 2). The modified first line from Kafka’s story, famous in itself, that can be read in the upper left-hand corner of the panel in conjunction with the visual imagery of the panel, which features an insect reading a newspaper, and the current political context, rendered in the form of a headline and an image on the cover of the newspaper, deliver a punch line that hinges on multiples sources to which readers must have access if they are to understand its message. Moreover, the caption of the cartoon (“Kafkaesque”) utilizes the prevalent connotations of the *Adjective* at the vernacular level to emphasize a political development that is more absurd and preposterous in the eyes of the illustrator than the transformation of a human being into a gigantic insect.



Figure 2. Cartoon by Pat Bagley.

The imitation that lies at the core of cartoons that incorporate elements of Kafka’s writings, his name, aspects of his life, and/or his physical appearance, pertain, at least to some extent, to the

norms of conventional parodies as outlined by Genette. By seeking a proximity to the hypotext and by “diverting the letter of the [source] text to another purpose” (Genette 1997, p. 78)—an operation that creates a comic effect—said cartoons pursue an imitation of the “letter”, just like parodies do, but contrary to the latter they also display an imitation that targets the imagery of the hypotext. The emulation of physical appearance, which is to say the medium/genre of *caricature*, is particularly interesting here because it conforms to the exact same rules that govern the genre of parody. While the parodist imitates a well-known and celebrated text by manipulating its microstructure, the caricaturist sketches the portrait of a famous individual by exaggerating and distorting some of her physical traits and facial characteristics. The artist has to make sure that her audience will recognize her victim despite the rendered distortions, which is why the target of the caricature must be a prominent personality or celebrity. The affinity between caricature and parody becomes axiomatic from this angle. In order to construct an amusing and playful moment, the caricaturist and the parodist draw on a widely recognized hypotext the structure of which they marginally distort, but the effect they hope to achieve hinges upon the ability of readers to discern both the source and its distortion. Hence, the inclusion of a name or other textual hints that facilitate the identification process is not uncommon, especially in caricatures and illustrations like the following by Jiri Slíva entitled *Die Verwandlung* (The Metamorphosis, Figure 3). Kafka’s iconic face in conjunction with the title of the illustration and the notion of hybridity that the unidentified creature evokes create a comic effect that has its roots in the hypotext on which the caricature rests. Furthermore, Slíva’s notion of hybridity in this particular illustration might be twofold. Not only is the creature hybrid, half-human, half-hare, but so too are the sources of the caricature; its hypotexts. The first hypotext, Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* [Die Verwandlung], is clear and indisputable given the many references, but one can only speculate about the other(s). It does seem possible, though, that the illustration refers not only to Kafka’s crossbreeds but also to Albrecht Dürer’s famous painting *Young Hare*. As such, it highlights a Kafkaesque mode of hybridity that is active at both the organic (the creature itself) and the referential level (Kafka and Dürer).



Figure 3. Illustration by Jiri Slíva.

We must keep in mind that there is, in fact, nothing Kafkaesque in Kafka's texts; that this "mood" can only be identified as such the moment it steps out of the carefully delineated, textual confines of Kafka's oeuvre; when it enters foreign territory; when it occurs in the text of another author or as a visual equivalent in visual or audiovisual media. This assertion raises several concerns, the most important of which is the following: how is imitation of the Kafkaesque possible if we cannot even say what the word signifies? In my study, I do not claim to exhaust the full range of the term but only an aspect of it that I view as a central Kafkan trait: (hybrid) insects. Their appearance in cartoons, films and comic books, as I argue, often alludes to Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and particularly to the hapless hero of the story, Gregor Samsa, who awakes one morning to find himself "transformed in his bed into a gigantic insect" (Kafka 1971, p. 89). It comes as no surprise, then, given the formal restrictions of the cartoon-medium that a considerable number of cartoonist often allude to the aforementioned story, particularly to Gregor's corporeality, in their attempts to generate a punch line. The illustration of an insect exhibiting human traits in conjunction with a name or a title serve as a clear reference to Kafka's work that enables readers to identify the source and grasp the gag that springs from it.

3. Charles Burns' Comic Books and Animations

"Parasite" is one of those words that calls up its apparent opposite. It has no meaning without that counterpart. There is no parasite without its host.

(Miller 1986, p. 452)

In contrast to cartoons, the presence of elements that evoke Kafka's imagery in comic books is not dependent upon readers' ability to discern the implanted reference, whether the latter is intended or not. According to Genette, whose analysis does not include Kafka's texts, the reoccurrence of certain formulations indicative of an author's style can be used as a platform for imitative practices. When the name of the main protagonist in a fictional narrative, for example, consists of a single letter that happens to be the first initial of the author's name (K. is the name of the lead character in both novels *The Castle* and *The Trial*), and when this peculiarity occurs more than just once, one can speak of a distinctive trait and categorize it as a formal feature of the author in question. Themes and motifs that occur repeatedly in an author's oeuvre can be subsumed under the broad category of an author's style as well. From this perspective, hybrid creatures and bodily deformity, to name just those Kafkan topics that are relevant to the present study, represent iterative phenomena in Kafka's texts that appeal to and can be appropriated by imitators. In this sense, what has often been labeled "the author's style" is nothing more than a series of repetitions, and repetitions, as Genette stresses, invite imitations. An imitation, then, occurs when an imitator attempts to simulate iterative formal or thematic features of influential precursors:

What I said once belongs to me and it can be parted from me only by being given over through a voluntary or involuntary transaction, officially acknowledged by a pair of quotations marks. What I have said twice or more ceases to belong to me; it now characterizes me and may be parted from me through a simple transfer of imitation; by repeating myself, I am already imitating myself, and on that point one can imitate me by repeating me.

(Genette 1997, p. 79)

Repetitive elements in the works of influential precursors are often the target of imitators, and a venerable member of that guild of imitators is Charles Burns. In the third chapter of his critically acclaimed and highly unsettling graphic novel *Black Hole*, an illustration of a slightly disfigured female hand in the third chapter of the comic book directs us towards the character of "Leni" in Kafka's novel *The Trial* (Leni is the mistress of K.'s lawyer and the one who seduces K. in the chapter *The Lawyer/Leni*). The web of skin that stretches between all fingers of the character's hand in Burns' panel hints at the same passage in Kafka's novel in which a detailed description of Leni's hand is

presented: “Sie spannte den Mittel- und Ringfinger ihrer rechten Hand auseinander, zwischen denen das Verbindungshäutchen fast bist zum obersten Gelenk der kurzen Finger reichte. [She spread the middle and ring fingers of her right hand apart from each other and between those fingers the flap of skin connecting them reached up almost as far as the top joint of the little finger.]” (Kafka 2002, p. 145). Aside from this very direct intertextual prompt that draws our attention to Kafka’s work, the most intriguing references in Burns’ works are the ones that hint at *The Metamorphosis*. In that narrative, the protagonist of the story, Gregor, awakes one morning and finds himself transformed into a grotesque creature, half-human and half-insect. If we adhere to Theodor W. Adorno’s principle of literariness (“Das Prinzip der Wörtlichkeit” (Adorno 1963, p. 251)), according to which every single word in Kafka’s texts is to be understood literally, and reject symbolical readings of the story that view it as an elaborate metaphor (Corngold 1973, pp. 1–31), then Gregor is indeed a hybrid creature. In his *Lectures on Literature* (Nabokov 1980), Vladimir Nabokov examines the physiology of Gregor’s body based on the evidence at hand in the text and concludes that Gregor must be a beetle. He admits, however, that “the metamorphosis is not quite complete as yet” because a “regular beetle has no eyelids and cannot close its eyes—a beetle with human eyes” (Nabokov 1980, p. 258). Nabokov is referring to the very beginning of the text, shortly after Gregor’s realization that he is no longer a human being: “However violently he forced himself toward his right side he always rolled onto his back again. He tried it at least a hundred time, shutting his eyes to keep from seeing his struggling legs . . . ” (Kafka 1971, p. 89). There is additional evidence scattered throughout the text that confirms Nabokov’s observation. Insects, for instance, breathe through their bodies thanks to a network of tubes called tracheae. They have neither noses nor lungs. Gregor, on the other hand, does not conform to this model. The following passage depicts Gregor’s last moments before he succumbs to the wound on his back, inflicted by the apple that his father had thrown at him, and the overall neglect that he had to endure from his family: “Then his head sank to the floor of its own accord and from his nostrils came the last faint flicker of his breath” (Kafka 1971, p. 135). Hybridity, as it becomes evident here, is of the essence in *The Metamorphosis*, and one of the critics who classifies it as a central Kafka motif is Henry Sussman: “Kafka’s uncanny architecture, decisive as it was for the twentieth-century imaginaries of literature and the visual arts, incorporates the threshold between the human and the animal, under his administration a particularly active and generative interface” (Sussman 2010, p. 240).

The themes of hybridity and bodily deformity dominate all facets of Burns’ oeuvre as well, and the physical appearance of multiple characters allude, to a considerable extent, to Kafka’s universe. Not unlike Gregor (*The Metamorphosis*) and the Kittenlamb (the half-kitten, half-lamb character in *A Crossbreed*), the two creatures in Kafka’s stories that are hybrid by definition, the characters in Burns’ *Black Hole* exhibit a corporeality akin to Kafka’s characters. A female body endowed with a tail or a face with feelers, to name just two examples of bodily deformity in Burns’ graphic novel, do not directly reference Kafka’s texts, but they can be viewed as an imitation of his style. The bizarre creatures that inhabit his latest trilogy, *X’ed Out* (2010), *The Hive* (2012), and *Sugar Skull* (2014), fall under the same broad category of hybrids and creatures as well: unidentified amphibians that speak to and interact with the protagonist of the story, deformed characters with dreadful wounds on their bodies, a slug-like being that boasts a human face, and many other creatures that defy conventional means of classification. The reoccurrence of animals that speak and behave as humans (Red Peter) and inanimate creatures (Odradek) in Kafka’s works that defy conventional means of classification can be viewed as an iterative, idiosyncratic feature of Kafka’s style that Burns takes on when composing his narratives and designing his characters. The imitation at work here is by no means inferior to the source, for it goes beyond the mere visual reconstruction of a textual, stylistic mode.

The palimpsestuous presence of *The Metamorphosis* is more directly involved in an equally original and equally disturbing animation by Burns, his only work in this medium to date, that appears as a segment in the French animated anthology *Fear(s) of the Dark*. The beginning of the story is very similar to that of *The Metamorphosis*. As Eric, the hero of the story, awakes one morning from uneasy dreams, he finds himself in a bare room that resembles the recovery room of an infirmary. Unable to stand up

from the bed, his gaze wanders to the only window in the room and the trees outside. At this moment, as the camera slowly zooms into the forest, a flashback sets in, recounting the tragic events that led up to this moment. While wandering through a forest many years ago, the young hero runs across a nest inhabited by insects of an undetermined species. Their unusual human-like appearance (Figure 4) prompts the teenager to capture one of the insects and bring it home to examine it more closely. The specimen eventually is lost and several years later the protagonist moves to a different city to begin his studies at a college. Eric eventually falls in love with a fellow student, Laura, and at some point sleeps with her on the same childhood-bed that he brought along when he moved into his new apartment. During that night, the protagonist realizes that the insect he once thought to be lost was in actuality hiding in a recess of his bed. As the scenes of the animation instruct us to believe, Eric was not the only one who interacted with Laura that night. The parasitic insect drilled its way into Laura's body, leaving a wound behind (Burns' characteristic vagina-looking cut), and from that point on it begins to control her mind. Laura, at the mercy of the parasite and slowly transforming into an insect (Figure 5), begins to dominate and terrorize Eric, forcing him to eat as much as possible. By the end of the story Eric's bloated body is used as a host in which the insects' larvae grow.



Figure 4. Burns, Charles. *Fear(s) of the Dark*. Animation. 2007.



Figure 5. Burns, Charles. *Fear(s) of the Dark*. Animation. 2007.

The animation bears a striking resemblance to Kafka's short story and the relationship between his work and the text upon which it is transplanted can be read as the outcome of a complex type of misreading that Harold Bloom terms "poetic misprision". Poetic misprision, according to Bloom, concerns the relation of an author to a celebrated forerunner and the efforts of the former to repudiate the power that the latter exerts over him or her. By misreading the precursor, the "ephebe", as Harold Bloom labels imitators of great poets (Bloom 1997, p. 10), attempts to overcome his or her influence and clear space for herself. This "anxiety of influence" is a considerable creative force that has given rise to works of unparalleled depth and scope, but in those works the voice of the forerunner, well hidden in the depths of the newly crafted work, is always active. Like a parasite turning a human body into its new domicile, the precursor comes to life through the agony and creative force of the ephebe, despite the efforts of the latter to deny the existence of the former or rather because of them. "[S]trong poems are always omens of resurrection. The dead may or may not return, but their voice comes alive, paradoxically never by mere imitation, but in the agonistic misprision performed upon powerful forerunners by only the most gifted of their successors" (Bloom 1997, p. xxiv). Whether the works of Burns' discussed here are the outcome of poetic misprision or not is open to debate. What is certain, though, is that the ground upon which his narratives grow is covered by Kafka's texts. In this sense, Kafka's "body of work" is akin to Eric's body. They both serve as a maternal womb out of which insects and insect-narratives ceaselessly hatch. Yet Kafka is by no means the only powerful precursor active in Burns' animation⁴. Every major work of art harbors more than just one "parasite" and the manner in which they inform and impact their "host" is considerable.

A central motif in both Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* and Burns' segment of *Fear(s) in the Dark* is "parasitism". Yet before I turn my attention to those works, it should be noted that the word "parasite" has two meanings in English: a biological and a social. In its social application, as a metaphor, a parasite designates a person who exploits the generosity of his or her benefactor without giving anything in return. The biological meaning of the word, on the other hand, refers to an organism that lives on or in another organism, feeding on it, and contributing nothing to its health and survival (Miller 1986, p. 453). In *The Metamorphosis*, the social meaning of the word "parasite", not the biological, is dominant. His transformation robs Gregor Samsa of the ability to interact with other people, and he soon realizes that his survival hinges upon the benevolence of his parents and his sister. Unable to offer anything in return, he finds himself in a state of absolute dependence. He has, in other words, not only been transformed into an insect but also into a parasite, at least in a social sense. The parents themselves, however, were parasitical on him before his transformation (Gregor was the sole provider of the entire family), and from that angle the metamorphosis marks an inversion in that relationship, turning the parasite into a host and vice versa. The parasite-metaphor in Kafka's *Letter to his Father* (1919) resonates with this notion too, although the German word that the author employs in that text is "Schmarotzer": a synonym of "parasite" ("Parasit" in German) that is more common in social contexts⁵. Bearing those references in mind, *The Metamorphosis* story appears to be a fictional version of Kafka's relationship to his father, and it should not come as too much of a surprise that many critics interpret *The Metamorphosis* as an elaborate metaphor. It is hard to tell, though, who is the parasite of who the host in both the real and the fictional version of that relationship.

⁴ William S. Burroughs' novels, Lynd Ward's woodcut novels, and David Cronenberg's films, to name just those hypotexts that are known to me, are all at work in Burns' oeuvre.

⁵ Towards the end of *Letter to His Father*, Kafka speculates how his father would respond to his long letter and sets out to write down that response on behalf of his father. The following passage from the text is written from the imaginary point of view of Kafka's father: "Im Grunde aber hast Du hier und in allem anderen für mich nichts anderes bewiesen, als daß alle meine Vorwürfe berechtigt waren und daß unter ihnen noch ein besonders berechtigter Vorwurf gefehlt hat, nämlich der Vorwurf der Unaufrichtigkeit, der Liebedienerei, des Schmarotzertums. Wenn ich nicht sehr irre, schmarotzest Du an mir auch noch mit diesem Brief als solchem" [Basically, however, in this as in everything else you have only proved to me that all my reproaches have been justified, and that one reproach in particular was still missing, namely the charge of insincerity, fawning, and parasitism. If I am not very mistaken, you are parasitical on me even with this letter] (Kafka 1995, p. 58).

In Burns' animation, the relationship between parasite and host is more straightforward given the biological implications. Apart from the references to Kafka's stories, the work clearly alludes to several parasitic species that use their host's body as a habitat and even engage in mind control. The behavior of the parasitic barnacle sacculina, for instance, is reminiscent of the insects that have parasitized Eric's body. The female sacculina larva colonizes a crab by plunging its way into the crab's exoskeleton through a soft chink on the arm. The crab's immune systems cannot fight off the intruder, and the parasite slowly grows inside the crab. Once a male sacculina larva joins the host, it endlessly fertilizes the female's eggs, and together they produce thousands of Sacculina larvae every few weeks. In *Parasite Rex* (Zimmer 2000), Carl Zimmer describes in detail how the parasite affects the crab's physiology and behavior: "The crab begins to change into a new sort of creature, one that exists to serve the parasite . . . And while other crabs mate and produce a new generation, parasitized crabs simply go on eating and eating. They have been spayed. The parasite is responsible for all these changes" (Zimmer 2000, p. 81). Following up on that observation, Zimmer goes on to remark: "But parasites such as *Sacculina* do more: they control their hosts, becoming in effect their new brain, and turning them into new creatures. It is as if the host itself is simply a puppet, and the parasite is the hand inside" (Zimmer 2000, p. 82). In Burns' animation, the insectoid parasites have turned Eric's body into their new home, but they have not taken over his mind. They do, however, control the mind of his girlfriend, Laura, who is apparently changing into an insect herself (Figure 5). Similar to the cabbage worm caterpillar that a species of parasitic wasp turns into a bodyguard (Zimmer 2000, p. 84), Laura assumes her new role as a guardian, protecting the insects' larvae and making sure that Eric gets all the "care" that he needs. The themes of mind control, bodily deformity, hybridity, and animalistic impulses that reverberate throughout the animation hint at another powerful precursor at work here on whose works Burns draws: the auteur David Cronenberg. His film *Shivers* (1975) takes advantage of the deep-seated human fear of parasites, presenting phallic creatures that drastically increase the sexual desire of their human hosts. The film, however, that can be read in relation not only to Burns' but also to Kafka's texts is Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*.

4. "Exterminate all rational thought": David Cronenberg's *Naked Lunch*

It's like an agent. An agent who's come to believe his own cover story. But who's in there, hiding in a larval state . . . just waiting for the proper time to hatch out.

(*Naked Lunch* 1991)

Taking into consideration the vast discrepancies between David Cronenberg's film *Naked Lunch* and William S. Burroughs' novel of the same name on which the film is based, one can hardly speak of a conventional adaptation. The director takes the liberty to utilize facts from Burroughs' life and fuses them with the distinct trademarks of his own films, including transformation (*The Fly*) and hybridity (*eXistenZ*, *Videodrome*) among many others. The main story line centers on William (Bill) Lee, an alter ego of Burroughs played by Peter Weller, his struggles with drugs, the hallucinations that they induce, and his efforts to complete the book that will establish him as one of the most intriguing writers of the twentieth century: *Naked Lunch*. The first few scenes of the film, aside from establishing the mood, setting, and philosophy of the work, contain a treatise on the theme of re-writing presented in the form of a dialogue between Bill, Hank (the alter ego of Jack Kerouac played by Nicholas Campbell), and Martin (the alter ego of Alan Ginsberg played by Michael Zelniker). The dialogue will be quoted in full because of its great importance:

Hank: So you can't rewrite, 'cause to rewrite is to deceive and lie, and you betray your own thoughts. To rethink the flow, and the rhythm and the tumbling out of the words . . . is a betrayal. It's a sin, Martin. It's a sin.

Martin: I don't accept your Catholic interpretation of my compulsive necessity to rewrite every single word at least a hundred times. Guilt is . . . Guilt is the key, not sin. Guilt re not

writing the best that I can. Guilt re not considering everything from every possible angle. Balancing everything.

Hank: Well, how about guilt re censoring your best thoughts? Your most honest, primitive, real thoughts. Because that's what your laborious rewriting amounts to, Martin.

Martin: Is rewriting really censorship, Bill? Because I'm completely fucked if it is.

Bill: Exterminate all rational thought. That is the conclusion I have come to. (*NakedLunch* 1991)

The dialogue conveys the writing philosophy of Kerouac and Ginsberg, referring particularly to Kerouac's *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose* (1958) and the improvisational fluidity of his works (his most famous novel *On The Road* was written in just three weeks). Burroughs' "cut-up technique", which is a type of montage that Burroughs used to rearrange his texts by cutting them up and creating new units out of them—a technique that undermines any attempt to extract a stable meaning from them—is at play here as well. Beyond those references, the above-cited dialogue reads as a sophisticated metatextual elaboration of re-writing procedures. Hank's position touches upon the traditional dichotomy between speech and writing, what Derrida names "logocentrism", according to which writing is subordinate to speech because speech, so goes this line of thinking, produces writing and not the other way around⁶. Hank (that is Kerouac) thus seeks to establish a mode of writing that is as close to his thought as is speech. In addition, his reluctance to rewrite i.e., refine the already written entails a refusal to delve into a palimpsestuous activity by imitating, for example, an author's style.

The repeated re-occurrence of the word "re" as both a prefix and a preposition in the dialogue is relevant here as well. As a preposition, and according to the online *Oxford Living Dictionaries*, "re" signifies "in the matter of" and/or "about; concerning" (*Online Oxford Living Dictionaries* 2017a) and as a prefix, among other things: "1. once more; afresh; anew, 1.1 With return to a previous state" (*Online Oxford Living Dictionaries* 2017b). "Re", in other words, signals a backward movement, a circling-back-to something, a re-turn to something previously established with the intention of either preserving its current state, improving, or altering it. The prefix "re" also implicates imitation and forgery; a proliferation, re-appearance, and repetition of something original by means of re-production, which helps explain Hank's unwillingness to indulge in similar endeavors. Seeking to access the spontaneity and purity of his thoughts in order to create a work of sheer originality, Hank condemns re-writing as a sin. Ginsberg's alter ego (Martin), on the other hand, desires a perfectly balanced form that can only be achieved, as he argues, through an act of "compulsive" rewriting. By constantly going back to his own writings, by ceaselessly polishing their shape and balancing their rhythm, he hopes to produce a form as close to perfection as possible. The backward motion that Martin foregrounds here is crucial, for re-writing i.e., imitating are marked by the same impulses: going back to the source and re-writing it so as to (allegedly) improve it. Bill's, that is Burroughs' (or is it Cronenberg's?) answer to this "anxiety of influence" is very simple and direct: "Exterminate all rational thought". Said definition perfectly captures the film's "logic", which strategically defies logic, and can be applied to Kafka's texts as well given the notions of absurdity that both works have in common.

The first scene of the film establishes Bill's profession and sets the plot in motion. Bill is a bug-extinator who runs out of bug-powder in the middle of a job. Being unable to explain the shortage of bug-powder to his employer and puzzled by the incident, he meets his friends Hank and Martin at a dinner and tells them about the incident (the dialogue cited above has been taken from the same scene). Hank hints that the missing powder might be a "domestic problem", indicating that Bill's wife, Joan, could be involved in its disappearance. In the following scene, Bill enters his apartment and finds his wife injecting bug-powder into her breast. Joan⁷, slightly shaken by the bug-drug she just injected into her body, explains to Bill what makes bug-powder so special:

⁶ Derrida goes on to take that notion apart in his *Of Grammatology* (1967).

⁷ Joan was the name of Burroughs' real wife whom he accidentally shot during a William Tell game.

Joan: It's . . . It's a very literary high. Very literary.

. . .

Bill: What do you mean it's a literary high?

Joan: It's a Kafka high. You feel like a bug. Try some.

Bill: Well, I don't know. I don't know. I think our metabolisms are very different.

Joan: Whose? Yours and Kafka's? (*Naked Lunch* 1991)

Bill, intrigued by his wife's statement, injects the Kafka-powder into his veins so as to experience himself what a literary high really feels like. The drug induces a series of hallucinations that manifest themselves in the following scenes in a series of hybrid, insectoid creatures, revealing to the spectator what a Kafka-high feels like or rather what it looks like (Figures 6 and 7). A Kafka-high (another intriguing synonym/neologism of the Kafkaesque?) signifies not as much feeling like a bug but rather seeing hybrid bugs on the screen. The events that follow after the injection of the Kafka-drug set the driving philosophy of the film ("exterminate all rational thought") in motion, and Bill proceeds to exterminate reason with the same passion that he used to exterminate bugs. The moment Bill consumes the bug-powder is also the moment that the film injects a powerful amount of Kafka-drug into its own veins. Hybrid insects and insectoid devices take over, transforming the film into a monstrous, Frankensteinian artwork. Kafka's texts, especially his *Metamorphosis*, and Burroughs' life and writings, the two major hypotexts of the film, reveal themselves and merge with Cronenberg's vision of insectuous re-writing.



Figure 6. Cronenberg, David. *Naked Lunch*. Film. 1991.



Figure 7. Cronenberg, David. *Naked Lunch*. Film. 1991.

If we take the metaphor of the bug-powder as a highly addictive Kafka-drug a step further, we can conclude that Kafka's writings in general and *The Metamorphosis* in particular have caused a serious addiction in our culture. It is an epidemic that has spread through a wide array of visual and audiovisual media in which hybrid insects ceaselessly multiply. And the infestation cannot be contained. The field of literary studies has not been spared either. As critics and Kafka aficionados, we all need our daily Kafka-dose to get through the day. The Kafka-drug runs through our veins, but it is also inscribed on the DNA of readers that have not yet had the pleasure of reading any of Kafka's texts, for the Kafka-substance can be obtained in a variety of media today in which *His* presence and influence is omniscient.

5. On Fathers and Forefathers

Shakespeare did not think one thought and one thought only; rather scandalously, he thought all thoughts, for all of us . . . The issue is not belief but our human nature, so intensified by Shakespeare as to be his re-invention. How can we historicize Shakespeare if we are children of Shakespeare, mapping our origins and our horizons in his diction, in his astonishing vocabulary of some 22,000 separate words?

(Bloom 1997, pp. xxvii–xxviii)

Harold Bloom's *The Anxiety of Influence* (1973) can be read as a reaction to Barthes' hugely influential essay *The Death of the Author* (1967), in which the latter proclaims the end of the author's tyranny over literary criticism. In his essay, Barthes exterminates the author-instance with the agency of a performative utterance, by simply proclaiming the author's death in the title of his essay. While John L. Austin's work *How to Do Things with Words* (1962), to which Barthes alludes in his text, is focused on speech and speech acts Barthes addresses the performative properties of writing when he notes that it "designates exactly what linguists . . . call a performative, a rare verbal form . . . in which the enunciation has no other content (contains no other proposition) than the act by which it is uttered—something like the *I declare* of kings or the *I sing* of very ancient poets" (Barthes 1977, pp. 145–46). Barthes does not directly declare the death of the author ("I sentence you to death" would be a typical performative sentence), but his essay can be viewed as a written declaration that does perform an action inasmuch as it changes a given social reality. By applying the performative properties of writing, in other words, Barthes brings an end to the reign of the author and raises the status of the reader by simply announcing the death of the former and the birth of the latter: the author is dead. Long live the reader. It is important to note here that the new established rule of the reader is also the rule of the critic who is a reader herself. Bloom's anxiety on the other hand strives to resurrect the author and restore *His* authority by regarding Shakespeare as the personification of the Author-God whom Barthes sought to cast out. By utilizing the same performative properties of writing as Barthes, Bloom declares Shakespeare the ultimate Origin and his texts as having no other source other than themselves. "Shakespeare has influenced the world far more than it initially influenced Shakespeare" (Bloom 1997, p. xvi). In this sense, Shakespeare's texts gain the same status as the Bible or any other religious text. They originate from a source beyond our grasp. Shakespeare, as Bloom writes, "invented us, and continues to contain us" (Bloom 1997, p. xvi), which amounts to: the (short) reign of the reader is over. Long live Shakespeare.

A response to Barthes' essay came from Michel Foucault too who, as we already saw, was more concerned with the function of the author's name. His equally influential essay *What Is an Author?* (1969) and the arguments that he lays out in it are less performative in nature and purport to be more substantial and practical than the ones put forth by Barthes. Foucault does not attempt to resurrect the author as Bloom does, but he does raise the status of selected authors above the rest when he introduces the term "initiators of discursive practices". An initiator of said practices is an author who produces not only their own work, as Foucault asserts, "but the possibility and the rules of formation of other texts. In this sense, their role differs entirely from that of a novelist, for example, who is

basically never more than the author of his own text" (Foucault 1980, p. 131). The authors Foucault designates as initiators are Freud and Marx and he goes to great lengths to substantiate his claim that literary authors are excluded from this equation (Foucault 1980, pp. 132–33). In his analysis, only theorists and critics can become initiators of discursive practices, not authors of fiction or the founders of a science, a point that aligns him with Barthes who refers to the rise of the critic when he announces the birth of the reader at the cost of the author. And let us not forget that Foucault, the founder of discourse analysis, can be considered an initiator himself. Foucault's essay can also be seen as a partial influence study. This reality becomes evident when he stresses the importance of the "origin" and the necessity to go back to the source: "it is inevitable that practitioners of such discourses must 'return to the origin'" (Foucault 1980, p. 134). Towards the end of his essay, he follows up on his previous thought with the following statement: "These returns, an important component of discursive practices, form a relationship between 'fundamental' and mediate authors, which is not identical to that which links an ordinary text to its mediate author" (Foucault 1980, p. 136). The returns Foucault is referring to presuppose a re-writing of the source, at least in terms of imitation. In order to remain within the contours of a recently established discourse, a "practitioner", imitator, or descendant has to follow the rules and norms established by the initiator and that can only be achieved through an act of imitation: by going back to the source and re-writing it.

According to Monika Schmitz-Emans, the significance of an author's work is not limited to the influence that s/he has on subsequent generations of writers but should also be measured against the backdrop of works that have influenced the author in question as well (Schmitz-Emans 2008, p. 273), and the list of writers that have impacted Kafka's texts, as Emans demonstrates, is very long. This notion is refuted by Bloom, however, at least when it comes to Shakespeare who did far more than just that: "Shakespeare is the largest instance in the language of a phenomenon that stands outside the concern of this book: the absolute absorption of the precursor" (Bloom 1997, p. 11). While Bloom categorically dismisses any connection between his and Freud's theory and refuses to see his study in terms of an oedipal conflict, his remarks on Shakespeare suggest otherwise. Shakespeare commits parricide in Blooms account, killing his forefather, Christopher Marlow, and consuming him, not unlike the sons of the primal horde to whom Freud refers to in *Totem and Taboo* (1913). The father/king of the ancient primal horde, as Freud argues in his book, kept all women of the tribe for himself and oppressed his sons. Then, one day, his sons forged an alliance, plotted against him, and eventually killed him. Shortly thereafter, they consumed the corpse of their father in order to appropriate his powers (an interesting although somehow morbid case of re-writing). After the dreadful act, however, they soon realized that their feelings towards their now deceased father were more ambivalent than they originally thought. The sons hated their father, but they also loved and admired him, and those feelings gave rise to a powerful sensation of remorse: "Es geschah in der Form der Reue, es entstand ein Schuldbewußtsein, welches hier mit der gemeinsam empfundenen Reue zusammenfällt. Der Tote wurde nun stärker, als der Lebende gewesen war; [It took the form of remorse; a guilty conscience came about that coincided with the overall felt remorse. The dead now became stronger than the living had been;]" (Freud 1974, p. 427). The dead father becomes more powerful now than he ever was during his lifetime, and this unspecified moment in the timeline of human history, as Freud "declares", marks the birth of human "Schuldbewußtsein" (guilty conscience).

The cannibalistic relationship between father and son(s) in Freud's account is not very different from Bloom's concept of "poetic misprision"⁸ (to say nothing of the Christian rite of the Eucharist). In an act of cannibalistic re-reading and re-writing, the ephebe devours/rewrites the hated but also admired great forerunner so as to appropriate his prowess and take his place. The consumption of the

⁸ In contrast to the sons of the primal horde that Freud mentions in his narrative, and barring a "case of indigestion that Marlowe caused the Moby-Dick of all playwrights" (Bloom 1997, p. xxi), Shakespeare did not develop any guilty conscience after devouring Marlowe. In Blooms account, Shakespeare is the conscience of all son-authors who, eagerly and ceaselessly, feed on his body.

forefather, however, comes at price: the authority of the father-author, already overwhelming before the attempt at imitation, becomes all-encompassing now. The son-writer ceases to be the “master in its own house”,⁹ to use a Freudian catchphrase, given the dominant influence that the dead forefather now exerts on him. The parricide creates a parasite. By consuming the “body of work” of a major poet, the ephebe becomes “infected” by the precursor’s ideas, thoughts, motifs, and techniques, and contributes, unwillingly, to their dissemination.

In her essay “The Medium is the Message: Cronenberg ‘Out-Kafka’s Kafka”, Iris Bruce makes two central observations. Firstly, she establishes a connection between Cronenberg’s and Kafka’s narratives by highlighting the motif of the “open wound” in Kafka’s short story *A Country Doctor* (Ein Landarzt, 1917) and relating it to the open wounds that many Cronenbergian characters have on their bodies. The same motif is also the visual trademark of Burroughs’ oeuvre, especially in *Fear(s) of the Dark* and *Black Hole* in which it often appears in the form of a cut of the skin that resembles a vagina. Bruce’s second observation concerns the physiology of the oversized beetle in *Naked Lunch* and its hybrid version, a creature half-beetle, half-typewriter, with which the protagonist communicates. The creature, as Bruce notes, “speaks through a hole in his back, which in ‘The Metamorphosis’ was caused by the wound created by the apple which his father threw at Gregor. Here, however, Cronenberg has transformed Gregor’s wound into a Burroughesque anus: the bug talks through his asshole” (Bruce 2016, p. 226). Bruce goes so far as to claim that Gregor actually appears “in flesh” in the scenes that feature the anus-beetle. Regardless if one agrees with that claim or not, the beetle-hybrid acts as an intertextual cursor in the film, pointing unmistakably to *The Metamorphosis*.

Given the multiple direct and indirect references to Kafka and the fact that the film claims to be an adaptation of Burroughs’ most celebrated novel, the work can be viewed in terms of the relation that writers entertain with their precursors. Bill’s first encounter with the typewriter-beetle (Figure 6) is particularly intriguing in this respect. At some point during the scene, the Kafkaesque Gregor-beetle asks Bill for a “favor” and prompts him to write something down: “I want you to type a few words into me. Words that I’ll dictate to you.” Bill reluctantly agrees and sets out to write the sentence that the creature “dictates” (an interesting synonym of “influence”) to him by using the beetle’s keyboard. In a scene that calls to mind the cruel execution-device of Kafka’s Penal Colony (In the Penal Colony, 1918), the protagonist literally types into the Gregor-beetle. His writing is filtered through the Gregor-typewriter and emerges from it. The Burroughesque mugwump-typewriter (Figure 7) that secretes hallucinogenic substances when Bill composes his “reports” can be interpreted along similar lines¹⁰. Bearing in mind the fact that the protagonist of the film is actually writing a novel, if only unconsciously, the above scenes illustrate nicely the hypotextual ground upon which every important work of art grows.

As the analysis of the selected cartoons, graphic novels, and films has demonstrated, the visual presentation of unspecified (grotesque, oversized, hybrid) insects in visual narratives is a genuine Kafkaesque trait. Their proliferation in said media is proof of the continuous influence that Kafka’s texts in general and *The Metamorphosis* in particular exert on contemporary illustrators and filmmakers to whose works this study was limited. Kafka and Ovid are after all the writers, as Monika Schmitz-Emans states, that have profoundly shaped the metamorphosis-trope (Schmitz-Emans 2008, p. 289). For Joan, moreover, the female character in *Naked Lunch*, “Kafka-high” means as much as feeling “like a bug”. In her view, bugs operate as symbols that point to a representative work of Kafka’s texts, *The Metamorphosis*, and as a consequence to Kafka himself. Bugs are Kafkaesque. As to the relationship

⁹ “But the third and most irritating insult is flung at the human mania of greatness by present-day psychological research, which wants to prove to the “I” that it is not even master in its own home, but is dependent upon the most scanty information concerning all that goes on unconsciously in its psychic life.” (Freud 1920, p. 247).

¹⁰ The mugwump creature refers directly to Burroughs’ source text *Naked Lunch* (1959): “Mugwumps have no liver and nourish themselves exclusively on sweets. Thin, purple-blue lips cover a razor-sharp beak of black bone with which they frequently tear each other to shreds in fights over clients. These creatures secrete an addicting fluid from their erect penises which prolongs life by slowing metabolism” (Burroughs 2001, p. 46).

between artists and their precursors, their “bodies” are both parasite and host at the same time. As J. Hillis Miller argues in his seminal essay *The Critic as Host* (1976): “The new poem both needs the old texts and must destroy them. It is both parasitical on them, feeding ungraciously on their substance, and at the same time it is the sinister host which unmans them by inviting them into its home” (Miller 1986, p. 456). What Miller notes with regard to new poems pertains to Kafka’s body as well: his oeuvre is both the host that nurtures insectoid narratives but also the parasite that sneaks into an artist the moment the latter consumes his intoxicated texts.

A crucial point is still missing, though. From a biological point of view, a parasite has to make one last effort in order to come full circle, as Zimmer writes: “No matter how comfortable a parasite may make itself by altering its host, it has to leave sooner or later” (Zimmer 2000, p. 83). In works of art, that moment occurs when the precursor’s ideas and motifs emerge, in disguised form, on the pages or the screen of the ephebe’s work. In that work, however, the ephebe and precursor(s)’s thoughts coalesce, creating a hybrid artwork with multiple origins. With some luck, said artwork will find its way into a broad audience which will enable it to act as a parasite (precursor) itself in the perpetual inversion of parasite and host.

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Article

Out of Time, Out of Space, Out of Species: Deictic Displacement of the Exiled Self in Hans Sahl's "Der Maulwurf" (The Mole)

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Abstract: In Hans Sahl's poem "Der Maulwurf" (The Mole), only the title gives an indication about the speaker's species affiliation. The speaker of the poem suggests that he was transformed from a human into an animal. This metamorphosis is not only physical, but also seems to have had an impact on the position of the speaker regarding his position in time and space. In this article, I analyze temporal, spatial, and physiological changes in the poem, and I argue that they are indicative of a theme of displacement that is embodied in animal existence in the text. Specifically, these shifts construct an exiled lyric identity whose transformation from human to animal creates an experience of displacement on every pane of existence.

Keywords: animal narration; Hans Sahl; lyric poetry; mole; space; time; species; metamorphosis; transformation; exile

"Lohnt es sich noch, für den Menschen zu sein, nachdem er uns schon so lange enttäuscht hat?" (Sahl 1991a).

(Is it still worthwhile to be in favor of humankind, since it has been disappointing us for such a long time?)¹.

1. Introduction

Hans Sahl (1902–1993) was a German author of literary criticism, poems, short stories, plays, and a novel—some say the novel of exile (Martini 1976; Kellenter 1982).² In 1933, he was forced to flee Germany because of the fascist Nazi-regime, as he was Jewish and associated with the political left. After the end of World War II, he remained in New York City and became a US-citizen, but he still considered it exile, although the immediate political threat was over. In several essays, he discussed the complication that exile did not end for him, and that it was impossible for him to return to his home country and start over.³ He returned to Germany only for the last few years of his life. I therefore contend that a major theme of Hans Sahl's writings is the experience of a perpetual state of exile, even if it is not explicitly mentioned in every piece.⁴

¹ All German-to-English translations in this article are mine.

² As with many exiled authors, researchers focus much more on Sahl's biography than his literary output, because the primary goal of scholarship was to track the personal histories and make the writings accessible for a long time. Of those who do consider his writing, most studies concentrate on his novel *Die Wenigen und die Vielen* (1959; *The Few and the Many*), written between 1942 and 1945 and on his late autobiographical works *Memoiren eines Moralisten* (1983; *Memoirs of a Moralist*) and *Das Exil im Exil* (1994; *Exile in Exile*). Only very few scholarly works take Sahl's poems into account, e.g., Andrea Reiter (Reiter 1998), who also wrote a comprehensive biography (Reiter 2007); especially the late ones are barely recognized, even though they are an essential part of his oeuvre. For more about Sahl's identity see (Reiter 2004).

³ E.g., *Das Exil nach dem Exil* (*Exile after Exile* (Sahl 1987)) and *Gast in fremden Kulturen* (*Guest in Foreign Cultures* (Sahl 1964)).

⁴ For a broader study on exile in Sahl's work see (Hess 2006).

This article focuses on Sahl's poem "Der Maulwurf" (The Mole (Sahl 1991b)). It was first published in a magazine in 1988, and later included in a collection of poems entitled *Wir sind die Letzten/Der Maulwurf* (1991; *We Are the Last/The Mole*). Even though the second part of the collection is called "Neue Gedichte" (New Poems), and many of them were written in the 1970s or 1980s, they focus on the Second World War, exile, and related subjects.⁵ "Der Maulwurf" is one of the poems that seems not to be related to exile, at least not at first glance. But the speaker of the poem is a migrant, albeit an unusual one. He⁶ appears to be the titular mole, although that assumption is not confirmed conclusively in the poem, since it is voiced in the first person without an external introduction or description of the focalizing speaker.⁷ Yet, taking the mole for the speaker complies with the conventional reading of a role poem, which means that the voice of the poem is also a character that speaks from its point of view.⁸ One can presume, however, that the speaker has not been a mole for his entire life, because he mentions that he once lived among human beings. This suggests that the speaker changed his species affiliation and transformed from a human being into a mole. He moved from human society to the realm of animals and plants, it seems, not entirely voluntarily, and thus addresses the structures of exile in figurative ways. That leads to questions, such as: How does the transformation from human into animal affect the world shown in the poem? Is the physiological appearance of the speaker connected to his position in space and time? Are there any signs of displacement? What does the image of a mole add to the scenery of the poem? In order to answer these questions, this article will focus on the three categories of space, time, and physiology before reflecting on the choice of a mole for this poem.

2. Shifts in Space, Time, and Physiology

Before analyzing space, time, and physiology, I will introduce the poem itself. It is dominated by an I ("ich" (Sahl 1991b, l. 7)) whose utterances are organized around a temporal structure of past, present, and future, as well as the distinction between the space of realm of earthworms ("das Reich der Regenwürmer" (Sahl 1991b, l. 6)) below the surface of the earth ("unterirdisch[]" (Sahl 1991b, l. 35)), which is full of plants and animals, and the world above, the community of humans ("die Gesellschaft der Menschen" (Sahl 1991b, l. 37)). For a better understanding of the following analysis, here is the full poem:

Der Maulwurf

- 1 Hügel aufwerfend,
nicht wissend, was draußen vorgeht,
wo das Unbeständige beginnt,
das Verdorren und Verdursten,
- 5 das Verblühen—
Aber hier, im Reich der Regenwürmer,
in das ich mich zurückziehen mußte,
ist alles noch Keim, Hoffnung, Ahnung,
Urzustand der Dinge, darauf wartend,
- 10 Gestalt anzunehmen, sich selbst
zu formulieren—
Da liegen die Larven und träumen von dem Gesicht,

⁵ E.g., "Denk ich an Deutschland in der Nacht" (Thinking of Germany at Night), "Charterflug in die Vergangenheit" (Charter Flight into the Past), "Befragung des verlorenen Sohnes" (Questioning of the Prodigal Son).

⁶ The speaker is not gendered. I call him "he" to avoid the pronoun "it" for animals in accordance with the grammatical gender of the mole in German, which is masculine.

⁷ As is often the case in poetry, no distinction between the homo-diegetic first-person speaker and the protagonist is possible because of "the contrived congruence of voice and focalization" (Hühn and Sommer 2014, p. 423).

⁸ For poetic forms, especially the role poem, see (Ryan 2012, pp. 204–5).

das sie annehmen werden,
die Körper von den Gliedern, die sie
15 fortbewegen sollen, die Wurzeln
von den Baumstämmen, die sie
festhalten müssen—
Hier unten werden die wunderbaren Blumen
entworfen, die Säfte für die
20 Äpfel und Birnen und Pflaumen vorgeschmeckt.
Hier gibt es nur Anfänge,
und wehe mir, wenn ich sie nicht
erkenne, wehe mir, wenn der Hügel,
den ich mir errichtet habe,
25 zusammenstürzt—
Wenn ich von den Launen und Einfällen, die mir
zur Verfügung stehen, keinen Gebrauch
machen kann,
das Schlummernde nicht aufwecken,
30 dem Schweigen nicht einmal das Zirpen
einer Grille entlocken kann
oder der Einöde den blauen
Rausch der Fliederbäume—
Wehe, wenn ich das mir selbst auferlegte,
35 unterirdische Tun nicht mehr zu ertragen
vermag, wenn ich des Treibens unter Tage
müde werde und die Gesellschaft der Menschen,
der ich entließ,
zu entbehren beginne,
40 wenn ich aus dem Reich des Werdens
in das Gewordene,
aus dem noch Ratenden
in das Ungeratene
desertiere,
45 entschlossen, nicht mehr zurückzukehren,
es nicht noch einmal zu versuchen,
mit dem Kopf unter der Erde,
Hügel aufwerfend,
kratzend, grabend, wühlend,
50 blind in der blendenden
Helligkeit des
Nochnicht. (Sahl 1991b)⁹

Narratological concepts will help determine the speaker's position in the poem more closely.¹⁰ The focalizing voice, as Peter Hühn and Jörg Schönert say, shares its "perceptual, psychological, cognitive and/or ideological perspective" (Hühn and Schönert 2005, p. 8) with the reader. Throughout the poem, the reader's orientation is guided by deictic expressions (Hühn and Schönert 2005, p. 8). These are expressions that cannot be understood without context, because they only unfold their

⁹ The full poem is printed with permission. No English translation of the poem exists; for the context of this article, all pertinent lines of the poem will be translated throughout the close reading.

¹⁰ For the potential gain that lyric analysis can derive from narratological theory, see (McHale 2009; Hühn 2011).

meaning with a point of reference. They relate directly to the speaker and his speaking position, and change reference points as soon as somebody else is speaking. This referentiality is especially important regarding the axes of person, space, and time. The speaking “I” is “here” and “now.” These are the fix points for references such as “you,” “there,” and “later.” They are only relatable when provided given by a specific speaker. In this poem, for instance, there are deictic words for space, like “outside” (“draußen” (Sahl 1991b, l. 2)) and “here” (“hier” (Sahl 1991b, l. 6)), as well as for persons, such as “I” and “my” (“ich”, “mir” (Sahl 1991b, l. 26)). On the level of presentation, the grammatical subject is located at the center of the I-here-now-deixis. Since the deictic *origo*, the reference point of the deictic axes, is flexible, meaning that it adjusts to the speaker’s position and relates to his specific context, it is impossible for the speaker to leave the deictic center. Yet a closer look at the deixis in the poem reveals a transformative shift of on every deictic axis. The speaker in “Der Maulwurf” seems to be displaced from his previous spot in respect to space, time, and physiology. The only location from which he is not moved is the grammatical level of the I, which remains the deictic center. In order to trace the shifts of the speaker on each axis, I will now examine the spatial, the temporal, and the physical structure of the poem more closely.

2.1. Spatial Structure

In the category of space, the poem describes a change of the spatial position of the speaker. He introduces a deictic distinction between the inside and the outside. These two spatial dimensions, the outer and the inner, are semantically identified with an existence on and beneath the surface of the earth, respectively. The position of the speaker is down in the soil (“unten” (Sahl 1991b, l. 18)), subterranean (“unterirdisch[.]” (Sahl 1991b, l. 35); “unter Tage” (Sahl 1991b, l. 36)), with his head beneath the ground (“Kopf unter der Erde” (Sahl 1991b, l. 47)). According to the poem, there has been a move of the speaker from the outside towards the inside, from above the earth to below (Sahl 1991b, ll. 6–7, 34–38). While many texts that depict migration or exile use the metaphor of losing their homeland and being rootless,¹¹ this poem creates an alternate image: its subject moves from above ground into the soil, literally to the plants’ roots (“Wurzeln” (Sahl 1991b, l. 15)). It is a dialectic image, as it combines with contrary movements: the speaker migrates to a foreign habitat that is separated from his former living environment, yet at the same time he seems to stay in his ‘native home’, that is, he migrates to his own roots deep down in the soil. One could also describe this shift as a move to a terrain beyond all distance (“eine Landschaft jenseits aller Ferne” (Sahl 1991c, l. 2)), like it says in “Strophen” (Verses), another poem of the collection.

The speaker is cut-off completely from his former home. Since he moved, he does not know anymore what is happening outside (“nicht wissend, was draußen vorgeht” (Sahl 1991b, l. 2)). The change of place thus also entails a cultural and social change which is the price the speaker paid for his escape from human society (“Gesellschaft der Menschen,/der ich entlie” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 37–38)). He left the human world to live in a non-human world, i.e., the realm of the earthworms (“Reich der Regenwürmer” (Sahl 1991b, l. 6)). It is not clear in the poem whether there would be a way to return above ground, though it is also not explicitly excluded. Yet, longing to return above ground seems itself to be a problem, since the speaker does not dare formulate it as an explicit wish, but rather expresses it indirectly in the form of warning and lament: “woe is me, if I cannot bear the self-imposed underground activity anymore” (“wehe mir, wenn ich das mir selbst auferlegte,/unterirdische Tun nicht mehr zu ertragen/vermag” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 34–36)). This does not suggest that the move underground is final; rather, it shows that there is great necessity for the speaker’s existence in this spatial sphere, and that the above and below follow different rules that are decisive for his wellbeing.

It becomes clear that the speaker left his position above ground and his usual habitat to find a new place to live. This movement underground also places the speaker in a different social realm,

¹¹ For the motif of plants and roots in exile literature see (Bischoff 2015).

in which small animals and plant roots become his companions instead of human beings (Sahl 1991b, ll. 6, 12, 15, 31). This sphere below seems to be a parallel world to the human one, yet it is out of reach of human perception, or even an exchange of information and experience. The position of the speaker after the migration is therefore not just a move on the spatial axis, but seems to be no longer on the same spatial axis whatsoever. He has moved to a different space from his pre-migration-world and hence been utterly displaced from its former living space.

2.2. Temporal Structure

The spatial descriptions in the poem are closely connected to the temporal ones. When the speaker describes his position beneath the ground, it seems that he leaves the present tense of the I-here-now-deixis. Instead, the speaker steps outside of the linear historical timeline to a place that is *before* time, where everything is still in the process of becoming (“ist alles noch Keim” (Sahl 1991b, l. 8)); or as “Strophen”, another Sahl poem of the volume says, it is like slowly stepping out of time, toward a future beyond all stars (“Ich gehe langsam aus der Zeit heraus/in eine Zukunft jenseits aller Sterne” (Sahl 1991c, ll. 6–7)). This seems to be a temporal pane in which everything is preparing to enter the deictic time axis. Above ground, everything is transient, destined to pass away in the end. The words used to describe this ephemerality are all semantically connected to vegetation: above begins the impermanence, where one dries up, dies of thirst, and withers (“wo das Unbeständige beginnt,/das Verdorren und Verdursten,/das Verblühen” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 3–5)). Using the fragile life of flowers as an exemplification of an existence above ground shows the vulnerability of living beings in the outside world. From a socio-historical perspective, plants played an important role in the process of human civilization, as knowledge about plants and their annual cyclical rhythm of life allowed humans to settle (Deußner and Nebelin 2009, p. 9). So, there is a close connection between plants, human history, and time. The sociologist Norbert Elias sees time as a symbol that allows humans to relate different occurrences to one another and to circulate them in social contexts. Hence, time is not objective, but related to the human perception and therefore part of the human world, the above (Elias 1988, pp. XVII–XVIII). In Elias’ view, the conceptual differentiation of time ran parallel to the process of civilization, so that time became second nature of humankind (Elias 1988, pp. XVII–XVIII). In line with this idea, the speaker of Sahl’s poem “Die Zeit” (Time) asks whether time originated with the stars or was invented by humans (Sahl 1991d, ll. 1–3). Leaving human society could thus also be understood as leaving the human concept of time behind. This is what happens when the speaker moves to a sphere before time in the poem. Time, meaning historical time, has no part of the non-human world of the text.

Despite this rejection of human concepts, the poem also contains references to the religious motifs. Moving underground means for the speaker to leave the world of being—which is also described as ‘the damnation of completion’ (“Verdammnis der Vollendung”, (Sahl 1991e, l. 23) in “Das tägliche Pensum” (Daily Workload), another of Sahl’s poems—and enter the world of becoming, where only beginnings exist (“Hier gibt es nur Anfänge” (Sahl 1991b, l. 21)). It is the territory of germ, hope, and premonition (“Keim, Hoffnung, Ahnung” (Sahl 1991b, l. 8)), where things are in their primordial state (“Urzustand der Dinge” (Sahl 1991b, l. 9)), waiting to take shape (“wartend,/Gestalt anzunehmen” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 9–10)) and to formulate themselves (“sich selbst/zuf formulieren” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 10–11)). This seems to align with Genesis and imagine a prelapsarian state of becoming, of complete harmony and immortality. Transience first came with tasting the fruit of knowledge, because knowledge and eternal life were incompatible in the Bible (Krauss and Kuchler 2003, p. 71). The speaker seems to have moved back to a position of the ‘not yet’, which is before the ‘now’ of the post-paradisiacal time, the usual deictic center. Again, the speaker’s position cannot be located on the deictic axis of time that existed pre-migration. It is therefore a state even *before* identity, because it has not yet been articulated what the parameters of that would be. This means, it is a state *before* definition through human language and a logocentric image of the self.

This position *before* is neither present, nor past, nor future, but a state of continuous preparation, akin to a primordial time, in which beings are preparing to come into existence. Some scholars, like Anette Streeck-Fischer, compare prelapsarian existence to the early stages of the development of the human self (Krauss and Kuchler 2003, p. 93; Streeck-Fischer 2014, pp. 12–13). According to a psychoanalytical perspective, the process of becoming a conscious person means setting boundaries. At a young age, an infant cannot differentiate between him- or herself and surrounding objects, or as Sigmund Freud would say, between ego-libidio and object-libidio (Freud 1975, p. 66). When toddlers learn to differentiate between the self and the other, they learn to see themselves as separate from their environment. In a similar way, Genesis tells the story of establishing boundaries and separation (Krauss and Kuchler 2003, p. 93). Therefore, this time *before* designates both the state of an individual before self-awareness and the time *before* humankind was banned from Eden.

The unusual phrase of “formulating oneself” (“sich selbst/zu formulieren” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 10–11)) highlights the fundamental role of language in the process of becoming and defining, in the conceptualization of the self and the development of the human self. This is not only the case because it occurs in a poem and the speaker would not exist without words, but because language also affects the (symbolic) order of the non-fictional world. Julia Kristeva says,

The symbolic order—the order of verbal communication, the paternal order of genealogy—is a temporal order. For the speaking animal, it is the clock of objective time: it provides the reference point, and, consequently, all possibilities of measurement, by distinguishing between a before, a now, and an after. If I don’t exist except in the speech I address to another, I am only *present* in the moment of that communication. (Kristeva 2000, p. 255)

Within the poem, on the level of events, the speaker is cut off from the present in a pre-linguistic state and is thus outside of the symbolic order and also outside of a logocentric order of humankind. This is the case even though the speaker is a textual subject on the level of presentation, as it is voicing the poem and presents itself in language.

The temporal transformation on the level of events is mirrored on the level of presentation.¹² The voice begins to speak in the present tense (Sahl 1991b, ll. 1–21), talking about the underground world that is connected to the *before*. In the middle of the poem, the speaker switches to the subjunctive mood (Sahl 1991b, ll. 22–44), asking what would happen if it could no longer bear staying underground and would leave the realm of becoming (“Reich des Werdens” (Sahl 1991b, l. 40)) in order to return to the realm of that which has become (“das Gewordene” (Sahl 1991b, l. 41)). But toward the end of the poem, the speaker decides that he will never return, never try again, that he will stay with his head below ground and remain blinded in the dazzling brightness of the “not-yet” (“entschlossen, nicht mehr zurückzukehren,/es nicht noch einmal zu versuchen,/mit dem Kopf unter der Erde,/ [. . .] blind in der blendenden/Helligkeit des/Nochnicht” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 45–52)). This sphere of the “not-yet” cannot be located on a linear time axis but remains in a sphere that is beyond the measurement of time, that is before its beginning. The speaker is at a point of time undoing itself “Zeit, die sich aufhebt” (Sahl 1991f, l. 5), as it says in Sahl’s poem “Der Schnittpunkt” (Point of Intersection).

2.3. Physiological Structure

Based on these movements, a third shift emerges: the textual subject has not only moved to a different world and left linear time, but it has changed species designation, too. The speaker’s characterization is vague, as not many details about the identity of the voice are given. In addition, there is no explicit addressee; no sign of an audience within the poem. The poem is constructed as the monolog of a diegetic animal, which is an animal that has an actual place in the diegetic universe

¹² Hühn and Schönert state that in lyric poetry, as well as in narrative texts, there is a “fundamental distinction between the level of events and the level of presentation—between incidents which we take as the primary, basic material and the way in which they are mediated in the text” (Hühn and Schönert 2005, p. 4).

and is not only used in a metaphorical way (Borgards 2016, p. 226). Taking the mole as the speaker of the poem gives him a voice, specifically the first-person individuating I. It is possible to read the mole as an allegory for the estrangement from the world through migration, displacement, and exile. Yet, the poem also depicts an actual metamorphosis from a human being into a mole when taken literally.¹³ There is evidence that a change of species took place, when the speaker reports that he had to hide himself away underground because he had to escape the human world (“die Gesellschaft der Menschen, der ich entliefe” (Sahl 1991b, l. 37)). The verb “entlaufen” in German is used for pets that escape from their owner, so the choice of words suggests that the speaker has actually left humankind. Also, human beings are not able to live under the earth like animals and plants can. From a human standpoint, the ground is reserved for burying the dead; it is the place for one’s final rest. This is probably one of the reasons why moles are associated with death in popular belief; even more so as molehills resemble burial mounds (Bies 2006, p. 55). But at the same time, soil is associated with fertility. Especially for vegetal life, it is the place where life begins. This corresponds once more with the prelapsarian image, in which life and death meet. For the speaker it is a place to start a new life. In order to survive, his spatial migration requires a physiological assimilation. That means that the speaker has to modify his bodily functions, as well as the everyday routines and habits, to survive in these non-human surroundings.

Becoming a mole and converting to the animal world is a fundamental change of the deictic *origo* by transforming the “I” that presumably centered around a human speaker once. This metamorphosis is not only an external phenomenon, but has an existential impact on everyday life. The speaker lives underground in the characteristic habitat of a mole and does mole-typical things like raising mounds, clawing, grubbing, and digging (“Hügel aufwerfend,/kratzend, grabend, wühlend” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 48–49)). This confirms that the mole is a diegetic textual animal, not only a semiotic textual animal, meaning that in the logic of the text the mole appears to be a real animal, not a human person metaphorically designated as a mole. These behavioral depictions strengthen the notion of the actual biological being and problematize a reading of the mole as merely an emblematic metaphor or allegory. Also, there is no word of comparison that would give a signal for a simile, unlike in Sahl’s poem “Die Auster” (The Oyster), in which the speaker addresses an oyster with the phrase: “To be like you” (“So sein wie Du” (Sahl 1985, p. 148)), before the speaker describes their potential life as an oyster; or Sahl’s novel *Die Wenigen und die Vielen* (*The Few and the Many*), in which the narrator describes an exile who lives *like* a mole (“Er lebt wie ein Maulwurf” (Sahl 1959, p. 169)).¹⁴

The reader is carried off to the world of the mole, a mythical place, where wonderful flowers are created and the juices of apples, pears, and plums are pre-tasted (“Hier unten werden die wunderbaren Blumen/entworfen, die Säfte für die/Äpfel und Birnen und Pflaumen vorgeschmeckt.” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 18–20)). The underground world is depicted as a sphere of creation and becoming that seems to be harmonious and carefree. But it is a fragile peace. The speaker formulates his worry about a collapse of this world, caused by the inability to change it; an inability to awaken the slumbering, to tease a cricket’s chirping out of the silence, or to raise the blue ecstasy of the lilac trees out of the wasteland (“kann,/das Schlummernde nicht aufwecken,/dem Schweigen nicht einmal das Zirpen/einer Grille entlocken kann oder der Einöde den blauen/Rausch der Fliederbäume—” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 29–33)). The speaker needs something to do; he needs to have an impact on his surroundings and affect change (Sahl 1991b, ll. 26–33). Furthermore, he needs to communicate with the other living beings, the plants and animals, to ensure him that he is part of a lively sphere (Sahl 1991b, ll. 29–33). Physiology is

¹³ In Sahl’s poem “Gedichte schreiben—oder was davon noch übrig blieb” (Writing Poems—or What Was Still Left of It), printed a few pages before “Der Maulwurf”, it says “Ich mache mich selbst zum Gedicht./Ich bin eine Begebenheit./Ich finde statt./Ich passiere.” (I make myself into a poem./I am an occurrence./I am taking place./I am happening. (Sahl 1991g, ll. 61–64)). That seems to be an instruction in and taking the word seriously.

¹⁴ “Der Maulwurf” is not the only literary piece by Sahl that has an animal as narrator. In *Memoiren einer Katze* (1957; *Memoirs of a Cat* (Sahl 2012)), the titular cat is the focalizing subject.

literally what keeps one alive, which is, metaphorically spoken, more than only bodily functions and physical appearance. The speaker appears to be like an obstetrician who helps bring things to life in order to ensure his own livelihood. A collapse therefore would mean a life-threatening situation (Sahl 1991b, ll. 23–25). The metamorphosis from a human being into an animal not only means a change in physiological appearance but also in psychological understanding of the I in the deictic *origo*.

Another potential reason for a collapse of this world could be the speaker's longing to go back to the human world. The unreliability of the speaker, which is given in any first-person monological stance, as Hühn says (Hühn 2015, pp. 173–74), reveals itself by showing that the identity of the voice is unclear and that the mythical underground world might not be (as perfect) as it is described. This is because there is a threat, whose consequences are not explicitly named (Sahl 1991b, ll. 22–33), and also because the speaker is not allowed to long for leaving, which turns the supposedly paradisiacal place into a prison (Sahl 1991b, ll. 34–44). In addition, the speaker does not explicitly describe what caused his flight from the human world or what might happen upon his return, so that many blind spots remain for the reader. What is clear is that the identity of the speaker is not stable and that another transformation might be possible in the fictional reality of the poem. Yet, the speaker chose to remain underground as a mole along with other animals and plants.

While other subterranean living beings in the poem, for instance the grubs, are dreaming of a transformation that will allow them to enter the upper world (Sahl 1991b, l. 12), the focalizing speaker decides not to re-enter the upper, that is the human, world. The mole stays in the animal world in order to see whether there is an opportunity for a different life that has *not-yet* come (“Nochnicht” (Sahl 1991b, l. 52)). In another poem of the volume, “Der Verwundbare” (The Vulnerable),—one that is not clearly voiced by an animal, though the speaker had to leave his kind, too—there is a similar ending, but with a differing notion. It says: “Man hat mich aus der Art geschlagen,/jetzt will ich in sie zurück und/finde sie nicht mehr”. (My kind was beaten out of me,/now I would like to return to it and/cannot find it anymore. (Sahl 1991h, ll. 12–14). This phrasing suggests that violence is involved in the process of leaving one's kind. The transformation was forced upon this speaker, not chosen, and in addition, his attempt to return fails. But in “Der Maulwurf”, the metamorphosis into another species was self-imposed (“mir selbst auferlegte” (Sahl 1991b, l. 34)), even though the speaker says that he *had* to withdraw below the earth's surface (“in das ich mich zurückziehen mußte” (Sahl 1991b, l. 7), which suggests that it was not entirely voluntary. The speaker therefore does not return and remains underground. The “not-yet” bears hope and hopelessness at the same time. It carries the bright promise of a possible return on the one hand. On the other hand, this return is delayed to an indefinite moment in time that is never to come. Even if the possibility of return is one of brightness (“blind in der blendenden/Helligkeit” (Sahl 1991b, ll. 50–51), the speaker seems to be afraid of it, since it is blinding, and the ending feels like an obituary of a lost future (“Nekrolog auf eine verschollene Zukunft” (Sahl 1991i, l. 36)), as another of Sahl's poems puts it.

The shift from a human to a mole is visible on the outside, but also affects the speaker's way of perception, everyday routines, and the communicational sphere. Even though it is the same I that is speaking, it is displaced on the axis of person: through the shift, something irregular happens, since it is not typically possible to have an animal in the center of a speech act, at least in an anthropocentric view. In addition to the spatial and temporal transformations, the direct effects of this change on the speaker, on his body and way of life, are powerful signs for the shifts in every sphere. Although there still are the axes of space, time, and person, and the speaker is still in the deictic center, one can clearly see that the reference points of all deictic expressions have changed. On every deictic level the speaker is displaced. Still one question remains unanswered: why the choice of a mole? In the final section of this article I will try to find an explanation.

3. The Mole Across Texts and Time

As the analysis shows, the three examined transformations regarding space, time, and species affiliation have an existential impact on the speaker. The spatial migration, leaving linear time, and

the metamorphosis into an animal locate the speaker in a different position on all deictic axes. When supposedly established categories come into motion, it causes a crack in the stable construction of the world. Carl Einstein, a fellow exiled writer, defined literature itself as such a fundamental transformation (“*dichtung als verwandlung*” (Einstein 1986, p. 26)) and art as a metamorphosis of being (“*Metamorphose des Daseins*” (Einstein 1996a, p. 247)). Bettina Englmann, who wrote about the poetry of exile, explains that art in the way Einstein saw it is able and tasked to negate and break with social conventions for the purpose of making new realities visible (Englmann 2001, p. 121). In order to achieve a new reality, which is a new image and a new form of humans and the world, one has to shatter the traditional concept of the self and the idea of stability, as well as a continuously progressing history (Englmann 2001, p. 123).¹⁵ This is exactly what the poem does when the speaker leaves the human world and transforms into a mole. Through mimetic ability, the viewer of art can, if one follows Einstein, construct unstable realities, which means that art is a potential way to generate new and multiple realities (Einstein 1996b, pp. 404–5). Art should therefore not only depict but *be* a reality (Einstein 1996b, p. 258). The refusal of consenting to the world as it is—especially given the reality of Nazi Germany—plays a crucial role in the literature of exile, as Englmann points out (Englmann 2001, p. 128). In Sahl’s poem, the profound impact of migration, displacement, and exile on a person’s life becomes clear, as it affects all aspects of existence. The following section addresses how this is specifically related to the mole.

The traditional symbolism of moles in European literature is an antitype to human self-awareness, embodying human deficiency (Stierle 1982, p. 104). Because moles stay in the dark and were wrongly believed to be blind, they have, at least since the Renaissance, symbolized the opposite of progress and knowledge, as light was associated with truth and wisdom, to enlightenment, and the dark was related to lies and lack of knowledge (Stierle 1982, pp. 105–8). But even before that, moles have been regarded not only as ignorant, but also as troublesome. Since Greek and Roman antiquity, there has been a widespread notion that moles are ravenous and responsible for the death of plants because they would eat the roots (Stierle 1982, pp. 103–4; Bies 2006, pp. 51, 61). That is why they are considered vermin or a pest in some European countries. However, there have been a few defenders of the mole in history as well. One of them was Johann Peter Hebel, who in *Schatzkästlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes* (1817; *Treasure Chest of the Rhenish Family Friend*) included a piece that is named “*Der Maulwurf*” (Hebel 1961), like Sahl’s poem, in which he explains that not the mole but the grubs as well as other types of larvae are actually responsible for the damaged plants, while the mole is a predator who is after grubs, not roots. In Sahl’s poem it is not the mole either who is responsible for the death of plants, but linear time in the upper world (Sahl 1991b, ll. 4–5). In addition, the mole does not seem to be an aggressor, but rather the one who is threatened (Sahl 1991b, l. 7). The poem therefore does not invoke the negative image that is often associated with moles, and I am therefore turning to another aspect of the metaphorical understanding of moles.

As I showed in the first section, Sahl’s collection of poems is embedded in a political and socio-historical discussion about the Second World War that is specifically against fascism. In this context, it is relevant to take a closer look at the image of “the mole” in the field of politics because its semantic history might be reflected in the poem. During the 1848 revolution in Germany, the term “*Wühler*” (literally burrower, synonym for a mole and other little burrowing mammals) was a common insult for democrats and members of separatist groups (Burkhardt 2001, pp. 59, 66–67). More and more, it was used as a stigmatizing nickname for the radical democratic left, who retaliated with the strategy of adapting the insult and turning it into an ironic self-designation (Burkhardt 2001, p. 63). Giving this strategy, one could say that the speaker of the poem even goes one step further: he not only *adapts* the designation, instead he literally *becomes* a mole. Thinking with Einstein, this metamorphosis then means that the poem is not only depicting a mole-like existence, but instead creating a mole-existence

¹⁵ Englmann refers to Carl Einstein (Einstein 1996b, p. 242).

as an inner textual reality. It becomes even likelier that the speaker might be read as an exile and member of the democratic left when taking into account the following development of the image of the mole.

German linguist Armin Burkhardt notes that the term “Wühler” lost its function as a political keyword at the end of the 19th century, and an increase of the metaphorical usage of the mole in political and philosophical writings began instead. The combination of a threatened and hidden existence, as it also appears in the poem, makes the mole a popular metaphor in critical thought. The Shakespearean phrase “Well said, old mole,” uttered in a conversation between Hamlet and the ghost of his father, was widely known and formative for the image of the mole in the German context. Immanuel Kant, Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel famously refer to it, often in political contexts.¹⁶ For instance, in his analysis of the February revolution in France, Marx adapts Shakespeare’s phrase when he writes: “Brav gewühlt, alter Maulwurf” (Well burrowed, old mole! (Marx 2009, p. 196)). Marx’s *Der achtzehnte Brumaire des Louis Bonaparte* (1852; *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*), which he wrote when he was in exile in London, contains a mole as a symbol for the revolution that does its subterranean work invisibly.¹⁷ Hegel used it in his *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* (1892; *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*) as an explanation for the spirit:

It goes ever on and on, because spirit is progress alone. Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward as Hamlet says of the ghost of his father, ‘Well done, old mole’—until grown strong in itself it bursts asunder the crust of earth which divided it from its sun, its Notion, so that the earth crumbles away. (Hegel 1974, pp. 546–47)¹⁸

One can see the revolutionary potential of the mole metaphor, which stands for radical change that is yet to come and that is in the process of becoming, inside of the existing world, mostly unnoticed. This understanding aligns with the mole in the poem, who has a self-imposed task (Sahl 1991b, l. 44) that might be dangerous (Sahl 1991b, ll. 23–25) and that works towards an event that is to come (Sahl 1991b, l. 52).

As this short exploration illustrates, the mole has often been used as a symbol or metaphor in political and revolutionary contexts, where it represents an attentive observer who has a distinct sensitivity for seismographic vibrations. Taking into account that “Wühlarbeit”, which could be translated as mole work but also as subversive activity, was used in NS-language for opponents of the regime (Brackmann and Birkenhauer 1988, p. 207), the choice of the mole in Sahl’s poem suggests, so I argue, not only the connotation of migration through transgressive shifts in space, time, and species, but that of exile. The mole’s activity in hiding invokes the notion of exile and, given the history of the trope of the mole, perhaps even subversive activity such as resistance. Sahl describes human-animal-transformations not only in this poem, but also in his memoir, when he says, “Die Asseln, die Käfer, die Regenwürmer, die Würmer, die einmal aufrecht gingen und Menschen waren wie ich, Verstoßene, Umherirrende, in der anonymen Landschaft des Exils” (The woodlice, the beetles, the earthworms, the worms that once walked upright and were human beings like me, outcasts, wanderers, in the anonymous landscape of exile (Sahl 1990, p. 13)). In Sahl’s poem, animal metamorphosis can be considered an image for going into exile, another form of migration by leaving the human world behind.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

¹⁶ For detailed analysis see e.g., (Krell 1981, Kant pp. 157–58, Hegel pp. 158–63, Nietzsche pp. 163–65), and (Stierle 1982, Kant p. 110, Hegel pp. 114–18, Marx pp. 118–20, Nietzsche pp. 121–23).

¹⁷ For a broader analysis of the mole in Marx’s writings and in the political left see (Opitz and Pinkert 1979, pp. 74–99; von Beyme 1999).

¹⁸ For a broader analysis of the mole in writings by Kant, Hegel and Nietzsche see (Krell 1981).

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Article

“And in That Moment I Leapt upon His Shoulder”: Non-Human Intradiegetic Narrators in *The Wind on the Moon*

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Abstract: Non-human narrators, by definition anthropomorphized, fill different functions in literature, and have different effects, not always positive for the species that is utilized, for example to voice a human political concern. However, many animal studies scholars agree that anthropomorphism, while inadequate, may be the best way we have to get to know another species. Animal characters who tell their own, autobiographical, stories are particularly interesting in this regard. Eric Linklater’s children’s novel *The Wind on the Moon* (1944), raises posthumanist questions about human–animal differences, similarities and language, especially through its engagement of several non-human intradiegetic narrators. In a novel with surprisingly few other forms of characterization of the non-human characters, their own detailed narratives become a highly significant means of access to their species characteristics, their consciousness, and their needs. In an analysis of these embedded narratives using Genette’s theory of narrative levels and functions, as well as intersections of speech act theory and cognitive narratology, this article exposes an otherwise inaccessible dimension of characterization in Linklater’s novel. It argues that the embedded narratives, in contrast to crude anthropomorphism, are in fact what enables both a verbalization of the character narrators’ otherness, and a connection and comprehension between species. In other words, these non-human narratives constitute what might be called (with Garrard) examples of critical anthropomorphism.

Keywords: non-human narrators; intradiegetic narration; Gerard Genette; anthropomorphism; Eric Linklater; *The Wind on the Moon*; direct speech; characterization; posthumanism; inter-species comprehension

1. Introduction

“And when I was hungry I went hunting, and that was the loveliest thing in life, to go hunting in the moonlight, and feel your blood like quicksilver in your veins” (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 100). The voice telling the story from which this excerpt is taken belongs to a puma, an important non-human character in Eric Linklater’s classic children’s novel from 1944, *The Wind on the Moon*. This novel, otherwise told by a heterodiegetic narrator, is scattered with a number of embedded narratives in direct speech, (usually between one to three pages in length) told by various characters. The examples that interest me, and that will be discussed here, are embedded narratives by two non-human characters, the Puma and the Falcon, whom I will treat as intradiegetic narrators, using a term from Gerard Genette (Genette 1988), and William Nelles (Nelles 1997), among others. Apart from the fact that these embedded narratives are lengthy and very noticeable in the text, there are two circumstances that make them interesting from a theoretical point of view: The first is that unlike the human characters, the animal characters are not focalizers. Neither are their cognitive functions, actions or

reactions interpreted or discussed by the narrator or by the characters. This places a large importance on their narratives, since they provide the otherwise missing link: access to the minds of these characters by means of direct speech. The other circumstance is that unlike many other talking animals in literature, these characters are not speaking a human language, but “the language of animals” (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 76) which (through magic) the human characters have also acquired. It is an important plot device that the child protagonists know this language, because this enables them to listen to and understand the non-human animals, which gives the children the knowledge and help that they need in their adventures. As the children gain this ability, so do we, the readers. Because we understand what they say, we understand what they mean, and how they justify their species-specific actions; in other words, through their embedded stories, they are characterized as cognizant, sentient beings. In this article I argue that *The Wind on the Moon*, through its non-human intradiegetic narrators, draws attention to, and negotiates the human–animal boundary in an interesting way, creating an inter-species connection that evokes, in the words of Bernaerts et al., “a double dialectic of empathy and defamiliarization” (Bernaerts et al. 2014, p. 69).

In what follows I will first give a brief introduction to the novel and its context, and then outline some recent ideas about anthropomorphism and the significance of non-human animal narration, before I present the narratological elements and concepts that are central for my subsequent analysis of the levels and functions of non-human intradiegetic narration in *The Wind on the Moon*.

2. Eric Linklater’s *The Wind on the Moon*

The Wind on the Moon is a long children’s novel that is somewhat difficult to ascribe to a certain genre. It was published in 1944, during the war, but like in many children’s books published at this time, the war is not visible (Hunt 1994, p. 129), other than as a threat that calls the protagonists’ father abroad, and starts the adventures. Like many children’s books, it has didactic undertones but the message is not the usual insistence on good behavior, but rather a universal right to freedom of body and mind, regardless of which species you happen to belong to. While it has important animal characters, it is not primarily an animal story, but it adheres, in perhaps unexpected ways, to some of the traditions of animal stories. For example, there are magical transformations of humans to animals that recall pre-Christian myths and tales, and the parts of the story where animals express their desire to be set free from the zoo are similar to the Victorian animal tales, such as Anna Sewell’s *Black Beauty*, that gave voice to the suffering of animals (De Mello 2013, p. 2). For a novel written well before the posthuman turn in philosophy and literature, it is remarkably posthuman in the way it proposes, in the words of Jacques Derrida, “a multiple and heterogenous border of this abyssal rupture” (Derrida 2008, p. 31) that is, a destabilized and non-binary human–animal distinction.

Although human–animal transformations and talking animals in children’s literature often indicate the fantasy genre, this novel is however also largely realistic in its representation of both human and non-human characters, and especially in discussions of their behavior and their living conditions. This is thus not a case in which, in the words of Cary Wolfe, “the discourse of species, and with it, the ethical problematics of our relations to non-human others, [can be] treated largely as if species is always already a counter or cover for some other discourse” (Wolfe 2003, p. 124). Although some of the objectives of humans and non-humans in this novel converge, (notably freedom from confinement), these different non-human animals also speak rather eloquently for their species-specific needs.

The protagonists are two pre-teen human sisters, Dinah and Dorinda, who, when their father goes abroad, create a series of adventures to brighten up their dull school days. At one point they ask the local witch for help to frighten the people of their village, Midmeddlecum. With a magic draught, they turn themselves into kangaroos, a species chosen as much for its ability to carry objects (such as the bottle with the remains of the magic potion) in its pocket, as for its size and agility. This exemplifies the ease with which this novel negotiates anthropomorphism and defamiliarization, in a fashion similar to many of its more famous forerunners by Beatrix Potter, Kenneth Grahame and Lewis Carroll, discussed by David Rudd (Rudd 2009). Unfortunately, the children’s plan to strike fear

into the villagers is foiled when they are captured and taken to the local zoo. Here they meet other inmates of the zoo, the Puma, the Falcon, the Giraffe, the Bear, and many others. They also realize that the bottle with the magic potion has fallen out of Dinah's pocket, and that they now seem destined to remain kangaroos for the rest of their lives.

3. Talking Animals and Anthropomorphism

An unexpected result of the girls' transformation is that they now understand "the language of animals, as well as English, and they had learnt it without any trouble to themselves. This was very gratifying when they remembered the weary hours they had spent with Miss Serendip, trying to learn French" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 76). The fact that all non-human characters in the story speak the same language is interesting in several ways. It is easy to see how a plot involving zoo animals (many different species at close quarters) can be advanced by this maneuver; most importantly, it enables them to plan and execute their escape. It could also be seen as the result of a reductive view of the human-animal distinction, an issue I will address and refute in what follows. It also calls attention to the relationship between language and consciousness and the well-known philosophical dilemma which lingers everywhere in the background of this novel, namely how non-humans and humans may connect with, and comprehend each other.

Kari Weil discusses this as "the tragedy of language" which ensues "when we acknowledge that there is another consciousness there . . . that we desperately desire to know through language" (Weil 2012, p. 9), something which has often been seen as the major if not the exclusive hindrance to inter-species comprehension. Language, spoken or written, is after all how we humans primarily communicate, and language is especially privileged in literature, so a literary representation of non-human consciousness has to grapple with this. In fiction, the solution sometimes is to let the non-humans speak a human language, as for example in C.S. Lewis's Narnia series (1950–1956), and in Kafka's "A Report to an Academy" (1917). Kari Weil, however, in a discussion citing Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?", uses Kafka's story as an example of how non-humans learning a human language equals a problematic form of assimilation. As Weil points out: "Language is at the core of Kafka's critique of assimilation as a process that gives voice only by destroying the self that would speak . . . [I]f they learn our language, will they still be animals?" (Weil 2012, p. 6).

A related problem is Wittgenstein's claim that "If a lion could speak, we could not understand him" (quoted in Cary Wolfe, (Wolfe 2003, p. 44)). Wolfe, in a discussion of several philosophers' writings on this observation, quotes Vicki Hearne, who appreciates the fact that Wittgenstein's claim shows that this is a problem for us, not for the animal. Wittgenstein's lion, "regarded with proper respect and awe, gives us unmediated knowledge of our ignorance" (Hearne, quoted in (Wolfe 2003, p. 45)). In *The Wind on the Moon*, the non-human animals do not have to assimilate, but neither are the humans faced with their ignorance, at least not immediately. In the more pragmatic and comedic manner of children's literature, the transformation of the girls into kangaroos automatically opens their ears not only to the fact that the animals talk, but also to what they say, and to what they can learn from them.

The "language of animals" perhaps suggests *The Jungle Book* (1894) (Kipling [1894] 2012), where the animals of the jungle are able to communicate with each other, and with Mowgli who has been raised by the wolves. However, unlike the situation in *The Jungle Book*, which opens with wolves and jackals speaking to each other, we never hear the animals in *The Wind on the Moon* talk until the girls are introduced to a llama and realize that they are able to understand what she says (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 76). Speech and understanding are thus accentuated in Linklater's novel, in a way they are not in Kipling's.

This also turns the girl protagonists in *The Wind on the Moon* into translators and mediators between the non-human characters and the readers, because it is the fact that the girls are able to understand the non-humans that enables the readers to do so. It also creates, I would argue, a reason for readers to take an interest in the non-human characters, because as soon as they talk, (and we understand them) they are identified as cognizant subjects with interesting and educational things

to say. In this novel, then, the problems of assimilation and asymmetry are skirted (if not resolved) by letting the human protagonists (and by association and imagination the readers) use a language common to all non-human species. The kangaroos Dinah and Dorinda retain their human minds and their individual traits even though they eat and speak like kangaroos: they get bored without books to read or games to play, and are determined to change back to children as soon as the bottle with the magic draught is found. Similarly the other animals of different species are able to express their minds without assimilating, or adapting to human standards or forms of communication, and indeed without conforming to any reduced form of animality (cf. (Derrida 2008, p. 31 and passim.) On the contrary, the common language is what enables their expression of species-specific and individual characteristics.

The following scene shows with some clarity how a common language alters our view of non-humans. The sisters, (now kangaroos) are allowed to walk freely on the grounds of the zoo, and here notice for the first time the Puma and the Falcon in their cages.

They were both so beautiful that Dinah and Dorinda stood between their cages and could not decide which to look at first.

“Good afternoon,” said the Puma. “Hail!” cried the Falcon. “How do you do?” said Dinah and Dorinda. (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 97)

As soon as the non-humans speak, they are transformed from objects under the sisters’ gaze, to subjects in control of the situation. The sisters, too, change, from spectators to polite participants in a new social setting, and proceed to introduce themselves, as they would to adult humans, people of some significance. This key scene is then followed by extensive intradiegetic narratives by the Puma and the Falcon, (which will be analyzed in detail below), and by then we are already prepared to listen to these characters and learn more about them.

But even if we accept that language in fiction is a path to the recognition of consciousness and self-awareness in others, are not talking animals anthropomorphized, and is this not in general to their disadvantage? It is a concept loaded with negative connotations, and has in the words of Greg Garrard, “until recently been used exclusively as a pejorative term implying sentimental projection of human emotions onto animals” (Garrard 2012, p. 154). However, as Garrard also points out, a too one-sided view of anthropomorphism “risks making it impossible to describe animal behavior at all, so the problem is to distinguish between different kinds of anthropomorphism” (Garrard 2012, pp. 154–55). Garrard uses the term crude anthropomorphism for phenomena such as “disnification” (a term he takes from Baker’s *Picturing the Beast*, 1993), and the term critical anthropomorphism for its scientific use, e.g., in ethology (Garrard 2012, p. 157). So, even though anthropomorphism, in the words of McFarland and Hediger, is “the natural human tendency to view an animal’s actions in terms of our own conscious motives” (McFarland and Hediger 2009, p. 3) it is perhaps the only means we have to form any notion “of what takes place in the mind of an animal” (Washburn, qtd in (Bekoff 2002, p. 48)). Marc Bekoff, professor of biology and the author of many works on human–animal interaction, and on non-human cognition, underlines that being human,

we have by necessity a human view of the world. The way we describe and explain the behavior of other animals is limited by the language we use to talk about things in general. By engaging in anthropomorphism we make other animals’ worlds accessible to ourselves and to other human beings. By being anthropomorphic we can more readily understand and explain the emotions or feelings of other animals. But this is not to say that other animals are happy or sad in the *same* ways in which humans (or even other members of the same species) are happy or sad. (Bekoff 2002, p. 48)

Bekoff thus underlines that the limitations of our human existence, our dependence on language for reasoning about the world, makes some anthropomorphism necessary, if not unproblematic. However, Bekoff is talking about understanding actual animals. Representations of talking animals in literature have often been used for purposes other than conveying animal consciousness. Lars Bernaerts et al.

mention satiric, didactic, and ethical functions, (Bernaerts et al. 2014, p. 70), and Karla Armbruster notes functions such as providing an outsider point of view, or voicing social criticism of various kinds (Armbruster 2013, p. 18). Clearly, in most such cases, except perhaps in the voicing of suffering of animals, anthropomorphism is of little use to the animal thus represented, or to anyone wishing to reach some understanding of that animal's mind.

Even so, imagination is a key to understanding, as Thomas Nagel notes his famous essay, "What Is It Like to Be a Bat?" (Nagel 1974) and fictional representation may of course have other purposes and qualities. Armbruster, for instance, suggests that, "a yearning to genuinely know the otherness of non-human animals runs through most, if not all, talking animal stories, as well as the motivations of their readers" (Armbruster 2013, p. 19). If that is so, the fact that these fictional animals share a language with us, does, perhaps paradoxically but in line with Bekoff's ideas, enable readers and other characters to infer the experiences and emotions of animals, and to appreciate their difference.

Derrida says of the (hypothetical) animal who speaks in the first person: "Whether it is pronounced, exposed as such, thematised or not, the I is always posed autobiographically. It refers to itself" (Derrida 2008, p. 56). I would suggest, that when fictional animals not only talk, but also become intradiegetic narrators, that is, when they get to tell their own autobiographical stories in their own voices, distinguishable from other characters and narrators, their otherness has an even better possibility to filter through to other characters and to the reader. Naama Harel also suggests:

The nonhuman narrators, who tell their own story in a way which is impossible outside the world of fiction, are indeed pronouncedly anthropomorphized, [sic] yet they can still raise significant questions about nonhuman existence and its relationship with human existence. Anthropomorphic representation should not necessarily lead to anthropocentric interpretation, which excludes the nonhuman protagonists. (Harel 2013, p. 49)

In other words, fictional works with non-human character narration affords us a possibility to access subjects that would be otherwise inaccessible, and therefore deserve an effort on our part, to read them in good faith. Nagel, although of course ultimately pessimistic about our possibilities of ever understanding what it is like for another being to be it, makes the point that "even to form a conception of what it is like to be a bat (and a fortiori to know what it is like to be a bat) one must take up the bat's point of view" (Nagel 1974, p. 442). One way to enable that attempt, that leap of imagination, is to allow animal narrators to express that consciousness in a mutual language. Furthermore, if the text as a whole is, "both inviting the reader to identify with the nonhuman animal as a fellow living being and reminding him or her of the inevitable differences between humans and other species" (Armbruster 2013, p. 24), this places the burden of a nuanced interpretation more firmly on the shoulders of the narratees, and on the readers.

In *The Wind on the Moon* there exists both a rather pointed invitation to the reader to empathize with the non-human characters, and a reminder of the difference. One example of the latter is the fact that human and non-human characters differ in modes of characterization, and in the representation of consciousness. The human characters' are often focalizers and their minds are regularly represented in indirect, and free indirect discourse: "Dinah wondered why there should be a light in his house" [indirect thought]. "Perhaps he was ill?" [free indirect thought] (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 84). In contrast, and even though some non-human characters have large and important roles to play, the animals are never focalizers, and the instances when non-human minds are represented, or non-human actions interpreted, in the extradiegetic narrative are very rare. One of those few examples is this, from a scene when the human protagonists come back, after some delay, to liberate the Puma from her cage: "Then the Puma turned her head, and her agate eyes, as if a lamp had been lighted behind them, shone suddenly with a wild joy" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 182). Even so, the Puma's joy is seen in her eyes, not expressed as a representation of her thoughts. This asymmetry in characterization suggests a reluctance on the part of the narrator to interpret non-human behavior in human terms, that is, to engage in simplistic, or crude anthropomorphism (Garrard 2012). However, since the Puma and the other non-human characters are allowed to express their minds at length in direct speech in a

common language, we get access to what they feel and think through what they say, and we are invited to empathize. This circumstance, apart from emphasizing the Puma's and other animals' ability to speak (and our ability to understand them) therefore highlights both defamiliarisation and empathy (Bernaerts et al. 2014).

In what follows, I will show how the direct speech events of the non-human characters in *The Wind on the Moon* call attention to themselves, both because they invite us to learn about and empathize with these cognizant characters, and because many of them constitute sizeable embedded narratives with interesting textual functions.

4. Direct Speech, Character Narratives, and Narrative Levels

Before I move on to the analysis of these narratives, I would like, first, to connect with at least some of the work that has been done on speech categories (such as direct speech) in literature, and then show how narrative levels or embedded narratives like the ones that interest me in *The Wind on the Moon*, may be analyzed. I became interested in direct speech because it is so conspicuous in *The Wind on the Moon*, as the predominant form of discourse associated with the animal characters.

In narratology direct speech is generally considered as mimetic, that is, a representation of an actual utterance, a "literal quotation" (Genette 1988, p. 50). Similarly, according to Leech and Short, the reporter of direct speech claims "to report faithfully (a) what was stated, and (b) the exact form of words which were used to utter that statement (Leech 1981, p. 320)". They also point out that apart from the grammatical differences such as verb tense and syntax, there is an equivalence between direct and indirect speech (Leech 1981, p. 320), in the sense that when indirect speech is offered, what we read is the narrator's report of the direct speech of a character. However, as Terence Patrick Murphy has shown (Murphy 2007), the equivalence relation between the indirect speech reported by the narrator in the narrative discourse, and the direct speech that we are to infer took place in the story, is in fact far from 1:1. Narrators have reasons for choosing one or the other reporting form, and the effect of their choice is considerable. Murphy argues for instance that by choosing what he calls monitored speech (indirect or free indirect speech) "the narrator thereby conveys that speech at one remove, potentially suppressing what makes that particular character's speech forms unique" and is thus able to "upgrade or downgrade typical speech forms of that character" vis-a-vis the ideology of the novel (Murphy 2007, p. 28). He also points out that without the reported direct speech of the characters, readers are unable to accurately reconstruct the scene with regards to who is present and participating in the conversation. Monitored speech thus becomes, not only a more economical (because usually shorter) way to express something less important, but a tool for selecting and controlling the effect of characters' utterances, and even their perceived presence in the scene (Murphy 2007, p. 29). It seems to me therefore, that direct speech offers a more direct access to the speaker's own ideology, speech forms, and grade of activity, than indirect speech, and that this makes direct speech a source of characterization and a point of access to the speaker's mind.

The view of direct speech as indicative of a character's mind is also indirectly suggested by other scholars. Jonathan Culpeper, for example, in theorizing how characterization can be inferred from textual features, states that "in literary texts an author can afford us such direct access into a character's mind through such devices as thought presentation or soliloquy" (Culpeper 1996, p. 336). Similarly, Lars Bernaerts, analyzing speech acts in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, claims that "A character's speech acts activate a particular nexus of character or personality traits and suggest a particular mental functioning" (Bernaerts 2010, p. 291). While, as Brian McHale points out, "the 'originality' of direct quotation in fiction is entirely illusory" (McHale 2009, p. 435), because it is also controlled by a narrator, this illusion is in many cases all we get. When, as in *The Wind on the Moon*, indirect discourse and direct or indirect characterization of non-human characters are almost non-existent, whereas character narratives in direct speech are conspicuously common, the latter do therefore invite an analysis into the speaker's mind.

Before I move on, I need to address a question of terminology. As mentioned above, direct speech has traditionally been considered mimetic, that is, non-narrated, and my designating examples of direct speech as embedded narratives, and the speakers as intradiegetic narrators, might therefore cause objection. Genette, however, suggests in *Narrative Revisited*, that dialogue should be seen as transcribed or quoted, by the narrator (Genette 1988, p. 43), and Nelles, citing Genette, declares that “I will view all quoted dialogue in this way, not as direct speech spoken by characters, but as spoken by the general narrator in the persona of a character” (Nelles 1997, p. 60). Nelles later states:

[A]ny discourse can be seen as a narrative, since, given the proper context, any discourse can imply a story. Following this reasoning, the difference between a character addressing a speech to a listener and a narrator narrating a narrative to a narratee is not quantitatively determinable. One could thus label any character whose direct discourse is presented a narrator. One definition of “embedded narrative” would then be “character discourse”: all intradiegetic narrative is embedded narrative. (Nelles 1997, p. 122)

It could seem that this means that the direct speech connection to the speaker’s mind would thereby be lost, but for the fact that the general narrator speaks “in the persona of the character” (Nelles 1997, p. 60). The way I understand it, this persona must include the character’s consciousness. David Herman offers a good example of direct speech analyzed not only as a point of access to the speaking character’s mind, but also as an embedded narrative, in his discussion of Joyce’s “The Dead” (Herman 2007). He points out about “an embedded narrative told by Gretta” that “Rather than conveying bedrock facts about Furey, [her long-dead boyfriend] the story represents Gretta making her best effort to understand what happened, and during their interaction her attempt informs Gabriel’s inferences about Gretta’s mind” (Herman 2007, p. 254). In what follows, I try to do something similar, that is, I read character discourse as embedded narratives, told in the persona of characters, and therefore characterizing these characters as particular personalities with particular “mental functioning[s]” (Bernaerts 2010, p. 291).

The embedded narratives in *The Wind on the Moon*, told by non-human character narrators, can be analyzed following Genette’s model in *Narrative Discourse Revisited*, 1988 (Genette 1988), in which he sees intradiegetic narratives as occupying different levels. Genette calls the embedding narrative the first or primary level, which may be told by an extradiegetic narrator as in *The Wind on the Moon*, or an intradiegetic and homodiegetic, (or character) narrator. Second level, (or embedded), narratives are always told by an intradiegetic narrator, like the Puma in *The Wind on the Moon*, who per definition exists in the embedding narrative and possibly but not necessarily in the story she tells.

Intradiegetic narratives can frame other intradiegetic (also called metadiegetic) narratives, in an ever increasing number of levels, as for example, in *The Wind on the Moon*, where the extradiegetic narrator of the first level introduces a story told by the character the Falcon, which, occupying the second level, in turn embeds the narration of another character, the Bantam Hen, occupying the third level. These inserted narratives can, according to Genette’s revised theory (which was informed by that of John Barth) fulfil six different narrative functions (Genette 1988, p. 93). The first is the explanatory one, an analeptic narrative that explains parts of the same story (*fabula*) that we would otherwise have no access to: background facts, for example, which are common in *The Wind on the Moon*. The second is the “predicative function of a metadiegetic prolepsis” (Genette 1988, p. 93), like the witches’ prophesy in *Macbeth*, and a few possible examples in *The Wind on the Moon*. The third, the thematic function, a story of similarity or contrast which develops a theme or motif, and the fourth, the persuasive or dramaturgical function in which the narrative, “perceived by the narratee, has consequences in the first action” (Genette 1988, p. 93), are both common in *The Wind on the Moon*, and will be seen in examples below. Function number five is distractive, like a story told while the characters wait for something else to happen, and number six is obstructive, like Sheherazade’s stories which actually stop her from being killed.

5. Intradiegetic Narratives in *The Wind on the Moon*

So what do the non-human intradiegetic narrators say, and what can we and the narratees infer from these narratives? In this section, I will present a number of sizeable intradiegetic narratives, (length is, after all, a common feature of direct speech (Murphy 2007)) which will be analyzed with regard to Genettian function and to non-human characterization and cognizance.

5.1. *The Puma*

The first example introduces the Puma, and occurs soon after the scene quoted above, when the girls (now kangaroos) meet her and the Falcon for the first time.

“Don’t you like being in a zoo?” asked Dorinda. The Puma’s cage looked very comfortable, and behind it there was an outrun with bushes and a bare stony rise, and a little brook. The Puma was silent for a while, and then *she said*, “I used to live in a forest in Brazil, and in every part of the forest there was something new to look at. Every tree had a different shape and some were smooth as a young leaf, and some were rough and deeply crinkled. Their branches made pictures against the sky, and at night they became a fishing net and caught the stars like a shoal of little fishes. Flowers like trumpets grew upon the trees, sweet-smelling and among the huts of an Indian village were small brown children playing in the sun. There were long winding paths in the forest, I could run for fifty miles. There was a river, sometimes brown and swirly, sometimes clear and smooth. I used to lie on a branch above the water and look at my reflection in a greenish pool. And when I was hungry I went hunting, and that was the loveliest thing in life, to go hunting in the moonlight, and feel your blood like quicksilver in your veins. Not a bird wakes but you hear it. Not a leaf closes but you see the edge turn in. Nothing moves but you smell the wind of its movement. And you go like a shadow through the trees, and even your skin and your claws are laughing and alive.” “I suppose a Brazilian forest is good in its own way,” *said the Falcon*, “but I wish you could see Greenland” ((Linklater [1944] 2013, pp. 99–100), *my italics*).

As we can see, the Puma’s narrative is a second-level narrative, marked by threshold markers, quotation marks and a reporting verb at the beginning and the end (when another intradiegetic narrator, the Falcon, takes over with another second level narrative). At least partly, the Puma’s narrative belongs to Genette’s first function, because it explains what kind of life the Puma used to have. It belongs to the story, the *fabula*, in as much as it tells us that she used to be a wild animal, not born in the zoo where we first encounter her. Her mentioning of the Indian children foreshadows (but does not exactly predict) a later explanation, of how she was captured by a human and sold to England. Then her narrative smoothly shifts gears into the third, thematic, function, telling a story of similarity or contrast. In this case, by contrast, it calls attention to the theme of mental and physical imprisonment as opposed to liberty of body and mind. This is done partly through an affirmation of the Puma’s sensory faculties (visual, aural, olfactory, and kinesthetic) and through the introduction of certain motifs and metaphors that will return in the Puma’s narratives, and that characterize her and distinguish her from the other animal narrators. The Puma is for example fond of all kinds of imagery, but especially similes: “smooth as a young leaf,” “stars like a shoal of little fishes,” “blood like quicksilver”, and metaphors.

The contrast between the Puma’s memories and her current situation is evident. She used to have a forest where “every tree had a different shape”; now she has an outrun with bushes. She used to have miles of winding paths; now she has a stony rise. She used to have a swirling river; now she has a little brook. The last part of her narrative details the joys of hunting, which is contrasted by how the Puma is described when the girl first sets eyes on her some pages previously: “a lovely animal, gleaming like gold, moving swiftly out of shadow into sunlight, out of sunlight into shadow” (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 96), illustrating the restless pacing of a caged predator.

Later in the novel, we are reminded of the Puma's first narrative and "the loveliest thing in life," hunting, when the children, the Puma and the Falcon escape from the zoo and the Puma, for a short time, tries to live in the local forest. This is her first narrative in freedom, here considerably abbreviated:

"Children" said the Puma, "let me tell you this. You have done me the greatest service in the world. You have given me freedom, and I am grateful. You have given me life again. All last night I walked in the Forest with the smell of the trees and the rich ground in my nostrils, and the darkness was beautiful, the sky with a few stars looked through the branches . . . I had not known there were deer in the wood until I caught the draught of their movement. So I turned and followed up the wind, and in the first dawning I found a stag going to drink . . . Faster I went, fast and easy, till the morning air was whistling past my ears and the forest floor slid below my feet like a torrent racing down a mountain, and the labouring haunches of the stag came nearer . . . I drew near-level with him . . . and in that moment I leapt upon his shoulder . . . and as the sun came up, I made my kill. For that glorious moment and the headlong chase in the morning, I thank you. For the life you have given me, thank you. For the freedom of today and the liberty of tomorrow, thank you" . . . Both Dinah and Dorinda were somewhat horrified to learn that the Puma, so soon after regaining her freedom, had killed a deer. (Linklater [1944] 2013, pp. 193–95)

The first thing to notice, is perhaps the motif of inter-species connection and gratitude which is established here and which recurs repeatedly until the end of the novel. But it is also important to note the thematic and metaphorical similarity of this narrative to the first. The Puma's description of her surroundings evokes the original metaphor of the stars seen through the branches. Her running and enjoyment of the speed is elaborated on, as well as the physical sensations and sensory faculties involved in hunting, and the manner in which she finds her prey. In the first narrative she says: "Nothing moves but you smell the wind of its movement" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 100) and in the second, she describes an actual instance of this in similar words: "I caught the draught of their [the deer's] movement" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 194).

With hindsight, the first narrative may be seen as "premonitory" or "prophetic" (Genette's second function) (Genette 1988, p. 93), which would place the two narratives in a prophesy–fulfilment relationship, and in a sense she relives her memories in the second one. I also, however, read the first narrative as explanatory (Genette's first function) telling the story of her former life in freedom, and as establishing a theme: the natural habitat, the freedom of movement and the swiftness of action distinguishing the normal life of a puma. The second narrative is also explanatory (telling the story of her first night in the forest) but more importantly thematic (Genette's third function), because it repeats and emphasizes the motifs from the first, and shows her new life as an attempt to reclaim a more normal kind of life for a puma, in stark contrast to her life at the zoo. It is not only a question of her now being unrestricted and therefore able to chase after prey, nor only her ability to exercise athletic skills, but the very *liberty she takes* in killing a deer. We see this in the girls' reaction, which in this instance originates as much in the fact that the Puma's prey is considered the property of the landowner, as in their being unused to such unconstrained glorification of killing. I will return to their reaction below.

This reading also encourages a heightened awareness (in the narratees and in the readers) of the Puma's sensory capacities, related in the first narrative thus: "Not a bird wakes but you hear it. Not a leaf closes but you see the edge turn in. Nothing moves but you smell the wind of its movement" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 100). In particular the sense of smell is repeated and emphasized in the second narrative: "the smell of the trees and the rich ground in my nostrils . . . I caught the draught of their [the deer's] movement" (Linklater [1944] 2013, pp. 194). The Puma's superior sensory ability is also something which distinguishes her from the human characters and which is elaborated on later in

the same chapter, when she and the Falcon try to teach the girls how to use all their senses to notice everything that goes on around them¹ (Linklater [1944] 2013, pp. 198–99).

These excerpts also characterize the Puma through her choice of words, which are poetic, courteous and sensuous, and perhaps just a little old-fashioned, especially in the second quotation, where she pledges her gratitude to the children. Despite the fact that she is now free, and has a forest to run and hunt in, her happiness is somehow tainted with melancholy. Furthermore, the girls' realization that a puma might not be set free to live in an English, private, forest without "some awkward consequences" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 195) foreshadows the Puma's future return to imprisonment, and death.

This intradiegetic narrative in direct speech allows the Puma to express her otherness in a delicate play on estrangement and attachment (or, in the words of Bernaerts et al., defamiliarization and empathy (Bernaerts et al. 2014)). Her highly evolved senses, for example, which are characteristic of pumas but not of humans, are described in an elaborate language of similes and metaphors (denoting human sensitivity and intelligence) which helps us understand her and empathize with her, makes her less strange in spite of her otherness. In conclusion, in these two narratives, she becomes something more than the beautiful, non-human other the girls first notice; she develops into an accomplished and valuable character both different from and similar to us. Most of all, the contrast between the Puma's wistful tone in the first narrative, and her exultant gratitude in the second, helps the children and the readers understand the absurdity of keeping a character like this in a cage.

5.2. *The Falcon*

The Falcon is perhaps an even more important intradiegetic narrator, since he becomes the girls' spy and informant, the only one able to see and to report on what is going on, while the Puma and the girls are imprisoned, first in the zoo and then again in a later adventure, in the dungeons of the faraway country of Bombardy. Like the Puma, the Falcon gets to introduce himself, and to acquaint the girls and the readers with his specific Greenland falcon characteristics:

"I suppose a Brazilian forest is good in its own way," said the Falcon, "but I wish you could see Greenland. There is nothing in the world so beautiful as that enormous tableland, covered with snow, peaked and shining in the sun, cut by great ravines, and patched by blue shadows. I used to ride upon a breeze, a mile above it, in air like crystal, and on either side I could see a hundred mile of snow and sea, and icebergs shipwrecked on the beach, and the pack-ice moving, and the Eskimos in their kayaks, fishing. Then I would close my wings and dive like a bullet through the diamond sky, down to the little bushes and the glinting rocks . . . Headlong down, the thin air screaming, then *crash*—wings out, head up, and halt two feet from the heather—when I struck swiftly, straight-legged, at a fine fat ptarmigan, too slow to escape, and dashed him to the ground. Ha! The delight, the swiftness, and the freedom!" "Freedom," sighed the Puma. "Life without freedom is a poor, poor thing" ((Linklater [1944] 2013, pp. 100–1), my italics).

As we can see, the Falcon's initial tale is very similar to the Puma's in certain respects. It fulfils Genette's explanatory, first function, in showing what his life was like before he ended up in the zoo, and simultaneously performs the third, thematic function. The enormous expanses of his former homeland and especially his birds-eye perspective in describing the snow covered tableland cut by ravines, contrasts with his life in captivity, and develops the motif of (lost) freedom. His narrative also introduces the Falcon's particular species-specific capacities: his ability to fly at high speed and with

¹ This is a fascinating passage of the novel that can be compared and contrasted with Donna Haraway's ideas on animal training as a way to facilitate communication without language (Haraway 2008), but here it is the animals who train the humans. However, this discussion falls outside of my scope for this article.

great precision, and his sense of sight, which is exceptional. Both of these abilities turn out to be crucial to the plot, which also makes this an example of Genette's fourth function, the dramaturgical one.

The Falcon's narrative also characterizes him as both different from and similar to the children and the Puma. He is different, because so obviously capable of feats humans can only dream of, but similar because of his speech, which is more straight-forward and rational than the Puma's, and includes a tone of youthful delight and energy, especially in the last few, incomplete clauses where he runs up exclamations. As with the Puma, the effect of this narrative, on the protagonists and the readers, is to convince us that this is a reflecting, feeling character who does not belong in captivity.

With the kangaroos' help, the Falcon is the first non-human to be let out of his cage. He flies off to search for the bottle with the magic draught that can turn the kangaroos back into girls. During the several days of his absence, the zoo inhabitants are shaken by the repeated theft of eggs from a pair of ostriches. When the Falcon finally returns, he has an interesting tale to tell, not only of the search, but also, unexpectedly, of the hitherto unidentified egg thief. But the Falcon starts by telling the kangaroos of his search for their bottle, which despite his efforts, initially has not gone well.

"And then, barely an hour since, I was quartering the field by the gate-keeper's lodge, for the tenth, or twelfth, or fourteenth time, though the light was going fast, when I saw, not the bottle, but a plump young rabbit, and I thought to myself, There's my supper. So I stooped upon the rabbit, but the light being bad I nearly missed, and I barely gripped him by the hinder parts as he was vanishing down the hole. I pulled him out, he was squealing like a baby, and as I pulled I could see, beyond him in the hole, the bottle that you lost. It was too deep for me to reach, but the hole is near the edge of the field, on the far side of the road, eighty yards from the gate-keeper's cottage, and so that you will find it easily, I have stuck in the soil behind it the rabbit's white tail." "What a clever thing to think of!" said Dorinda. "Poor rabbit," said Dinah. "A fat and tender rabbit," said the Falcon. "I enjoyed my supper very much". (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 143)

This narrative is an example of the explanatory first function since he explains that he has found the bottle and how; but it is also thematic, (the third function) because we recognize the motif of hunting and killing. In addition, it is an example of the dramaturgical fourth function: it will enable the kangaroos to find their bottle. It also characterizes the Falcon as energetic, rational, thorough, and quick of thought, as Dorinda points out, to her sister and to the reader.

Dinah's "Poor rabbit" reaction deserves a short discussion. This is one of several instances when one of the implications of the non-humans' life in freedom becomes apparent, namely that since they are predators, they need to kill other animals to eat. Another such incident is the one related above, when the Puma kills a stag (which takes place after the Falcon kills the rabbit.) Like most children their age, Dinah and Dorinda have never had to think about where their Sunday roast comes from, but in their communication with these animals, and as an effect of their friendship, they have to at least approach the issue. After learning that the Puma has killed a deer, they are at first horrified, and realize that setting her free has had had some "awkward consequences. And the longer she remained at liberty, obeying her instincts and satisfying her hunger, the more and more numerous the awkward consequences would be" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 195). After some consideration, however, they remind themselves that the Puma is their friend, and "there was no use having a friend if you were going to complain about everything that he or she did. You had to understand her point of view . . . and as to her killing [a deer] now and then,—well, was that any worse than buying a leg of lamb which the butcher had killed?" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 195). This is an instance where a shared language is not enough to create understanding. The importance of seeing the non-human's point of view, (cf. (Nagel 1974)), and of the claims of friendship become explicit here, whereas the question about the ethics of killing for food is simplified into a realization that humans do that too. Although this might be seen as if the text avoids a potentially uncomfortable issue, I think we have to consider the time of writing. The novel was written in 1944, not only a time of war and scarcity of food, but also long before the lives of farm animals had entered public debate. Moreover, in keeping with the

ideology of the novel, the girls (and the readers) are once again given the lesson that non-humans are both similar to and different from humans, and that while their differences need to be respected, their similarities nevertheless make them possible to empathize with.

The Falcon's next narrative, which follows immediately upon the one quoted above, repeats the killing for dinner motif, here juxtaposed to another kind of killing. Like the other narratives, it also explains parts of the *fabula* that the girls and the readers would otherwise have been unaware of, and offers some characterization of the Falcon himself:

"Let me tell the story in my own way," said the Falcon. "It began when I killed, early one morning, a cock pheasant in a gaudy suit of feathers . . . No sooner had I killed than a little *Bantam Hen came running from the farmyard calling: 'Well done, Falcon! That was a very proud and dangerous bird . . . We are grateful to you, Falcon, and we shall be still more grateful if you will kill another of our enemies'"* (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 144).

In this section, the Falcon first takes control of the narrative situation in his own, rational voice, and then proceeds to relate the direct speech of the Bantam Hen, a third level narrator, (signaled by threshold phrase, italicized by me, and double quotes).

5.3. The Bantam Hen

As we can see above, the Bantam Hen first boosts the Falcon's self-confidence, and then goes on to explain that the farmyard bantams have had eggs stolen by an egg thief, who has also been feasting on ostrich eggs. This narrative provides important explanations and solutions to a mystery which would otherwise have remained unsolved (Genette's first function); it includes the killing motif, and motifs of inter-species connections and gratefulness (the third function); and it is dramaturgical (the fourth function) because it provides information that will be acted upon by the narratees (the thief is a python from the zoo). Moreover, it also characterizes both the Bantam and the Falcon. The Bantam continues:

. . . but when that supply [of ostrich eggs] is finished, he will return to us, for eggs of one sort or another he must and will have. And therefore Falcon, I ask you, who are a brave and noble killer, to kill him as you have killed this naughty Pheasant, and save us Bantams from further loss and sadness (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 145).

The fact that the Bantam's speech is related by the Falcon, who gets a considerable amount of praise here, must not be forgotten. Even so, my reading is that the Falcon makes an effort to speak "in the persona" (Nelles 1997) of the Bantam, because the direct speech, with its deferent, prattling tone, both signals and expresses the differences between the Falcon and the Bantam. He is big and dangerous, and presumably capable of killing a much larger animal than the pheasant; she is a very small, domesticated bird, and apparently silly enough to approach a bird of prey who might as well attack her as listen to her. She is also mistaken in her assumption that the Falcon's killing of a pheasant also makes him a likely killer of the python. Even so, this scene actually both foreshadows and initiates the killing of the Python by the Bear in the zoo, and is thus an example of Genette's second and fourth functions.

Furthermore, the Bantam's difference from the Falcon, in size and understanding, underscores her vulnerability and the Falcon's deadly skills (Genette's third function). By reporting her "typical speech forms" (Murphy 2007, p. 28) as he heard them, the Falcon is able to convey not only the facts he learns from the Bantam, but also her exposed position, and her difference from him. This third level narrator's urgent message, and its significance for her and for the other characters, is thus conveyed without obvious distortion, but with a highlight on interspecies communication; the Falcon and the Bantam may both be birds, but one is a bird of prey and the other a domesticated fowl. The Bantam's narrative also underlines both Linklater's consistency in letting animal characters be characterized through their intradiegetic narratives, and the fact that character narrators control what is told, and how.

The novel has many more examples of non-human narratives like the ones I have discussed above, most of them told by the Puma and the Falcon in their further adventures with Dinah and Dorinda.

The Puma's voice falls silent, however, when she is shot while attacking and killing the tyrant of Bombardy (who has kept her, the girls and their father prisoners). Her final words, directed at the girls, confirm the motif of freedom that she and the Falcon have expressed, repeatedly, since we first met her: "You have given me a little while of freedom. Have I repaid you?" (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 388) As it turns out, the Puma's killing of the tyrant, and her liberation of the girls and their father from the dungeons of Bombardy, have wider effects. After the girls are back in England again, the Falcon is the one who tells them what has happened:

But I have other news for you . . . I flew back to Bombardy to see what happened after we left. There has been a revolution there. All the many prisoners whom that man kept in his dungeons have been set free . . . They have buried the Puma in the garden of the house where she was killed, and set up a monument to her . . . (Linklater [1944] 2013, p. 407) .

This final intradiegetic, explanatory, narrative—which naturally evokes strong feelings of empathy with and grief for the Puma—is also the Falcon's goodbye, as he sets off for the icy expanses of Greenland.

6. Conclusions

In this article I have shown that Eric Linklater's novel, *The Wind on the Moon* (Linklater [1944] 2013)—a posthumanist text in its insistence on a non-binary human-animal opposition—on the one hand leaves most non-human characters under-characterized, but on the other gives them a voice by letting them talk, and narrate their own stories. I have also suggested that given our human limitations, we must perhaps allow ourselves to imagine a communication with other species that is language-based, even though we risk falling into the trap of crude anthropomorphism. As has been argued in both science and literature (Garrard 2012; Bekoff 2002; Armbruster 2013; Harel 2013), *critical anthropomorphism*, characterized by an ethical approach and respect for differences as well as similarities, might be our only hope to see at least some aspect of the world from the point of view of a non-human being.

Therefore, when the non-humans in this otherwise heterodiegetic novel get to tell their own stories in a language common to all animals, their speech, and their stories, invite analysis. With the help of Genette's (Genette 1988) theory of narrative levels, I have shown how the intradiegetic animal narratives present a wide range of explanations, thematic expansions and cues for further actions for the narratees. All of this not only advances the plot and enriches the reading experience, but also allows non-human characters to shoulder important narrative functions, and, in doing so express their own concerns in their respective voices. Although intradiegetic narration is by definition relayed by another narrator, narrations in direct speech like these can be recognized as quotations, spoken in the persona of the character (Nelles 1997) something which I argue provides significant instances of characterization, and insights into the consciousness of these characters (cf. (Herman 2007)). We learn for example what they enjoy, what they are good at, what they need to lead a good life. The non-human characters explain how different wild species are associated with different, specific, habitats and behaviors that a zoo, even if it looks nice to human eyes, can never provide or sustain. Through the intradiegetic narratives, this children's novel also raises the issue of killing for food, the value of friendship, and the universal need for freedom, all of them as something predatory animals and humans have in common. These intradiegetic narratives by non-human characters are therefore of significant value for inter-species connection, and comprehension between human and non-human characters, and for the reader trying to reach otherwise inaccessible insights into non-human characters' minds.

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Article

An Animal-Centered Perspective on Colonial Oppression: Animal Representations and the Narrating Ox in Uwe Timm's *Morenga* (1978)

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Abstract: As a result of its topic and its narrative style, Uwe Timm's novel *Morenga* (1978) marks an important step in the development of postcolonial German literature. The main theme of the book is the bloody suppression of the Herero and Nama uprisings through the German army in South-West Africa at the beginning of the 20th century. With recourse to historical and fictional documents and by using different narrative perspectives, the text achieves a plurality of voices and thereby destabilizes a one-dimensional view on colonialism. The present article discusses the functions of the nonhuman animals appearing in *Morenga*. It is assumed that the animal representations are an essential part of the plot and underscore the criticism of colonial rule in a narrative manner too. The novel contains several descriptions of suffering animals and links them to the harm of the Herero and the Nama in order to point out the ruthlessness of the colonists. Moreover, the book features a story-telling ox, which initiates a reflection process about possible ways of narrating colonial history. The talking ox adds a specific animal-centered perspective on colonial oppression and raises questions about emancipation, self-determination, and the agency of the nonhuman 'other'.

Keywords: Uwe Timm; *Morenga*; African history; colonialism; postcolonial German literature; animal narratology; speaking animals; multi-perspective narration; animal agency

1. Introduction

As one of the first German novels, Uwe Timm's *Morenga* [1]¹ (1978, translated into English in 2003)² takes a decidedly critical perspective on the violent structures of European colonialism in Africa. The text reveals a dark chapter of the German past: it centers on the Herero and Nama genocide undertaken by the Colonial Troops ('Schutztruppe') in today's Namibia between 1904 and 1908. During an insurrection of different ethnic groups, about 10,000 Nama and between 24,000 and 100,000 Herero were killed by the German army or died of exhaustion and disease in concentration camps. Besides the crimes of the 'Schutztruppe', Timm's novel illustrates the cultural differences between the European traders, soldiers, and settlers and the natives in the so-called 'protectorate' of South-West Africa.

¹ The title refers to Jacob Morenga (or Marengo, 1875–1907), who was one of the African leaders and an important identification figure during the rebellion. Morenga was a child of a Herero mother and a Nama father. He is known as 'the black Napoleon' for his strategic skills and his resistance against the numerically superior German army. Today, Namibia remembers him as one of the country's national heroes.

² *Morenga* was translated from the German by Breon Mitchell, who received the Helen & Kurt Wolff Prize for Translation for his work on the novel. Apart from a few exceptions, I will use the English version of Timm's novel since its 'sound' and use of language are very close to the original.

Since *Morenga* provides a critical and also an innovative view on the history of colonization, it is cited as a postcolonial novel “avant la lettre” ([2], p. 407). By combining the fictional story of the German army veterinarian Gottschalk with counterfeit historical sources as well as real documents from the era of colonialism and Post-World War II historiography, the text creates a wide panorama of voices: “Ein wichtiger Effekt dieser Montagetechnik ist dabei, daß sie zu ständigen Perspektivwechseln führt, die in diametralem Gegensatz zur [...] erzählerischen und ideologischen ‘Eindimensionalität’ steht” ([2], p. 407: An important effect of this montage-technique is the change of perspectives, which contrasts a narrative and ideological one-dimensionality). With its collage-style, wherein the text includes a variety of documents from personal diaries to military dispatches, the novel stands out from common Eurocentric approaches to colonial history. There are many articles and monographs about the book’s multi-perspective composition, which results from changing focalizations and the diverse attitudes expressed in the cited documents. An aspect that is analyzed in a few articles [3–5] but still deserves a closer look is an intradiegetic narrative of a speaking trek ox called Big-Red. This animal focalizer tells about the domestication of his oxen ancestors and describes the beginnings of European colonialism in Southern Africa, which were accompanied by oppressive structures for both humans and animals.³

According to Christine Ott, the animal representations in Timm’s novel are not as well examined as the rest of the text (see [6], p. 14). This is all the more surprising since the book frequently refers to animals. Even though the ox is the only nonhuman character that receives his own point of view, *Morenga* outlines several other situations that concentrate on animals. The present article has two aims: firstly, I want to demonstrate that the novel pictures human encounters with different animals, especially ostriches, cattle, horses, and camels, to sensitize the reader to the negative impacts of colonialism and to the terror of the German warfare. The second purpose is to discuss the functions of Big-Red’s narrative. In contrast to most former articles, I want to illustrate that the talking ox cannot simply be identified with a ‘wild’ culture or with the voice of the Africans. My thesis is that Timm establishes an ox-narrator to provide a specific animal-centered perspective on the loss of independence during the colonization of Africa. By lending the ox a voice within a puzzle of many other ‘human’ narratives, *Morenga* raises general questions about emancipation and self-determination. A contextualization of the ox-episode in present historiographical discourses, in turn, shows that the novel anticipates a recent interest in animal agency. The book understands the oxen as important actors in colonial processes and thereby starts a reflection process about animals as ‘protagonists’ in history. Overall, this article offers new impulses for a close reading of *Morenga* in the context of literary animal studies.

2. The Oppression of Humans and Animals under German Colonial Rule

The main plot of Timm’s novel takes place during the rebellions of the Herero and the Nama, which were provoked by the repressive structures of German colonial rule at the beginning of the 20th century. Furthermore, the narration refers back to the start of European land-grabbing in Southern Africa about fifty years earlier. These subplots, which mainly occur in the “Regional Studies” chapters (see [1], pp. 88–114, 135–76, 213–47), open up a wider context in order to point out the economic and ecological consequences of the European influence in Africa.⁴ While the main issue of the book is to illustrate the *inhuman* system of the military campaign against the natives, it is noticeable that it also turns toward the animals, which suffer from the colonial situation as well. In many cases, there are connections between these descriptions of oppressed animals and

³ For better readability, this essay terminologically distinguishes between ‘animals’ and ‘humans’ although humans are actually mammals too.

⁴ The chapter headings of the novel are statements of an omniscient narrator who knows about the illegitimacy of European colonialism. They should not be misunderstood since they are often named in a distanced and ironic way. Especially the long and meaningful titles of the ‘Regional Studies’ episodes are euphemistic and contradict the content of the chapters.

humans. For one thing, the animal representations reinforce a critical discussion about human dignity. Then again, they address the animals themselves to offer a more comprehensive view on the victims of colonization. Overall, *Morenga* pictures European colonialism as a history of violence for both humans and animals.

The chapter 'Regional Studies 2' stands out especially since it takes a closer look at the early human and animal victims of colonization in the middle of the nineteenth century. It explains the reasons for the extermination of the ostriches in the region of Bethany and thereby reveals the complex relations between European trading strategies and the devastating aftermath for the natives and the animal population. The chapter begins with the following description: "From time immemorial the ostrich, with its reddish neck and small, pop-eyed head, had roamed unmolested, grazing peacefully among the cattle herds. Until the day a rider appeared on the horizon and, galloping toward it with yells and whip cracks, got it running, though it had no desire to flee" ([1], p. 135). With two other hunters the rider finally chases the ostrich until it collapses and dies. Afterward, the narrative voice raises the crucial question, "Why was this bird, living peacefully and nourished solely on hydrous plants, forced to sacrifice its feathers?" ([1], p. 136). This question starts the tale of Klügge, a German businessman who comes to Africa in 1842 and who "specialized in buttons, pots, and pans, trading them for cattle, goats, and sheep" ([1], p. 145). Because the sale of these household objects is not as lucrative as he hoped, Klügge merges his business with the English trader Morris. To increase profits, the two men make plans to export cattle to St. Helena. Therefore, they develop a strategy to move the Nama "from stealing [livestock] when forced to for food, to systematic theft on economic principles" ([1], p. 148). In their calculations, alcohol plays a major role; by giving the Nama brandy as a payment, they manipulate the cattle trade and force the natives into subordination. This business plan—Morris and Klügge also sell gunpowder—sets off a deadly avalanche for both humans and animals. To satisfy their growing thirst for alcohol, the Nama have to sell more and more livestock to the Europeans. Thus, they start to raid and kill the Herero in order to steal their cattle, but the natives and their livestock do not remain the only victims; a few years later, as he wants to settle up with the Nama, Klügge notices the increasing demand for ostrich feathers in Europe. Meanwhile, the meat prices have fallen. Since the trader is "no longer willing to give out brandy on credit" ([1], p. 164), the Nama now have to find another way of paying him, namely they have "to chase every last ostrich in the region to death" ([1], pp. 164–65) to repay their debt. Before Klügge's life is told to the end, we can find a statement that refers back to the beginning of the chapter: "Two weeks later the last ostrich in the region around Bethany was killed and robbed of its tail feathers. The vultures circled in the sky" ([1], p. 165).

While the 'Regional Studies' chapters point out the devastating ecological impacts, which are triggered by the selfish motives of the colonists and their thirst for profits, the main plot relates to animals in the context of human warfare. The book contains many descriptions of wild and domesticated animals as two of the protagonists, Gottschalk and Wenstrup, are veterinarians of the German Colonial Troops. Their main task is to take care of the soldiers' horses during the insurrection of the Nama. Right from the start, Wenstrup is characterized as a critical person who is aware of the illegitimate methods applied by the German Empire. In contrast, Gottschalk's reason to join the 'Schutztruppe' seems to be a naive and romantic thirst for adventure influenced by his parents who are running a shop for colonial goods. Throughout the text, both veterinarians grow more scrupulous and begin to think of possibilities to improve the natives' situation. As we will see, Timm's novel discusses the two men's opportunities of resistance by picturing different encounters with animals.

The book repeatedly shows that most of the German soldiers do not distinguish between animals and humans when it comes to enforcing colonial rule in South-West Africa. During the uprisings, they arrest Herero and Nama and also seize cattle, sheep, and goats that originally belonged to the natives. These animals are in a poor condition, which catches the veterinarian's attention: "When Gottschalk asked how the livestock was used, [staff veterinarian] Moll said it provided meat for the troops. The rest simply died. [...] The cattle were a pitiful sight, totally emaciated, many injured by thorns or

bullets, with festering wounds. Bodies of dead animals lay scattered everywhere. The stench of carrion filled the air" ([1], p. 17). The Colonial Troops have also built a concentration camp for the conquered rebels. The description of the prisoners' situation—they are treated like animals—is reminiscent of the suffering livestock: "A large area next to the kraal had been enclosed with barbed wire. Sentries were posted in front with fixed bayonets. Beyond the fence Gottschalk could see people, or rather skeletons, squatting—no, something halfway between humans and skeletons. They huddled together, mostly naked, in the piercingly hot sun" ([1], p. 17). Moreover, "[s]omeone had lettered a sign and hung it on the fence: Please don't feed the animals" ([1], p. 18). This inscription corresponds to Captain Moll's sexist statement that most of the 'Hottentot' (Nama) women are "completely immoral, total animals" ([1], p. 17).⁵ The cited passages are essential for the rest of the novel. By describing humans as well as animals in a related situation of starving, they have the function to raise questions about the status and dignity of humans in captivity. Gottschalk's discovery of the wounded and dying animals on the one side and the exhausted and dehumanized rebels on the other side also triggers his further character development. After spending some time working near the concentration camp, the veterinarian slowly loses his initial naivety and starts to wonder about the conduct of the own troops: "What upset Gottschalk was the absurd fact that human beings were starving to death while a few meters away cattle dropped to the ground and rotted away" ([1], p. 20). Even if he still cannot believe Wenstrup, who feels confident that the camps are part of a systematic plan to exterminate the natives, Gottschalk composes a two point petition to Captain Moll: "1. If used for food, the dead animals would not rot, thereby reducing the risk of plague for the Colonial Guard and the prisoners. 2. The lives of women and children would be saved" ([1], p. 20).

While most of the German officers believe in the use of the "hippo-hide whip, [...] an internationally recognized language" ([1], p. 82), which exerts violent control over the natives, Gottschalk's perception of colonial policy changes. On the one hand—and agreeing with Kora Baumbach—his overall development can be analyzed as a "scheiternder Versuch des *going native*" ([7], p. 93: failed attempt of going native): in the end, he still feels an unbridgeable cultural distance between the Herero and the Nama and the Germans. On the other hand, the veterinarian stands out from his comrades since he is "putting aside half his ration of army bread and then, when he thought no one was looking, passing it through the barbed wire to the Hottentots" ([1], p. 129). As Gottschalk becomes more and more uncertain if the implementation of colonial rule is justified, he also develops a specific feeling of compassion for animals that goes beyond the 'duty' of an army veterinarian. For example, he saves a sow from being slaughtered by comrades and rescues a "cow with strikingly long, shadowy lashes, light brown coat, and high withers" ([1], p. 127) by performing an embryotomy. While Lieutenant Dr. Haring thinks that the veterinarian wants to refine his surgical skills, Gottschalk replies, "he'd just done it. A Hottentot boy had come for help, that was all, the cow couldn't have its calf, it was going to die, and everyone would lose the milk" ([1], p. 127). Haring, in turn, counters with the question, "why one would want to dirty his hands with a cow in this country" ([1], p. 127). In doing so, Gottschalk attempts to find his personal way to help the Nama who need the milk and the meat to survive. At the same time, the cow-episode illustrates that the veterinarian struggles against his moral scruples; even if he fears the consequences of siding directly with the rebellious natives, he at least can justify the treatment of the local cattle herds according to his tasks as a veterinary surgeon.

Morenga does not stick to a unilateral reading of Gottschalk's character development and thereby offers a multifaceted approach to the opportunities of anti-colonial resistance. In the end, the text critically questions the veterinarian's individual form of 'rebellion' and its negative impacts on both animals and humans. Before Gottschalk ultimately quits his service and returns to Germany, he announces in front of a superior officer that "he no longer wished to take part in the slaughter of

⁵ There are several other examples of German soldiers comparing Africans with animals for various reasons (see [1], pp. 10, 37, 40, 198).

innocent people" ([1], p. 323). With the term 'slaughter' he clearly criticizes the colonial regime and the downgrade of natives to dehumanized 'animals'. Nonetheless, his overall conduct does not change much, neither for the indigenous people nor for the animals. For one thing, the veterinarian recognizes "that he was helping maintain the circulatory system of force and terror" ([1], p. 208). Then again, he does not take the final step since he is not willing to desert or to support the 'enemy'. The passages in which Gottschalk supposedly 'rescues' certain animals disclose an ambivalent behavior towards the nonhuman victims of warfare too; while the veterinarian protects the animals from his *German* comrades, he has no concerns about the *natives* utilizing and slaughtering the cattle. A related episode, which shows that Gottschalk is trapped in contradictions, focuses on the veterinarian's task "to test the feasibility of camels as pack animals in German South West Africa" ([1], p. 257). Although he knows about the military plans to use the camels in order to fight the Nama, Gottschalk accepts the job of managing the experimental program. While he tries to calm himself with the idea "that every innovation brought to this land furthered its development and would benefit the natives one day" ([1], p. 258), we soon learn that "[t]hree years later, in 1908, the last rebels were tracked down and defeated in the Kalahari with the help of a German camel corps" ([1], p. 259).

In regard to his direct involvement in the military campaign, Gottschalk differs from Wenstrup. His veterinarian comrade is inspired by the anarchistic book *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (1902) by the Russian philosopher Pjotr Kropotkin. This text, which is often cited in the novel, explores specific forms of cooperation including mutual aid in 'societies' of nonhuman animals as well as close relations between humans and animals. Kropotkin criticizes, for example, a social Darwinian understanding of the thesis that only the fittest, here seen as the strongest and most ruthless competitor, can survive. The radical interpretation of this phrase, which originally emerged in evolutionary theory, is also a specific colonialist way of thinking. Based on his lecture, Wenstrup sympathizes with the rebellious natives and in particular with the animals in the colony. He tries to act according to the following maxim: "There is a hell for animals, created and maintained by human society and institutions. [...] Freedom of choice and freedom of opportunity for animals too!" ([1], p. 126). At an early point of the novel, Wenstrup disappears. Although rumors circulate that he might have deserted, the book refuses to give a clear explanation of his motives and the veterinarian remains lost. Since Wenstrup's anarchistic type of resistance is not successful as well, *Morenga* ultimately presents a gloomy picture of a potential equality in colonial situations. In the end, both veterinarians fail since they cannot seriously endanger the colonial endeavor.

The novel focuses on the victims of colonial injustice and on the guilt of individual German soldiers in several other passages. In addition to the Herero and the Nama and their livestock, especially horses are the sufferers.⁶ 'Schutztruppen' officer Captain Tresckow loses his mount during a battle and has to select a new one. As a replacement, he chooses "a somewhat bony but well-built black horse" ([1], p. 41) from the Cape Colony, but the mount kicks and rears up and the captain falls to the ground. After a second unsuccessful try, Tresckow declares the horse "as unfit for duty" ([1], p. 42) and has it shot, although it is otherwise completely healthy. Based on a previous case, Gottschalk's assumption is that the mount dropped the captain because it was not used to his strong aftershave lotion. The reason for Tresckow's harsh reaction, in turn, is his feeling of being humiliated in front of subordinates by a supposedly inferior being, especially since the horse allowed any other rider to mount it. The story of the unwilling animal is framed by reports about war crimes against helpless prisoners and an artillery attack on a village where over fifty Nama are killed. At first sight, there does not seem to be a direct connection between these narrative fragments. Nevertheless, we can easily link the descriptions; in this case, the vulnerable horse and the unarmed Nama are dead within just a few seconds due to a single command of a German officer. This is an example that it is not well-meant

⁶ To illustrate the large number of horses which had to participate in colonial processes: there is data for the Second Boer War that during this conflict between 494,000 and 520,000 horses were used, about 325,000 of which were killed in 'duty' (see [8], p. 58).

statements but rather the specific combination of short episodes, which creates the book's critical perspective on the ever-present violence. *Morenga* resists giving direct moral commentary and yet assumes an ethical stance in order to deprecate injustice and violence against all beings. All things considered, the text effectively blurs the line between human and animal victims without trivializing one of the two sides.

3. The Narrating Ox: Colonial History through the Eyes of an Animal

Timm not only achieves a nuanced depiction of colonial oppression by discussing this topic on the level of content but also by choosing a specific form for his book. The overall narrative situation in *Morenga* is complex and not easy to characterize: we cannot identify a single character that connects the diverse storylines as a narrator, nor is there a 'typical' omniscient voice which knows or tells everything. Following the terminology of Gérard Genette, Stefan Hermes speaks of a zero focalization, which, in turn, does not correspond with an "autoritären Erzählgestus" ([9], p. 184: authoritarian gesture of telling). On the one hand, this zero focalization prevails in many parts of the novel; a heterodiegetic narrator gives us historical and cultural details that are not bound to a limited perspective. On the other hand, the narration often changes between different internal focalizations and, as a consequence, between diverse points of view with individual states of knowledge in each case (variable internal focalization). In this way, we learn more about the thoughts, feelings, and prejudices of different characters. In addition to the internal perspectives of the protagonists, the narration also contains excerpts from both real and made-up documents, such as newspaper articles, scientific studies, letters, diaries, and official military reports. To quote Herbert Uerlings, this concept of intertextuality leads to a diversity of speech, "einer formalen, sozialen, inner- und interkulturellen Vielfalt der Stimmen" ([10], p. 133: a formal, social, inner-, and intercultural variety of voices). Altogether, the distinct narratives establish a multi-perspective view on the situation in South-West Africa. As a result, the narration undermines a one-dimensional 'truth' of the colonial discourse.

Even though the reader gets used to this multilayered story-telling technique quickly, one narrative strand sticks out: it is the tale of a speaking draft ox called Big-Red. Big-Red, who appears in the chapter 'Regional Studies 1', is the lead animal of Gorth, a German missionary who travels the land with his ox wagon in 1852 in order to convert the natives to Christianity. On their way through the desert, Gorth walks beside the wagon and suddenly hears the voice of his animal companion. What follows is a short but meaningful intradiegetic narrative that is divided into two parts.

The first part of Big-Red's tale focuses on the domestication of his cattle ancestors and describes how "we came under the yoke" ([1], p. 106). The animal narrator follows the livestock back to a time when "the broad plains belonged to the cattle" ([1], p. 105). This independent way of life—Big-Red mentions that the herds were free and "went where they wished" ([1], p. 105)—is destroyed by Hurt-Knee, "the ancestor of all Hottentots" ([1], p. 105). Since Hurt-Knee is limping and cannot follow the cattle, he thinks up a strategy to force the animals under his will. For this purpose, he helps a suffering cow named Dotsy⁷ by removing a thorn from her hoof. Big-Red, who has a narrative 'connection' to his relatives and, therefore, the possibility to empathize with them, reports that the cow naively accepts this aid; she allows Hurt-Knee to milk her in return, but this form of mutual help quickly develops to a unilateral relationship, and Dotsy's male calf "soon found that there was no more milk in her udder" ([1], p. 105). Later, as the bull grows up, Hurt-Knee catches him and castrates him by biting off his testicles. Afterward, he ties him "to a tree, struck him with a whip and called out, Ox, until he responded to that name and stood quietly while Hurt-Knee sat on his back. Then Hurt-Knee rode off on the ox, while Dotsy followed the ox, the [other] bulls followed Dotsy, and the herds followed the bulls" ([1], pp. 105–6). In the end, Big-Red describes that the animals

⁷ The descendants of Dotsy—for example White-Mouth, Long-Tuft, Big-Red, Christopherus, Fork-Horn, and Soft-Mouth—are named and appear throughout the novel (see [1], pp. 109, 141, 174, 214).

completely depend on their human 'leader': "Before long they couldn't find the springs any longer without Hurt-Knee, they forgot their directions and how to smell the rain. Cattle who had lost their way stood on the plains and lowed in fear" ([1], p. 106).

While the first passage illustrates the unequal interdependency between humans and animals, the second part of Big-Red's narrative relates to European colonialism and to the backgrounds of the 'cattle wars' between the Herero and the Nama. The ox gives us the information that hostilities between local ethnic groups existed before Europeans came to Southern Africa. Nonetheless, he explains that there is a causal relation between colonization and the following increase of violence: after "white men [...] from Holland" ([1], p. 108) begin to fight the 'Hottentots' in the south, these Nama, in turn, "kill and drive off the local Bushmen" ([1], p. 108) in order to settle the regions north of the Orange River. "But since the land conquered by the Namas had little rain and few springs, they couldn't keep large herds" ([1], p. 108). That is why the Nama move farther to the north and start to chase the livestock of the Herero, "the friends of cattle" ([1], p. 108). As Big-Red states, European traders even fuel these conflicts by selling guns, bullets, and powder to the different groups. A negative effect of this process for the animals is that cows and oxen increasingly become trading goods and therefore lose their status as sacred animals and respected 'friends' of the natives. As a consequence, they frequently end up in the slaughterhouses in Cape Town.

The narrative strand of Big-Red stands out since it is the only part of the book presented from the viewpoint of an animal.⁸ It also shows stylistic differences: in contrast to other chapters and especially to the cited military documents, the ox-narration reminds the reader of a fairy-tale gone wrong. The second part of the narrative, for example, begins with the phrase "Long, long ago" ([1], p. 108), which alludes to the fairy-tale-opening 'once upon a time'. In some other passages, Big-Red unfolds the history of oppression in a 'biblical' manner (see [11], p. 89); the sentences are figurative, memorable, and often use a repetitive syntax ("Hurt-Knee rode off on the ox, while Dotsy followed the ox, the bulls followed Dotsy, and the herds followed the bulls" [1], pp. 105–6). Nevertheless, the episode might confuse the reader as it blurs the boundaries between realistic and fantastic representation methods. In this context, Axel Dunker claims that the narrative style of Big-Red is inspired by the magical realism of Latin American literature. He describes the effect on the reader as follows: "Die entsprechenden Passagen des Buches werden tatsächlich als 'fremd', als einer außereuropäischen, 'anderen' Tradition verpflichtet, empfunden" ([5], p. 49: The relevant passages are actually experienced as 'alien', bound to a non-European, 'foreign' tradition).

The animal narration differs from the rest of the novel in another respect. Big-Red participates in the story as a character and can be categorized as an intradiegetic narrator. At the same time, his descriptions of the cattle herds and the conflicts in Southern Africa are zero focalized. In other episodes we can either find a zero focalization on the events that are presented by a narrator that does not participate in the story or the perspectives are limited and connected to individual characters. The narrative of Big-Red, in turn, contains much information that goes beyond the presumed knowledge of such a homodiegetic narrator. This leads to the conclusion that the ox holds a representative voice; he does not only speak for himself but also for someone or something else. A characteristic feature of Big-Red's speech backs this assumption: in some parts of his narrative, the ox empathizes with his ancestors by telling their thoughts and feelings. For example, he conveys the experiences of Dotsy and her calf (see [1], p. 105). Big-Red also uses the personal pronoun 'we' which addresses all of his oxen companions: "Thus we came under the yoke" ([1], p. 106).

This narrative style and the impression that the ox possibly raises his voice for someone else have prompted different interpretative approaches. A short overview illustrates that most of them are human-centered and often simply ignore the ox's own viewpoint. The research primarily highlights

⁸ The book gives a small hint that all three 'Regional Studies' chapters are possibly told by Rolfs, one of the native rebels (see [1], pp. 325–26). However, the changing focalizations as well as the stylistic and narrative differences between the individual chapters and subplots speak against this explanation.

a supposed allegorical function of the passage and thereby tends to link the animal narrator to the perspective of a 'foreign' culture or directly to the Herero and the Nama. Martin Hielscher argues that all three 'Regional Studies' chapters are part of a narrative strategy to circumvent the imperial and rational logic of colonialism, as they contrast with the "zitierten Dokumenten, authentischen Äußerungen und Aufzeichnungen der Militärs und Behörden" ([11], p. 86: cited documents, authentic statements, and records of the soldiers and authorities). Hielscher locates Big-Red within this narrative comparison of distinct discourses and attributes a representative function to him; in his view, the voice of the ox fills "eine Leere, die bleiben muss, weil die Unterlegenen ihre Geschichte noch nicht selbst erzählen können" ([11], p. 89: an emptiness which has to remain since the underdogs are not yet able to narrate their own history of oppression). In this context, Hielscher associates the talking ox with the oral traditions of the Nama and their 'sensual' perception of the world (see [11], p. 87). We find a similar argumentation in Kerstin Germer's exploration of narrative strategies in Timm's novels. Germer claims that the mythical and fantastical episodes of *Morenga* are an attempt "der nur unzulänglich zu fassenden afrikanischen Kultur eine potenzielle Stimme zu verleihen" ([12], p. 40: to lend the elusive African culture a potential voice). Christine Ott mainly follows these interpretations. She states that Timm could not rely on written sources of the oral historiography of the Herero and the Nama (see [6], p. 25). The speaking ox, in turn, represented these oral narratives: "Die Erzählungen des Roten Afrikaners [Big-Red] bieten einen solchen Zugang, wie ihn die Historiographie nicht vermitteln kann. In ihnen transportiert der Autor die Eigengeschichtlichkeit der indigenen Kultur, für die er die Rezipientinnen und Rezipienten sensibilisieren möchte" ([6], p. 81: Big-Red's narratives provide an approach which conventional historiography cannot offer. In these passages, the author transports the genuine historicity of the indigenous culture in order to sensitize the reader to it). At the same time, Ott questions if the ox-episode and the 'Regional Studies' chapters actually convey African history and oral traditions in an adequate way (see [6], pp. 26–31): "Das, was als indigene Eigenheit im Roman beschrieben wird, fußt möglicherweise auf einer klischeehaften Vorstellung des Autors von Afrika" ([6], p. 31: The supposed indigenous peculiarity, which is described in the novel, possibly arises out of the author's stereotypical picture of Africa).

Although the novel is siding with the natives, it is indeed remarkable that Timm mainly avoids narrating through the eyes of the Herero and the Nama. In an interview, the author mentions that an aesthetic of empathy would be a colonial act itself (see [13], p. 452). At first glance, the tale of the ox appears to be a possible approach to African history, while avoiding a direct and 'colonial' assimilation of the voices of the natives. In the German original version of the book, the presumed connection between the nonhuman narrator and the history of Africa even 'sounds' stronger since Big-Red's German name is "der Rote Afrikaner" ([14], p. 138: the Red African). At the same time, it is problematic to identify Big-Red with the perspective of the indigenous people for two main reasons: firstly, even though they are rare and short, we *can* find passages which internally focalize natives and illustrate the perception of African individuals (see [1], pp. 29, 58, 60–61, 74, 91, 97, 110, 154, 326). When Baumbach suggests that there are no explicit "Äußerungen der Indigenen über die Kolonialherren" ([7], p. 97: statements of the indigenous people about the colonial rulers) in the entire novel, it is simply not correct. In this regard, the novel cannot fully avoid empathizing with the natives' experiences. Secondly, an equation of the narrating ox to the Herero and the Nama would do justice neither to the humans nor to the animals. On the one hand, it would animalize the natives and thereby adopt a colonialist position, which radically disregards human dignity as well as African culture and history. On the other hand, it would trivialize the specific animal-centered perspective, which the novel undoubtedly includes.

In the following, I want to show that, with his representative voice, the trek ox does not primarily speak for the natives but, above all, for the animals. In doing so, I can build on Esther Almstadt who, as an exception, points out that the narrative clearly focuses on the animals' point of view: "An der Ochsen-Erzählung ist signifikant, dass den geschilderten Tieren nicht ausschließlich die Funktion zukommt, menschliches Verhalten zu bebildern. Sie demonstrieren vielmehr die Vorstellung, dass

auch die Tiere Opfer der Kolonisierung seien" ([15], p. 190: It is significant that the descriptions of the animals in the ox-narration do not only picture human behavior. They rather demonstrate that animals are victims of colonization too).

When we look at the oxen's human 'audience', it is interesting who is able and who wants to understand their language and for what reasons. At first we could assume that Gorth only hears his draft animal because of sunstroke. It is mentioned that the missionary never wears a hat. Another presumption is that the talking ox is nothing but a drug-related hallucination since Gorth begins to listen to him after smoking "a small pipe of dagga" ([1], p. 104). That this is a reduced view becomes clear as the novel itself criticizes these explanations of Gorth's "confused state of mind" ([1], p. 106): after a letter appears in which Gorth writes that "he'd finally learned the language of the oxen" ([1], p. 106), a debate arises about the possible reasons for his 'expansion of consciousness'. There is no doubt that the novel ridicules the rational explanation attempts of the German Missionary Society. In contrast to the perspectives of most European colonists, we can find several statements of Africans who claim that they are able to communicate with animals. While the Nama Lukas explains that he can speak "a language the cattle understand" ([1], p. 101),⁹ Gottschalk's former assistant Rolfs questions the skills of the German veterinarian because of his lack of empathy for the livestock: "You call yourself a cattle doctor and can't even understand what they say" ([1], p. 326). When Gottschalk performs the mentioned embryotomy—the suffering cow, Soft-Mouth, is actually a descendent of Dotsy—we also learn that he "understood nothing" ([1], p. 127) and solely hears a mooing animal. In addition to the natives and the missionary Gorth, it is surprisingly the German trader Klügge who ultimately learns to 'listen' to the oxen. Before he gets lost in the width of the desert, Klügge recognizes the harm he has done to both humans and animals; when Klügge's wagon master strikes their lead ox with his whip, the businessman "threw himself protectively across the animal and cried out: This is God's creature" ([1], p. 174). The text does not explain the trader's change of mind in detail, but the named episodes clearly contrast the 'limited' viewpoint of those who take part in the oppression of animals and those who try to empathize with the nonhuman 'other'.¹⁰

In this context, one might assume that *Morenga* just offers another anthropocentric approach to different ethnic groups and their disparate conceptions of the world, but it is an important feature of the text that it includes a perspective that explicitly attributes the *nonhuman* animals the means to express themselves. The novel concretely refers to animistic and ethnological positions which question a strict dichotomy between culture and nature: "Viele nicht-westliche Gesellschaften anerkennen Tiere als konstitutiven Teil der Welt, [...] interagieren mit ihnen und schreiben ihnen personenhaften [...] Status zu" ([16], p. 292: Many non-Western societies recognize animals as a constitutive part of the world, interact with them and attribute personhood status to them). According to such an animistic view, the communication between humans and animals is not a "Phantasieprodukt, sondern eine ernsthafte Angelegenheit" ([17], p. 227: product of fantasy but a serious issue). The novel takes up this perspective in order to include 'inexplicable' approaches to speaking animals "die mit unseren westlich-abendländischen Vorstellungen in keiner Weise zu vereinbaren sind" ([16], p. 289: which are in no way compatible to our Western ideas). With respect to the special role that the cattle play for the Herero and the Nama, it is no coincidence that Timm chose an ox for bringing up this topic; through Big-Red's narrative, we learn that especially the Herero keep "holy cattle" ([1], p. 109), which are an integral part of their ancestor worship. Furthermore, we can connect the animistic way of thinking to anarchistic ideas, which imply an "Gleichsetzung von Mensch und Tier" ([15], p. 190: equation of humans and animals). Since the narrative of the ox indicates a possible "verbale Verbundenheit

⁹ Lukas claims that, in addition to the language of the cattle, he is also able to speak and listen to "the fat-tailed sheep, the jackal, the antelope, the sand viper" ([1], p. 101). By mentioning the cattle in the first place, Lukas underlines their importance for the natives.

¹⁰ While the novel clearly states that Gottschalk is not able to understand the speech of animals, unfortunately, we cannot find any proof that his anarchistic comrade Wenstrup, who demands equal rights for humans and animals, possibly could.

zwischen Mensch und Tier" ([15], p. 191: verbal solidarity between humans and animals), it provides an innovative and novel angle on colonialism "that can prompt humans to focus afresh on subjects that have been marginalized" ([18], p. 128).

It is an important characteristic of *Morenga* that this comparison of different worldviews does not lead to a naive appreciation of a 'near-natural' form of perception. As Uerlings states, the 'animal-friendly' culture of the indigenous people has its limits too. Their religious and cultural 'connection' with the livestock does not mean that they would not utilize or kill animals. On the contrary, during the conversation with his lead ox, Gorth experiences the animals' relationship with the natives as a harmful life of suffering (see [10], pp. 135–36). When Big-Red describes how Hurt-Knee brutally domesticates the "cow's calf, and bit off its balls" ([1], p. 105), he reveals a history of consistent subordination and exploitation of animals. Therefore, the book does not romanticize the supposed 'animal-understanding' African societies. At the same time, the narrative of the ox questions predominant patterns of thinking. In this respect, we can agree with former research; by lending the animal a voice, the text clearly criticizes the rational and objective explanatory approaches of the Western colonial discourse. Following ethnologist Lukasz Nieradzki, the history of livestock is not only a history of human violence. In fact, *writing* this history can be a violent act too (see [19], p. 122). A quality of Timm's novel is that it turns towards the domestication of animals without an authoritarian Western viewpoint. Even though every literary animal is bound to the perspectives of humans who ultimately produce the text (see [17], p. 233), *Morenga* succeeds in questioning Eurocentric as well as anthropocentric forms of rule and representation. Moreover, since the book establishes a *speaking* animal, which is capable of reflecting the history of oppression, it implicates "that ideas of an absolute difference between the human and the animal (and the superiority of the former over the latter) owe a great deal to the colonial legacies" ([20], p. 414).

Reflecting dissimilar forms of understanding and talking about the oxen's loss of independence is just one purpose of the episode. The other function is to give the animals a voice in order to point out their important role in colonial history and, in this sense, their specific historical agency. According to Actor Network Theory, agency can be understood as "the capacity to affect the environment and history" ([20], p. 415). This capacity is not limited "to the conscious, rational choices made by human individuals" ([20], p. 415). It rather means "an effect generated in multiple and unpredictable ways from a network of interactions between human, animal, and environmental actors" ([20], p. 415). A journey through literary history shows that it is a particular privilege of fictional texts "Tiere mit großer Handlungsmacht auszustatten oder sogar als vollgültige Subjekte zu präsentieren" ([17], p. 236: to equip animals with a specific form of agency or to even present them as fully valid subjects).

The animals occurring in *Morenga* reflect different content-related motifs. While the representations of horses and camels are primarily integrated into the criticism of human warfare, the speaking draft ox addresses another topic: we associate oxen with stock farming, trading, and, since they are essential means of transport, especially with colonial 'movements' like land-grabbing, resettlement, and missionary work. Big-Red's tale demonstrates that animals are important triggers for colonial developments which, in turn, mostly end up in injustice for the natives as well as the animals themselves. As the trek ox explains, the violent conflicts and the raids in the southern parts of Africa always involve the fight for the best feeding grounds for the cattle herds; for example, he says that the Nama tribes move into Herero-territory because they want to occupy the "thick meadows flowing with water" ([1], p. 108) in order to keep more livestock. Therefore, the ox-narration presents animals as reasons and motives for historical changes. As actors, the cattle also affect the economic situation and thereby the course of the fights (see [1], p. 109). The term "the great cattle war" ([1], p. 157), which is used in the second 'Regional Studies' chapter and sums up the different Herero and Nama conflicts in the nineteenth century, indicates the livestock's significant influence on the circumstances in Southern Africa too.

With regard to this animal-centered perspective on economic aspects of colonialism, we can link *Morenga* to current historical studies, which focus on the agency of nonhuman 'others' in historical

processes. By characterizing the oxen as actors and, in general, as an important part of colonization, the novel reflects and anticipates the findings of an 'animate history' that questions the common position that animals are solely objects of history and its interpretations (see [21], p. 10). While most research firstly refers to the human parties that are involved in colonial experiences, German historian Gesine Krüger, in turn, underlines that the discourse has to be open to nonhuman animals for several reasons:

"Kolonialismus und Imperialismus bedeuteten nicht nur Herrschaft über Menschen, sondern waren zugleich in vielfacher Hinsicht Herrschaft durch und über Tiere. Ohne Tiere gäbe es keine imperialen Eroberungen. Tiere [...] sind Bedingung imperialer Prozesse, mit denen sie in vielfältiger Weise verflochten sind, die sie verändern und durch die sie verändert werden" ([22], p. 127: Colonialism and imperialism did not only mean rule over humans but rule by and over animals too. There would not be imperial conquests without animals. Animals are the requirement for imperial processes, with which they are interwoven in diverse ways. Imperial processes are changed by animals and influence them at the same time).

Using the example of horses and cattle, Krüger points out specific forms of agency which we can rediscover in Big-Red's narrative; especially at the North American, Australian, and South African 'frontiers', oxen (and horses) affected substantial economic and ecological changes. The import, export, and commerce involving these animals influenced the landscape and small-scale agricultural systems as well as global market structures (see [22], p. 140). Timm's speaking ox relates to these topics and illustrates how animals are interwoven with missionary work, trading, and, above all, with a spiral of colonial violence which has constantly increased since the middle of the nineteenth century.

In contrast to books that simply bring up such themes, *Morenga* deals with the agency of animals in a content-related as well as a narrative way. Due to this dual approach, which respects a viewpoint on and of animals, the novel anticipates the recent postcolonial interest in the perspectives of nonhuman 'others' (see [20], p. 417). With regard to the narrative situation, the novel does not entirely characterize animals as passive victims; the descriptions of Big-Red reveal that they are often downgraded to objects which do not have the opportunity to act independently, "aber im Erzählen wird der Rote Afrikaner zum Souverän seiner Geschichte" ([11], p. 89: but during his narration, Big-Red becomes a sovereign over his tale/history). Therefore, the text undermines a mere victims' perspective. By lending Big-Red his own voice, *Morenga* gives at least the oxen the means to 'emancipate' in a narrative manner.¹¹ In this way, the book provides a reflected view on animals' agency since it respects their ambiguous position (see [17], p. 234). As participants in historical processes their status is not clearly evident; animals always appear to be subjects and objects at the same time, tied to complex structures of political and economic interests.

4. Summary

Analyzing animals in postcolonial literature and in (post-)colonial contexts in general can be a difficult undertaking. As Philip Armstrong states, "One reason might be the suspicion that pursuing an interest in the postcolonial animal risks trivializing the suffering of human beings under colonialism" ([20], p. 413). Uwe Timm's *Morenga* gives us a striking example that literary texts can provide a kaleidoscopic perspective on European colonialism, which focuses on both humans and animals. By centering on two veterinarians, the book takes up an innovative viewpoint on a military campaign, which not only is a genocide committed against the Herero and the Nama but also kills "more cows than had been lost in the last ten years" ([1], p. 209). With its different animal representations and the specific interest in the nonhuman 'protagonists' of colonial history, Timm's

¹¹ However, this is an opportunity for the literary ox, not necessarily for his real 'relatives' that are "under the yoke" ([1], p. 106).

novel turns towards a topic that has often been marginalized. This animal-centered perspective, in turn, does not trivialize the harm done to the natives. As a short passage in Gottschalk's diary illustrates, the book recognizes humans as well as animals as victims of colonialism: "Those who come after us will trace our passage through this land for years to come: the skeletons of dead animals, and the graves of those who have fallen, will serve as milestones along the way" ([1], p. 212).¹² Overall, the text draws a comprehensive picture of colonialism in order to reveal the far-reaching brutality of the soldiers, traders, and settlers in the 'protectorate' German South-West Africa.

In a moment of recognition, 'Schutztruppen'-captain Tresckow asks, "What sort of campaign is chasing off the enemy's oxen, shooting their women and children, and burning their homes?" ([1], p. 209). It is remarkable that *Morenga* refuses to give a rational or ethical answer to crucial questions like these. As an alternative, the novel establishes a multifaceted narration, which deliberately leaves opportunities for critical reflection. With its polyphonic style, the text problematizes colonial practice as well as Eurocentric forms of representation. The trek ox Big-Red is a significant part of this narrative technique; the talking animal effectively undermines conventional literary approaches to the colonial discourse and thereby triggers a discussion about possible ways of narrating African history. His intradiegetic narrative describes the beginnings of colonization, which ultimately lead to the violent oppression of both humans and animals under German colonial rule. It is a story about the loss of independence and, nevertheless, about rebellion, emancipation, and equation. In this regard, and since it implies animistic ideas, the tale of the ox is closely linked to the Herero and the Nama, but the novel does not simply equate the animal's perspective to the experiences of the natives. The animal narrator does not claim to tell the 'truth' about the history or culture of the indigenous people but rather speaks for the oxen themselves.

The animals' point of view forces us to "think outside inherited paradigms" ([18], p. 128). Relating to Uwe Timm's statement that a 'narrative empathy' would be a colonial act itself, we might be surprised that the author decided to empathize with an ox and that he lends a voice to the *nonhuman* 'other'. At the same time, the story-telling animal represents a consequent and innovative postcolonial step as it opens up a new way of understanding the colonial past. Big-Red resists the perception that the marginalized could not express. In particular, his narration reveals an attitude toward the 'subaltern', which respects their importance for historical processes and thereby anticipates the recent ethnological and historiographical interest in animals as specific actors in colonial contexts. In this regard, *Morenga* is more than just one of the first postcolonial texts in German literature. Since it initiates a reflection process about the role of nonhuman animals in history, the novel can also be seen as an early literary approach to questions of animal agency.

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¹² In this specific passage, the German original version of the novel uses even more critical vocabulary: "Die Skelette der krepiernten Tiere [perished animals] am Wege und die Gräber der Gefallenen sind die Meilensteine" ([14], p. 278).

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Article

Animal Dystopia in Marie Darrieussecq's Novel *Truismes*

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Abstract: The article focuses on the contemporary French author Marie Darrieussecq's dystopian novel, *Truismes* (1996), that contemplates the differential boundaries between human and non-human existence within the scope of contemporary Western metaphysics. The novel challenges the anthropocentric conception of dystopia on the grounds that it is not only a *human* dystopia; the story centres on a female protagonist whose body begins to turn into a sow. In the novel's dystopian reality, non-human nature has only capitalistic value in relation to human needs, which has caused a large-scale ecological crisis. For the heroine, the dystopian cityscape is the antagonist that she struggles against; the story represents the sow-woman looking for a better place to live. By giving a narrative voice to an animal, Darrieussecq's novel urges the reader to identify with the non-human world. The article aims to come to an understanding of the agency beyond the human species. Further, it argues that agency constitutes an entanglement of intra-acting agencies; it is not an attribute of (human) subject or (non-human) object as they do not pre-exist as such separately. Consequently, human and non-human agencies are related to one another; humans are not only affecting the non-human world, but they affect each other in a very profound way. In this, the article contributes to the ongoing interrogation of human relations with non-human agency that is being actively conducted in contemporary Western scientific discourse. The concept of agency also allows participation in discussion about the current ecological crisis.

Keywords: agency; animal; dystopia; Marie Darrieussecq; human; non-human; *Truismes*

1. Introduction

To be entangled is not simply to be intertwined with another, as in the joining of separate entities, but to lack an independent, self-contained existence. Existence is not an individual affair. Individuals do not preexist their interactions; rather, individuals emerge through and as part of their entangled intra-relating (Barad 2007, Preface).

The above extract is part of the discussion in which the complex entanglements between human and non-human existence are powerfully brought forth in contemporary Western scientific discourse. This article studies contemporary French author Marie Darrieussecq's first novel, *Truismes*, which challenges the differential boundaries between the human and the non-human world. Darrieussecq's novel places itself within a contemporary French literary field that is argued to be *en péril* ("in danger") because it means nothing but "formalism, nihilism, and solipsism" (Todorov 2007). The Bulgarian-French literary critic Tzvetan Todorov argues that instead of being what literature is meant to be—discourse about the world—literature has turned into a discourse about literature (Id). Similarly, the French literature Professor Antoine Compagnon claims that contemporary French literature has gone through *un long suicide fastueux* ("a long luxurious suicide"), having been unable to deal with questions concerning the meaning of human existence in the contemporary world (Compagnon 2007). Another French critic, William Marx, proclaims that literature is only capable of talking about nothing and becoming a nothingness about which nothing more can be said (Marx 2005).

As the American feminist theorist Karen Barad reflects in general, “Language has been granted too much power. The linguistic turn, the semiotic turn, the interpretative turn, the cultural turn: it seems that at every turn lately every ‘thing’—even materiality—is turned into a matter of language or some other form of cultural representation” (Barad 2007, p. 801). When it comes to the genre of dystopian fiction, one is more likely able to explore the connections between the speculative scenario and the actual condition of the real world, similar to the ways in which the American ecocritic Keira Hambrick argues in more general terms that environmental science fiction allows one to explore the possible outcomes of current ecological crisis (cf. Hambrick 2012, p. 130). Darrieussecq’s dystopian novel challenges one to understand that the ecological crisis is not *only* a narrative representation, as it deeply affects the world. That is to say, in encountering the environmental issues, such as the ways in which human activities have already had a significant global impact on earth’s biodiversity, ecosystems, and species extinction, that appear in Darrieussecq’s novel, one is more able to become aware of the ecological crisis. And then, “[R]eaders may be less likely to feel immobilized by fear and eco-anxiety, and may respond favourably to the call-for-action espoused by the narrator, characters, or the author” (Ibid., p. 135).

Truismes is, as argued, a dystopia, which literally in Greek means “not-good-place,” set in the future. To be more specific, Darrieussecq’s novel is based on classical dystopian fiction that portrays a human society of the future in which the agency of an individual or a group is restricted (Jacobs 2003, p. 92). However, *Truismes* is not only a classical *human* dystopia, as the novel centres on an animal. That is, *Truismes* is a story of a female protagonist whose body begins to turn into a sow. The heroine’s physical appearance is not all that changes; she undergoes many psychological and social changes as well. The heroine begins to change slowly from a beautiful young woman into a deformed hybrid, and then into a sow, but the metamorphosis is never completed. The heroine stays a “sow-woman,” which challenges the differential boundaries between human and non-human animal. It takes the heroine a long time to accept that she is a human *animal*. That is, the novel reflects the French philosopher Jacques Derrida’s critical thought about the ways in which humans have distinguished themselves from other animals (cf. Derrida 2006). The novel’s “animal question,” meaning the ways in which the text questions human supremacism, is important because of the insights it provides about speciesism, but the text also brings forth the ways in which the ontology of non-human animals needs to be rethought (Koponen 2017; Lestel 2015).

The “animal turn” is a significant part of contemporary French literature, as problematizing the dualistic opposition between human and non-human animal is the recurrent theme of several contemporary French authors, including Marie Darrieussecq (born 1969), Marie NDiaye (born 1967), and Antoine Volodine (born 1950). The novels of Darrieussecq, NDiaye, and Volodine are centred on life that can no longer be recognized separately as either human or animal (Turin 2012; Simon 2015). Their novels are related to a variety of contemporary theoretical approaches, such as Actor-Network theory (following Michel Callon, Bruno Latour, and John Law), affect theory (Silva Tomkins), agential realism (Karen Barad), animal studies, assemblage theory (Gilles Deleuze and Manuela DeLanda), cyborg theory (Donna Haraway), ecocriticism, ecofeminism, new materialism, Object-Oriented Ontology (Ian Bogost, Levi Bryant, Graham Harman, and Timothy Morton), posthumanism, and transhumanism. Each of these approaches challenges the Cartesian dualism between (human) observer and (non-human) object of observation that still dominates Western metaphysics. For instance, Barad argues that “agency” is an entanglement of intra-acting agencies; agency is not an attribute of (human) subject or (non-human) object as they do not pre-exist such. Therefore, “We don’t obtain knowledge by standing outside the world; we know because we are . . . part of the world in its differential becoming” (Barad 2007, p. 185). This means that any “becoming” is a process in which human and non-human agencies are entangled (Barad 2007; Morton 2010). As the American feminist theorist Donna Haraway argues, “To be one is always to become with many” (Haraway 2008, p. 4). In Haraway’s view, existence is always an entangled becoming, and there can be no pre-existence: “The partners do not precede the meeting; species of all kinds, living and not, are consequent on

a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters” (Id). For Haraway, “Respect is *respecere*—looking back, holding in regard, understanding that meeting the look of the other is a condition of having face oneself” (Id). As she adds, “[T]he point is not to celebrate complexity but to become worldly and to respond” (Id). Similarly, for the English philosopher Timothy Morton, “[E]xistence is always coexistence . . . Nothing exists all by itself, and so nothing is fully ‘itself’” (Morton 2010, pp. 14–15).

Darriussecq’s novel reflects the ways in which dystopian fiction is often characterized by a dualistic framework that has long justified, maintained, and perpetuated the oppression of non-human nature—and that has also, in similar ways, justified, maintained, and perpetuated the oppression of marginalized groups, as the American philosopher Mark. S. Roberts argues about the history of animalization of both humans and animals (cf. Roberts 2008). As the Australian ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood puts it, “Dualism is a relation of separation and domination inscribed and naturalised in culture and characterised by radical exclusion, distancing and opposition between orders constructed as systemically higher and lower” (Plumwood 1993, pp. 47–48). Dualism results from a denied dependency on a dominated other; the relationship of denied dependency determines a logical structure in which the relation of domination shape the identity of both relata (Ibid., p. 41). Dualism is, thus, more than just a dichotomy. Plumwood claims that, “In dualistic construction, as in hierarchy, the qualities (actual or supposed), the culture, the values and the areas of life associated with the dualised other are systematically and pervasively constructed and depicted as contingent and shifting” (Ibid., p. 47). In a dualistic framework, the socially constructed concept of *humanity* has been used as a means of exclusion; human specificity has been constructed in contrast to the animal, most significantly since the rise of Western modernity, which separated human from nature and made the animal an object (Lestel 2015; Parizeau 2015, p. 163; Vilmer 2015). The dualism between humans and animals denies the very idea of specificity, as it opposes a concrete species, *the human*, to a concept, *the animal*, thereby denying the diversity of all animal species (Baratay 2015, p. 5; Burgat 2015, p. 53). That is, thinking dualistically does not only affect our view on the human species; it affects our view on other animals as well.

Non-human nature has long been seen as having only instrumental value in relation to human needs. As Plumwood argues, “It [nature] is seen as non-agentic, as passive, non-creative and inert, with action being imposed from without by an external force. It is non-mindful, being mere stuff, mere matter, devoid of any characteristics of mind or thought. It lacks all goals and purposes of its own” (Plumwood 1993, p. 110). Plumwood maintains that what defines nature is human superiority that contrasts systemically with nature in one of its many dimensions. As he puts it, “Nature, as the excluded and devalued contrast of reason, includes the emotions, the body, the passions, animality, the primitive or uncivilised, the non-human world, matter, physicality and sense experience, as well as the sphere of irrationality, of faith and madness” (Ibid., pp. 19–20). However, nature is one of the most complex words in the language (Williams 1985, p. 219). The Welsh academic, critic, and novelist Raymond Williams has argued that, “Any full history of the uses of nature would be a history of a large part of human thought” (Ibid., p. 221). In other words, defining nature depends on the historical context, in which the usage of the word reveals the complexity of human and non-human existence. For Williams, “nature” can refer to one of the following three definitions:

- (1) The essential quality and character of something;
- (2) The inherent force which directs either the world or human beings or both;
- (3) The material world itself, taken as including or not including human beings (Ibid., p. 219).

The definitions above show that nature can be conceived of as both something that includes and does *not* include humans. I do, however, want to call into question that non-human nature could be in *any way* excluded from human reality. Morton criticizes even using the word “nature” arguing that “Nature was always ‘over yonder’, alien and alienated. Just like a reflection, we can never actually reach it and touch it and belong to it” (Morton 2013, p. 5). It seems clear that the awareness of the ecological crisis has completely changed the ways we think about nature. As Morton puts it, “You can

no longer have a routine conversation about the weather with a stranger. The presence of global warming looms into the conversation like a shadow, introducing strange gaps" (Ibid., p. 99). With this, Morton means that the notion of objects of such massive scale and temporality that they exceed the perceptive capacities of humans and of which global warming is his example, challenges us to think about human and non-human relations more broadly (Morton 2013).

The novel's dystopian trope manifests, following the words of the British ecocritic and professor Greg Garrard, "the extreme moral dualism that divides the world sharply into friend and enemy" (Garrard 2004, p. 86). In my view, however, Darrieussecq's novel, in which comic and tragic elements seem mixed, also calls into question the distinction between "us" and "them" or "victim" and "evil." According to American rhetorician Stephen O'Leary, the apocalyptic scenario may be either comic or tragic: "Tragedy conceives evil in term of guilt; its mechanism of redemption is victim, its plot moves inexorably towards sacrifice and 'the cult of kill.' Comedy conceives evil not as guilt, but as error; its mechanism of redemption is recognition rather than victimization, and its plot moves not toward sacrifice but to the exposure of fallibility" (O'Leary 1994, p. 68). What is important is that Darrieussecq's novel implies that the "ecological thought" is often aestheticized, pastoralized, and simplified (cf. Morton 2010). As Morton argues, "Environmental rhetoric is too often strongly affirmative, extraverted, and masculine; it privileges speech over writing; and it simulates immediacy . . . It's sunny, straightforward, ableist, holistic, hearty, and 'healthy'" (Morton 2010, p. 16). Morton's concept of "dark ecology" brings "ambiguity", "darkness", and "irony" into ecological thinking (Id). Accordingly, the novel's "ecological thought" is not that of creating a false immediacy to the pristine nature, but that of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings (cf. Koponen 2017). This article asks how an understanding of the entangled intra-relation between humans and animals changes the anthropocentric notion of dystopia.

2. Living under the Threat of Humans

Darrieussecq has written several critical studies, short stories, plays, and novels in which a recurring theme is that of a heroine who cannot find her place in human society. *Truismes* is a story of a young female prostitute with a materialistic lifestyle who lives in a bomb-damaged, epidemic-ridden, and post-feminist Parisian-like city of the near future. There is a leading extreme right-wing party, Social-Franc-Progressisme, in the story. This party only allows a white man to lead the country. Their ideal of creating a homogeneous white nation means in practice that the defenders of human rights are locked in prison to "get rid of the rabble" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 100). It also means that all immigrants can be deported without due process, that the homeless and homosexuals can be brutally slaughtered, and that mental hospitals are burned down with people inside. In this kind of dystopian reality, non-human nature has only capitalistic value in relation to human needs, which has caused a large-scale ecological crisis. Darrieussecq's novel has also been conceived of as a dystopian satire of the 1990s rise of the French national party Front National (FN) (cf. Muirden 2008). Here, the novel ironizes the extreme ring-wing political forces, such as the Front National and its founding leader, Jean-Marie Le Pen, who has been criticized for his anti-Semitic speeches. Incidentally, since Le Pen's daughter Marine Le Pen's election as the leader of the FN in 2011, the popularity of the anti-immigrant party has grown.

In Darrieussecq's dystopian novel, the lack of an individual's agency is explained in terms of oppressive societal control, as the English professor Naomi Jacobs claims, "The citizens of dystopia are gripped in a social formation so powerful, a web of control so densely woven, that at worst they do not even know they are not free" (Jacobs 2003, p. 92). To begin with, the story begins when the female protagonist sends a job application to a massive cosmetic chain. When she manages to get an interview, the chain's director sits her on his lap and paws at her breast, and she needs to give oral sex for receiving the minimum wage for a part time employment, which turns out to be prostitution. Yet, there is irony, since the heroine delights in getting the job with low benefits: "[E]t dans le contrat il était précisé qu'au moment du déstockage annuel, j'aurais droit à des produits de beauté, les plus

grandes marques deviendraient à ma portée, les parfumes les plus chers!” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 13). [“And the contract specifically said that during the annual inventory clearance, I would be entitled to some cosmetics. I’d have a chance at getting the most famous brands, the most expensive perfumes!” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 3)]. The female narrator’s use of the exclamation point indicates her strong enthusiasm to get the job.

The heroine does not have any difficulties with post-feminist values, such as enjoying herself while working as a sex worker: “Ce n’était pas un mauvais métier. Il y avait quand même satisfactions” (Darrieussecq 1996, pp. 33–34). [“It wasn’t a bad line of work. There were some satisfactions, after all” (Darrieussecq 1997, pp. 22–23)]. At the same time, she could just as easily stay at home as a housewife: “Sans doute que le mieux pour les jeunes filles de maintenant, je me permets d’énoncer cet avis après tout ce que j’ai vécu, c’est de trouver un bon mari, qui ne boit pas, parce que la vie est dure et une femme ça ne travaille pas comme un homme, et puis ce n’est pas les hommes qui vont s’occuper des enfants, et tous les gouvernements le disent, il n’y pas assez d’enfants” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 66). [“What is doubtless best for girls of today, and I venture this opinion on the strength of my extensive experience, is to find a good husband, a teetotaler, because life is hard and a woman doesn’t work like a man, and you can’t expect men to look after the children, and there aren’t enough children, every government says so” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 52)]. The heroine’s naïve voice reflects the ways in which the feminist ideology from earlier generations has disappeared. As the French critic Shirley Jordan puts it, “Darrieussecq . . . appears to indicate that bodies of feminist knowledge have not percolated down to ordinary women: it is as if they were an irrelevance of history” (Jordan 2002, p. 146). In the words of the British cultural theorist Angela McRobbie, Darrieussecq’s novel creates a “new form of sexual contract,” which makes the heroine think that as gender equality is already once achieved and institutionalized, feminism is no longer needed (McRobbie 2009, pp. 3–8). The heroine seems to think that she has truly chosen “a life of her own” (Id). As McRobbie clarifies it, “[Y]oung women are endowed with capacity and are as a result expected to pursue specific life pathways which require participation in the workforce, which in turn permits full immersion in consumer culture” (McRobbie 2009, p. 9). That is, for the heroine, there is nothing remotely naïve about working as a sex worker, as she seems to be doing it for her own enjoyment.

However, working as a prostitute turns the heroine into an animalized object that does not hold any right to her own body: “Le directeur de la chaîne me disait que dans la parfumerie, l’essentiel est d’être toujours belle et soignée, et que j’apprécierais sans doute très étroite des blouses de travail, que cela m’irait très bien” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 11). [“The director told me that in the boutique the most important thing was to look lovely and well groomed at all times. He was sure I would approve of the employees’ uniforms, which were tight fitting and would look quite attractive on me” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 3)]. The scene points at the ways in which the normalization of pornographized culture makes the heroine try to fit an ideal of what a woman should look like by taking responsibility for her metamorphic body: “Je subtilisais les crèmes conseillées par les magazines et je les étais soigneusement sur ma peau, mais rien n’y faisait. J’étais toujours aussi fatiguée . . . En plus de développer une profonde graisse sous-cutanée ma peau devenait allergique à tout, même aux produits les plus chers” (Darrieussecq 1996, pp. 47–48). [“I swiped the products recommended by the magazines and smoothed creams carefully onto my skin, but nothing helped. I was just as fatigued . . . Besides developing a thick layer of subcutaneous fat, my skin was becoming allergic to everything, even the most expensive preparation” (Darrieussecq 1997, pp. 35–36)]. What is relevant here is that the heroine becomes allergic to beauty products at the same time as she starts having an animal-like appearance. These lines invoke the context of animal testing and the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham’s famous guideline for animal ethics, that is, “The question is not, Can they reason? nor, Can they talk? but, Can they suffer?” (Bentham in Vilmer 2015, p. viii). Yet despite her suffering, the heroine is an active subject that has a strong will to shape her body to human ideals of perfection, following the American feminists Susan Bordo and Naomi Wolf and their critical thought concerning the impact of popular culture (cf. Bordo 1993; Wolf 1991). The heroine’s constant self-monitoring practices, such as her will

to stare at her own reflection in the mirror, reveal the ways in which she starts to look at herself being looked at, which evokes the English author, critic, and painter John Berger's criticism of the ways in which women are portrayed in visual images (cf. Berger 1990). The heroine's "hetero-narcissistic" erotic mirroring, a mirroring of the self as other, turns the heroine into an object of vision (Freccero 2015, p. 114). The sow-woman continuously looks at herself as a material being, which constitutes, as I see it, a critical comment on animals as machines without a conscious mind (Sahlms 2015, pp. 22, 24).

The director is not the only one who pays attention to the heroine's body; the novel's recurring motif is that of men ogling the heroine's "appetizing" body, which reveals the ways in which men are constantly oppressing the heroine: "Il fallait toujours qu'on se mette à quatre pattes devant la glace, et qu'on pousse des cris d'animaux. Les hommes sont tout de même étranges" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 44). ["We always had to get down on all fours in front of the mirror and make animal noises. Men are really strange" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 32)]. The extract implies that the novel's metaphorical trope is describing women as animal-like. In other words, the female protagonist who becomes a sow is seen from the beginning as an animalized other in a strongly patriarchal society, in which it is nothing but a post-feminist platitude—or a *truism*—that a young woman possesses value only in an instrumental sense. The novel reveals the ways in which a process of "objectification, fragmentation, and consumption" enables the oppression of both animals and women so that they are rendered being-less in a strongly patriarchal society. As the American animal rights activist and feminist Carol J. Adams puts it, "Objectification permits an oppressor to view another being as an object. The oppressor then violates this being by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women that denies women freedom to say no, or the butchering of animals that converts animals from living breathing being into dead objects. This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption" (Adams 1990, p. 73). By way of clarification, Adams says, "Consumption is the fulfillment of oppression, the annihilation of will, of separate identity. So too with language: a subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents" (Id). The novel's name has, thus, an interesting onomatopoeic reference to two French words that are pronounced in almost the same way: *truism* and *truie*, a word that means a "sow"—a term of female abuse in many cultures (cf. Muirden 2008, p. 230).

In the novel's dystopian reality, the heroine is in many ways being animalized, but she also becomes a *real* animal. It is clearly not a coincidence that the heroine starts losing her appetite for pork in the process of becoming-animal: "Je ne pouvais plus manger de sandwich au jambon, cela me donnait des nausées, une fois même j'avais vomi au square" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 21). ["I couldn't eat ham sandwiches any more, they made me sick, and once I even threw up in the park" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 11)]. She even starts having anxiety attacks about pork: "Eh bien quand j'ai vu les rillettes je n'ai pas pu me retenir une seconde: j'ai vomi là, dans la cuisine . . . De toute la soirée je n'ai pas pu me calmer. Je tremblais, j'avais des sueurs froides qui empestaient dans tout l'appartement" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 53). ["Well when I saw the potted pork, I just threw up then and there, in the kitchen . . . I was a nervous wreck for the rest of the evening. I was shaking, and the entire apartment reeked from my cold sweats" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 40)]. One interesting feature of Darrieussecq's novel is that the motif of pork is present in the heroine's life throughout the story. For instance, the sow-woman is forced to confront an animal slaughtering in finding a book passage in which a boar realizes his own death:

C'était un livre de Knut Hamsun ou quelque chose . . . Ça me paraissait bien, à moi, comme livre, mais il y a une phrase qui m'a fait tout bizarre, ça disait, je m'en souviens encore par cœur: « Puis le couteau s'enfonce. Le valet lui donne deux petites poussées pour lui faire traverser la couenne, après quoi, c'est comme si la longue lame fondait en s'enfonçant jusqu'au manche à travers la graisse du cou. D'abord le verrat ne se rend compte de rien, il reste allongé quelques secondes à réfléchir un peu. Si! Il comprend alors qu'on le tue et hurle en cris étouffés jusqu'à ce qu'il n'en puisse plus. » Je me suis demandé ce que c'était qu'un verrat, ça m'a mis

comme une mauvaise sueur dans le dos. J'ai préféré en rire, parce que sinon j'allais vomir (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 105).

It was a book by Knut Hamsun or whoever . . . Personally, I thought it was a nice book, but there was one passage that made me feel sort of shaky, it said (I still remember it by heart): "Then the knife plunges in. The farmhand gives it two little shoves to push it through the thick skin, after which the long blade seems to melt through the neck fat as it sinks in up to the hilt. At first the boar doesn't understand a thing, he remains stretched out for the a few seconds, thinking about it. Aha! Then he realizes he is being killed and utters strangled cries until he can scream no more." I wondered what a boar was; my back was beginning to feel all clammy. I decided to laugh it off, because otherwise I was going to throw up (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 87).

Hamsun's book makes the sow-woman realize that there is no difference between utilizing an animal product and having to confront the dead animal itself. The heroine then attempts to avoid eating meat that reminds her of her own transformation from a *living* animal to *dead* meat. However, the heroine's boyfriend, Honoré, is trying to maintain control over the metamorphic heroine by forcing her to eat pork: "J'ai failli me trouver mal quand Honoré a absolument voulu me faire goûter son pécarri à l'ananas, mais j'ai réussi à prendre sur moi" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 59). ["I thought I was going to be sick when Honoré insisted that I taste his peccary à l'ananas, but I managed to control myself" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 48)]. For the heroine, the meat is the moment "when what remained hidden to us is opened up" (Broglia 2011, pp. 1–2). As the American philosopher Ron Broglia clarifies, "The animal's insides become outsides. Its depth of form becomes a surface, and its depth of being becomes the thin lifelessness of an object exposed. Meat makes the animal insides visible, and through sight the animal body becomes knowable" (Id). Consequently, pork refers to a corporeal breakdown in the distinction between what is the *self* and what is the *other*, following the Bulgarian-French feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva's thought about the human reaction to anxiety caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object (cf. Koponen 2017; Kristeva 1980). I argue that in the process of becoming-animal, the heroine confronts what has always been there, which is to say, she discovers that she is a human *animal*.

And yet, the heroine realizes that she needs to act if she wants to avoid her own death as an animal. To clarify, the sow-woman's mother, who has become a wealthy farmer engaged in raising pigs and other livestock for food, wants to make extra money by killing her daughter: "Ma mère tenait un grand couteau à la main, une bassine en cuivre pour le sang, et du papier journal pour faire brûler la couenne. 'Là au fond', elle a dit ma mère. Elle a posé la bassine et le papier journal . . . Ma mère en plus d'être un assassin était une voleuse, elle allait tuer un cochon qui ne lui appartenait" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 156). ["My mother was holding a large knife, a copper basin to catch the blood, and some newspaper for singeing the skin. 'Over there, in the back,' she said. She put down the basin and the newspaper . . . Besides being a murderer, my mother was a thief; she was going to a pig that didn't belong to her" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 134)]. The mother's determinate action makes the previous encounters with animal slaughter personal, which becomes even stronger when the heroine finds out that her mother has a relationship with her former exploiting employer from the cosmetic chain. The mother's threat is the last straw for the sow-woman, who, after being suddenly transformed more into a human-like form, shoots first her former employer and then her own mother: "[J]e le lui ai arraché des mains. J'ai tiré deux fois, la première fois sur lui, la seconde fois sur ma mère" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 157). ["I tore the gun from his shaking hands. I fired twice: first at him, then at my mother" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 134)]. The tragicomic scene raises questions about an animal's agency by pointing at the ways in which animals are realized as lacking the rational capacity to act outside their biologically determined behaviour (cf. Koponen 2017). That is, animals may not act like humans, but that is not to be conceived of as a loss of agency.

3. Looking for Better Place to Live

The metamorphic heroine is going through a crisis of identity, which reflects Julia Kristeva's notion of the *sujet en procès*, which means both the "subject-in-process" and the "subject-on-trial" (Kristeva 2008). Kristeva makes a reference to the speaking subject that does not have a fixed identity but is in the process of *becoming*. One interesting feature of Darrieussecq's writing is that she uses a female narrator who writes her own story. In this, Darrieussecq makes her female narrator relate to the French literary tradition of *écriture féminine* ("feminine writing"). Here, she follows the theorizations of the Algerian-French feminist philosopher Hélène Cixous, for whom this concept refers to a way of feminine expression which is capable of resisting the history of *phallogocentric* discourse, that women have, in short, been denied access to the agency within the possibility of self-representation. Therefore, in Cixous' view, "Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies—for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text—as into history—by her own movement" (Cixous 2010, p. 875). In writing in the tradition of *écriture féminine*, Darrieussecq is liberating her female narrators from phallogocentric discourse, enabling them to take agency in the process of constructing their identity.

In *Truismes*, Darrieussecq gives her female protagonist the chance to narrate her self-written story in her own voice. And yet, she calls into question the human way of perceiving the world by using the animal's voice: "Mais il faut que j'écrive ce livre sans plus tarder, parce que si on me retrouve dans l'état où je suis maintenant, personne ne voudra ni m'écouter ni me croire. Or tenir un stylo me donne de terribles crampes" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 9). ["But I must write this book without further delay, because if they find me in my present state, no one will listen to me or believe what I say. Simply holding a pen gives me terrible cramps" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 1)]. The metamorphosis allows the heroine to create new ways of expression. I see this represented in the heroine's relationship with language. In the process of becoming-animal, the sow-woman finds a contact with the mental hospital patients: "Je suis devenue copine avec pas mal de monde. Personne ne parlait là-dedans, tout le monde criait, chantait, bavait, mangeait à quatre pattes et ce genre de choses. On s'amusaient bien" (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 101). ["I became chummy with lots of people. No one talked in there, they all screamed, sang, drooled, ate on all fours and that kind of thing" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 83)]. The scene implies that the sow-woman is excluded from the human sphere on the grounds of lacking rational thinking. The heroine's lack of speaking skills constitutes, to my thinking, the ways in which she is not integrated into human life because she is not able to indicate to humans by a voice referring to human thought (Roberts 2008, p. 9). And yet, the scene questions the ways in which marginalized groups, such as mentally disabled people, have been animalized and stripped of their agency because they do not operate according to the laws of the dominant phallogocentric order, in accordance with the ways in which Roberts describes the process of animalization (cf. Roberts 2008). The heroine's lack of human language brings also forth the *muteness* of nature, which refers to the nature's inability to speak for itself via human language, similar to the German essayist, critic, and philosopher Walter Benjamin's claim that, "[N]aming implies the communicating muteness of things (animals) toward the word-language of man, which receives them in names" (cf. Benjamin 1996, p. 70). The novel suggests that the fact that animals do not speak, at least in the sense that humans understand language, is not to be conceived of as a loss of agency, but rather as a condition that indicates another mode of existence (Burgat 2015, p. 54).

The heroine's muteness is in service to the portrayal of a dystopian world in which she lacks the capacity to question the ways in which humans have established the means of consuming nature to the point of depletion. As the French philosopher Michel Serres states, "Through our mastery, we have become so much and so little masters of the Earth that it once again threatens to master us in turn. Through it, with it, and in it, we share one temporal destiny" (Serres 1995, pp. 33–34). In the novel's dystopian reality, human acting over non-human nature is recognized as the problematic that the heroine needs to confront, as almost all animal life is destroyed: "Où avez-vous bien pu trouver

un cochon par les temps qui courent?” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 116). [“Where did you get a pig in this day and age?” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 97)]. The passage implies that the sow-woman belongs to a species categorized as endangered, if not extinct. In this, the novel challenges the vision of continuing human progress.

As the metamorphosis proceeds, the heroine regains her speaking skills every now and then: “Je pouvais articuler à nouveau, c’était sans doute d’avoir lu tous ces mots dans les livres, ça m’avait fait comme qui dirait un entraînement” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 105). [“I could speak again, probably from having read all those words in those books, so you might say I’d had some practice” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 87)]. In what follows, the heroine starts to express herself with a voice that reflects the American literary critic and professor Barbara Claire Freeman’s notion of the “feminine sublime”, which resists categorization. This is a condition in which the subject enters in a relation with an unrepresentable otherness that, almost without exception, is gendered feminine (Freeman 1995, pp. 2–3). As Freeman clarifies it, “The feminine sublime is not a discursive strategy, technique, or literary style the female writer invests, but rather a crisis in relation to language and representation that a certain subject undergoes” (Ibid., p. 2). For Freeman, the feminine sublime makes a reference to the categorical instability of a socially constructed body of writing that bears the traces of women’s shared history of oppression (Ibid., p. 7).

The heroine’s sublime voice involves taking up a position of respect in response to an incalculable otherness (Freeman 1995, p. 11). The heroine begins to realize that the non-human world is inseparable from her own being: “[L]’air, les oiseaux, je ne sais pas, ce qui restait de la nature ça me faisait tout à coup quelque chose” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 19). [“The air, the birds—I don’t know, whatever nature was left—really affected me all of a sudden” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 10)]. The sow-woman’s focus of attention reveals changes in her perception of the environment: “Je discernais de plus en plus en mal les fumées d’Issy, les couleurs de brouillaient. Tout ce que je voyais maintenant c’était le fond très rouge du ciel, et tout le reste était en ombres noires et blanches” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 75). [“Over by Issy, it was growing harder to make out the factory smoke, the colours were running together. All I could see now was the vivid red background of the sky, while everything else was light and dark shadows” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 60)]. In becoming an animal, the sow-woman’s panoramic vision starts to increase, and gradually the limits of the city become blurred, which turn her attention toward the immense sky. That is, she is discovering, in a tangible way, that she has come into contact with a newly perceived environment in which she needs to find her place anew.

The heroine begins to feel “a violent, terrifying, delicious sense of solitude” over the dystopian city: “Il n’y avait plus rien qui me retenait dans la ville avec les gens” (Darrieussecq 1996, pp. 84–85). [“There was no longer anything to keep me in the city, among people” (Darrieussecq 1997, pp. 68–69)]. The novel’s turning point is the moment when the sow-woman begins to imagine the future: “Moi le bout des rails, ça me faisait rêver. Je me suis assise au bord de la voie et j’ai essayé de réfléchir à mon avenir . . . [J]e me mettrais à marcher le long des rails, parce qu’au bout il y avait forcément la campagne et des arbres” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 100). [“Well, looking down the tracks always started me dreaming. I sat down at the edge of the roadbed and tried to think about my future . . . I’d set out walking along the tracks, because there had to be trees and countryside at the end of the line” (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 82)]. The sow-woman is concerned with the future. She begins to expect that the current paradigm may be at an end, but what is important is that the heroine relies upon her will to survive within a new paradigm (cf. Seed 2000, p. 2).

For the heroine, identifying with the other animals allows her to escape the dystopian condition of the world: “Je me suis roulée dans mon odeur pour me tenir compagnie. Les oiseaux se sont tus. J’ai senti la nuit tomber sur ma peau. J’ai glissé du banc et j’ai dormi là, par terre, jusqu’à l’aube. Il y avait les rêves des oiseaux dans mes rêves, et le rêve que le chien avait laissé pour moi. Je n’étais pas si seule. Je ne rêvais plus de sang. Je rêvais de fougères et de terre humide. Mon corps me tenait chaud. J’étais bien” (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 85). [“I curled up in my smell to keep myself company. The birds fell silent. I slipped off the bench and slept there, on the ground, until dawn. In my dreams were

the dreams of the birds, and the dreams the dog had left for me. I was no longer so alone. I didn't dream about blood any more. I dreamed of ferns and damp earth. My body kept me warm. I was just fine" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 69)]. The heroine's focus remains no more in her own physical appearance; the sow-woman starts to identify with the non-human world, which makes her adjust her orientation toward an ecocentric perspective. The sow-woman begins to enjoy herself within *wild* nature, which here refers to what seems to be free from human activity (Freeman 1995, p. 155). This becomes apparent in the passage below:

Je ne suis pas mécontente de mon sort. La nourriture est bonne, la clairière confortable, les marcassins m'amuse. Je me laisse souvent aller. Rien n'est meilleur que la terre chaude autour de soi quand on s'éveille le matin, l'odeur de son propre corps mélangée à l'odeur de l'humus, les premières bouchées que l'on prend sans même se lever, glands, châtaignes tout ce qui a roulé dans la bauge sous les coups de patte des rêves (Darrieussecq 1996, p. 148).

I'm not unhappy with my lot. The food's good, the clearing comfortable, the young wild boars are entertaining. I often relax and enjoy myself. There's nothing better than warm earth around you when you wake up in the morning, the smell of your own body mingling with the odour of humus, the first mouthfuls you take without even getting up, gobbling acorns, chestnuts, everything that has rolled down into the wallow while you were scrabbling in your dreams (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 135).

The sow-woman moves on from thinking of herself as being part of the wild nature to enjoying her life within the cityscape (cf. Koponen 2017). Consequently, the sow-woman is not truly able to find her place among other species: "Même dans la forêt avec les autres cochons, ils me reniflent souvent avec défiance, ils sentent bien que ça continue à penser comme les hommes là-dedans. Je ne suis pas à la hauteur de leurs attentes. Je ne me plie pas assez au travail de la race, et pourtant c'est moi qui les ai débarrassés du principal péril qui les guettait" (Darrieussecq 1996, pp. 150–51). ["Even when I'm in the forest with the other pigs, they often sniff me suspiciously, sensing that human thoughts are still going on in there. I'm unable to rise to their expectations. I don't conform enough to porcine discipline, yet I'm the one who routed the chief danger that threatened them" (Darrieussecq 1997, p. 128)]. For the heroine, the other pigs are not other animals but "strange stranger." Morton defines the notion in respect to animals as follows: "This stranger isn't just strange . . . Their strangeness itself is strange. We can never absolutely figure them out. If we could, then all we would have is a ready-made box to put them in, and we could just be looking at the box, not at the strange strangers. They are intrinsically strange. Do we know for sure whether they are sentient or not? Their strangeness is part of who they are" (Morton 2010, p. 41). The heroine's wonderings reveal the ways in which other species are always *strange*, due to the fact that humans are not capable of completely reaching their inner being. That is, the novel calls into question the ideal of *going back to nature*, as there is no nature in which all humans or non-humans are not already engulfed.

4. Conclusions

Truismes is the most famous early novel of Marie Darrieussecq and was written in 1996. Through the novel, Darrieussecq depicts a dystopian vision of the world. Various dystopian elements, such as an extreme racism, sexism, and speciesism, are portrayed throughout the novel. In the novel's dystopian reality, non-human nature has only capitalistic value in relation to human needs, which has caused a large-scale ecological crisis. The dystopian background of the novel brings to mind the ways in which a dystopian fiction is often seen as a warning of human development in its many forms (Isomaa 2016). Bearing in mind the fact that humans have modified the Earth more in the past fifty years than the two centuries before that, this is clearly not an exaggeration (Delannoy 2015, p. 139). The idea of the "Anthropocene," a proposed geologic epoch, reveals the ways in which human activities have already had a significant global impact on Earth's biodiversity, ecosystems, and species extinction (Crutzen and Stoermer 2000). It can no longer be bypassed that

anthropocentric thinking, which implies a privileged separation of humans from non-human reality, has become highly problematic.

In Darrieussecq's dystopian novel, the ecological catastrophe is represented as something that has already happened, rather than as something in the future. The novel reveals the ways in which the heroine's agency is threatened by both the actions of other humans and by the large-scale ecological crisis. That is, humans affecting the non-human world and affect each other in a very profound way. In this, my reading of the novel is an attempt to contribute to the ongoing interrogation of human relations with non-human agency that is being actively conducted in contemporary scientific Western discourse. What is relevant is that Darrieussecq's novel gives the sow-woman the chance to narrate her self-written story in her own voice. By giving a narrative voice to the animal, the novel challenges the human reader to reflect on the transformation of anthropocentric orientation toward nature itself. And yet, the novel challenges the human reader to understand that the ecological crisis is not only a narrative representation, as it deeply affects the real world; the non-human world is not only the landscape surrounding humans, but that it is *in* humans, because humans and non-humans are all connected.

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Seeing and Hearing Animal Narratology



Article

An Unheard, Inhuman Music: Narrative Voice and the Question of the Animal in Kafka's "Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk"

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Abstract: In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida wonders whether it would be possible to think of the discourse of the animal in musical terms, and if so, whether one could change the key, or the tone of the music, by inserting a “flat”—a “blue note” in other words. The task would be to render audible “an unheard language or music” that would be “somewhat inhuman” but a language nonetheless. This essay pursues this intriguing proposition by means of a reading Kafka’s “Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk,” paying careful attention to the controversy regarding the status of Josephine’s vocalizations, which, moreover, is mirrored in the scientific discourse surrounding the ultrasonic songs of mice. What is at stake in rendering this inhuman music audible? And furthermore, how might we relate this debate to questions of narrative and above all to the concept of narrative “voice”? I explore these and related questions via a series of theoretical waypoints, including Paul Sheehan, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Jean-Luc Nancy, with a view to establishing some of the critical parameters of an “animal narratology,” and of zoopoetics more generally.

Keywords: narrative voice; inoperativity; singing mice; zoopoetics; anthropological machine; community; music

*Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter; therefore, ye soft pipes, play on*

—Keats

1. The Songs of Mice

In 2015, a study published in the journal *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience* reported that not only do male mice sing songs to attract females, but that these songs are syntactically complex and vary according to social context, placing mice in the same category as songbirds (Chabout et al. 2015). The principal difference is that, unlike birds, mice sing at ultrasonic frequencies (30–120 kHz), and so their songs are inaudible to the human ear. Later that same year, another study found that female mice also sing (Neunuebel et al. 2015). Both studies were widely reported in the online media (e.g., (Devlin 2015; Feltman 2015; Farrell 2015; Miller 2015)). This was not the first time singing mice had been in the news, however: in fact, ever since the pioneering 2005 study by Timothy Holy and Zhongsheng Guo first established that mouse vocalizations have the characteristics of songs—i.e., that they consist of several distinct syllables or phrases “uttered in succession and so related as to form a recognizable sequence or pattern in time” (Holy and Guo 2005, p. 2178; cf. (Arriaga 2014, p. 85))—the media have picked up on a new discovery concerning the songs of mice every few years. Evidently, there is something about these studies that captures people’s imagination. In 2011, for example, the *Smithsonian Magazine* published a piece on a North Carolina project aiming to record and study these

ultrasonic songs, remarking that “the world of rodents, long thought mostly quiet, may be full of songs, broadcast short distances, from one animal to another, songs that we still know very little about” (Dunne 2011). The comments section below the article is filled with notes by readers who either claim to have experienced the singing of mice or are simply charmed by the idea of this unheard music. One reader in particular thanks the author profusely for writing the piece because it reminds them of Franz Kafka’s final story, “Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse People”: “Thank you, thank you,” they wrote, “for giving Josephine a real voice!” (Dunne 2011).

There have been reports of such singing mice since well before it was possible to record them, and indeed before Kafka wrote his story. Alfred Brehm, in his compendious *Life of Animals* published in the 1860s, describes the phenomenon in some detail. Some people, Brehm notes, compare the singing favorably to “that of a Canary or even of a Nightingale” whereas others are less enthusiastic, for instance a certain Herr Schacht, “a well-known educator and reliable and well-informed observer,” who claims to have had a singing mouse for some time (Brehm 1895, p. 338). “Its song did not bear the slightest resemblance to the bright song of a Canary or the deep trills of a Nightingale. It was nothing but ‘a twittering, a mixture of long-drawn, squeaking, piping sounds,’ which in the quiet of night could be heard at a distance of twenty paces. The song of another Mouse, observed by Herr Mueller, another tutor, consisted of ‘soft, whistling sounds, uttered slowly or in a more lively manner, in the latter case reminding one distinctly of a bird’s song, but being much weaker’” (Brehm 1895, p. 338). In any case, Brehm concludes, it would be “more congruous to speak of ‘twittering’ Mice than of ‘singing’ ones” (Brehm 1895, p. 338).

Brehm’s evidence is mostly anecdotal, but some mice do indeed appear to sing at a pitch audible to the human ear, though it remains unclear why this should be. In a 1932 article published in the *Journal of Mammalogy*, Lee R. Dice provides a comprehensive bibliography on the subject, and concludes with the speculation that perhaps all mice sing, but that their songs are “ordinarily too high in pitch for our ears to hear,” so that we can only hear “certain rare individuals” whose vocal apparatus has been changed or deformed in some way (Dice 1932, p. 193). One such case had been described in 1912 by Charles A. Coburn, then a Harvard graduate student, who had captured a singing mouse in his home and taken it to his lab. “The sound is best described as a rapid whole-toned trill involving the tones *c* and *d*,” he writes, even supplying a musical transcription, before adding that “the quality of the tone resembled somewhat that of a fife or flute, but each tone ended with a slight throaty click” (Coburn 1912, p. 366). The mouse was captured in December 1911 and continued to sing until June of the following year. “She died in August, apparently of old age” (Coburn 1912). “During May 1912,” Coburn writes, “‘singing’ was again heard in the room in which the ‘singing’ mice had earlier been captured, but efforts to capture the ‘singer’ failed” (Coburn 1912).

Throughout, as we can see here, Coburn dutifully places the word “singing” in inverted commas, no doubt to guard against allegations of anthropomorphism. This is a practice which continues to this day, e.g., in the media coverage of the songs of mice, where every reference to ‘songs’ and ‘singing’ is routinely placed in ‘scare quotes,’ as if to indicate that these designations ‘really’ apply only to human beings, despite the fact that most people do not feel the need to mark birdsong as similarly improper. Why should this be? No doubt the aesthetic quality of birdsong is a decisive factor. Like Herr Schacht, we humans have always marveled at the beauty and precision of the nightingale’s song, and, indulging in our species narcissism, we have been able to imagine that the nightingale or the blackbird are singing *for us*. This is simply a further iteration of the general ideology of metaphysical anthropocentrism which arranges the natural world in terms of its utility for humans: cows and pigs exist only to provide us with meat, whereas songbirds provide us with aesthetic pleasure.¹ Within this worldview, the very

¹ As Justin E. H. Smith observes, this conception of animals as having a specific telos or purpose “for us” hinges on a “theory of animals” that reduces individuals to interchangeable instances of a kind. “At its most anodyne,” he writes, “this conception of animals permits us to see entire species as manifesting a single psychological trait of the sort we would ordinarily ascribe to individual human beings (e.g., slyness, laziness), but it is fundamentally no different than the conception that enables us

idea of mouse song must appear as a scandal. Not only are mice a nuisance, traditionally serving no useful function (excepting their comparatively recent use in laboratories), but their songs are inaudible to us. If they do indeed sing, it is not for our benefit or enjoyment. Or, as T. S. Eliot might have put it: I have heard these rodents singing, each to each. I do not think that they will sing to me.

Thus, the singing of mice points to a world beyond human perception, which science is only now beginning to be able to detect, but which has given rise to a cultural imaginary surrounding mouse song that hovers perennially at the boundary between sound and silence. There are several layers of ambiguity surrounding the singing of mice: first, whether it should be characterized as singing at all, and, second, whether all mice sing or only certain exceptional individuals. It will be noted that these very questions provide the narrative impetus of Kafka's "Josephine" (Kafka 2007a), the last story he wrote and the last to be published in his lifetime. There is evidence to suggest that Kafka was well-acquainted with Brehm's *Tierleben* (cf. (Middelhoff 2015)), and so it is not unlikely that he knew about singing mice—he may even have experienced them first-hand at his sister's farm in Zürau (cf. (Driscoll 2014)). When he wrote "Josephine," Kafka had essentially lost his voice to tuberculosis, and the narrative follows a trajectory from sound to silence, ending with the disappearance of Josephine's voice. Like most of Kafka's late animal stories, it has a first-person narrator, who in this case is not Josephine, but rather another mouse, presumably a male, who is describing the relationship between Josephine and the other mice. The entire narrative can be seen as an example of what Gerhard Neumann called Kafka's "gliding paradox" (Neumann 1968), a peculiarly Kafkaesque rhetorical figure whereby an initial affirmative statement—for example, "Our singer is called Josephine" (Kafka 2007a, p. 94, trans. mod.)—is gradually negated, whereupon that negation is itself negated, and so on, until all certainty has been eroded. In this story, the central tension concerns the nature and definition of Josephine's singing: having announced that Josephine is "our singer" the narrator then proceeds to question whether it really is singing, whether it isn't more of a whistling (*Pfeifen*), and then paragraph by paragraph the opening statement is questioned, qualified, and negated until there's nothing left: it's singing; no, it's more like whistling; but no actually it's not whistling; in fact it's less than the ordinary everyday whistling of all the other mice; her voice is really "nothing" (Kafka 2007a, p. 100); there is nothing musical about it, or if there is "then it is reduced to the lowest possible nothingness" (Kafka 2007a, p. 102); no of course it is whistling, "[h]ow could it be anything else? Whistling is the language of our people" (Kafka 2007a, p. 103), and so on, until at last we learn that Josephine has disappeared, at which point the narrator asks whether there will be any noticeable difference between Josephine's absence and her presence, and whether the gatherings where she used to sing weren't in fact completely silent all along.²

to see cattle as 'beef on the hoof'" (Smith 2013, p. 79). Earlier in the same article, Smith notes with reference to Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, that while "Fox" appears to serve both as a surname and a generic species designation for the protagonist, the human characters are not for their part named "Mr. Man." This, he writes, is because even in children's stories "men are always individuals, each with his or her own irreducible uniqueness, while individual animals are instantiations of a kind" (Smith 2013, p. 77). This, in turn, raises intriguing questions, which I cannot fully address here, regarding the relationship between Josephine, who, as the only named character in Kafka's story, is presented as a singular individual, and the nameless, collective "mouse folk." As Margot Norris writes, this ambiguous relationship calls into question the very possibility of telling Josephine's story at all: "If [Josephine] can be distinguished from the mouse folk [. . .], she becomes anthropomorphized, individualized, significant, and her story can be told. If not, she becomes appropriated by the mouse folk, animalized, obliterated, her story prevented" (Norris 1985, p. 122; cf. (Danta 2008, p. 161)).

² The constitutive uncertainty surrounding Josephine's vocal performances is compounded in translation, specifically with regard to the narrator's use of the word *Pfeifen*. The Muir translation, until relatively recently the only English version of the text, renders it as "piping" (Kafka 1971, p. 361), which is of course cognate with *Pfeifen* and applies to sounds produced by birds as well as musical instruments, and hence resonates nicely with the descriptions put forward by Brehm and others, but sounds rather antiquated and above all awkward as a counterpoint to "singing." Among the more recent translators, Michael Hoffmann gives it as "whistling" (Kafka 2015, p. 229), as does Peter Wortsman, who otherwise takes extraordinary liberties with his translation (Kafka 2016, p. 103). Stanley Corngold, on the other hand opts for "squeaking," explaining in a particularly revealing footnote that "the German word translated here as 'squeaking' is *pfeifen*, which, for human beings, means 'whistling'" (Kafka 2007a, p. 95n1, emphasis added). He thus gratuitously enforces the human-animal binary in a way that I would argue is at odds with the story itself. In most other respects, however, Corngold's translation is the closest to Kafka's text, and so in what follows I will refer to that edition, silently substituting "whistling" for "squeaking" throughout. At

The text as a whole resonates powerfully with questions concerning language, music, sound, and voices both human and nonhuman—questions which bear directly on the issue of “animal narratology,” and of zoopoetics in general. The animal narrator speaks on behalf of the “mouse folk” (*Volk der Mäuse*), and it is in the mode of a collective “we” that he questions Josephine’s status as the voice of the people. The text thus revolves around not only the ambiguous distinction between singing and whistling, speaking and falling silent, but ultimately also the question of narrative authority: in a sense, the text stages a conflict between the figure of the voice and the function of the *narrative* voice. Here it is certainly significant that the former, as embodied by Josephine, should be on the side of music, childishness, and femininity, all traditionally associated with the body, the sensuous, and the irrational (cf. (Gross 1985; Lubkoll 1992; Cavarero 2005)), whereas the latter presents itself as implicitly masculine, paternalistic, rational, “unmusical” (Kafka 2007a, p. 95), etc. The text itself appears to invite us to conceive of the relationship between Josephine and the community of mice in just this way, namely as that between a child (Josephine) and its father (the people) (cf. Kafka 2007a, p. 99). Within this schema, i.e., within the logic of carnophallogocentrism, the narrative voice would be the embodiment of λόγος (*logos*), on the side of the Father and the Law, while Josephine, embodying φωνή (*phōnē*), would be on the side of the animal, excluded from political life, “outside the law” (*außerhalb des Gesetzes*) (Kafka 2007a, p. 103). Yet this dichotomy is itself immediately undermined (“all of this is simply, absolutely, untrue” (Kafka 2007a, p. 103), not only because the mice themselves are repeatedly characterized as childlike and because, in Kafka, there is nothing outside the law, but also, I would argue, because the narrative voice is itself also that of an *animal*. But can one even imagine a narrative voice that is anything other than human?

2. Who Is Squeaking?

Certainly, within classical narratology, the concept of the “narrative voice” has always been implicitly human, and indeed humanist, invoking a presence and stable point of origin for the narrative, “a subjectivity intimately inhabiting the text” (Gibson 1996, p. 143), speaking to us. This is somewhat surprising, given how narratology has in almost all other respects sought to distance itself from hermeneutics and the humanist legacy. At the same time, it is perhaps understandable, at an intuitive level, given that humans, as far as we know, are the only animals that write (and read) literary texts. Even if we accept Roland Barthes’s famous objection that “writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin” (Barthes 1977, p. 142) and that therefore “in the text, only the reader speaks” (Barthes 1974, p. 151), even this voice, the voice which the reader lends to the text, will be a human voice. It is no doubt for this very reason that (literary) animal studies has for the most part ignored or avoided the term “narrative voice” when discussing the presence and agency of nonhuman animals in literary texts. And yet, the seemingly unassailable, always-already-human identity of the narrative voice causes problems on multiple levels—indeed, a salient characteristic of Kafka’s animal narratives is how they exploit these problems to their advantage.

On the one hand, *voice* (φωνή) is neither synonymous nor coextensive with *speech* (λόγος) (cf. Cavarero 2005). Hence even if the latter has served as a privileged marker of the anthropological difference, the former is shared by all sensate beings and hence not reducible to the human—nor does every human vocal utterance constitute speech.³ On the other hand, the status of language as a distinguishing feature of the human is itself highly problematic and ultimately untenable—unless, of course, one consents to define “language” in such a way that it automatically excludes “the animal.”

the same time, on a more fundamental level the difficulty of finding an adequate translation for “Pfeifen” highlights the inherent difficulty of interspecies translation in general. For more on this complex issue, see Jacques Lezra’s essay on “the animal in translation” (Lezra 2014). On the representation of animal voices in texts, see also Ben de Bruyn’s recent article on “polyphony beyond the human” (De Bruyn 2016) as well as the discussion of onomatopoeia in Anastassiya Andrianova’s article in this special issue (Andrianova 2016, pp. 9–10).

³ As Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, “there’s no speech without voice, but there *is* such a thing as voice without speech. And not just for animals, but for us as well. There’s voice before speech” (Nancy 2006, p. 38).

But there is essentially no good reason to accept such a definition, since, as Derrida, for example, insists, the “network of possibilities” that make language possible in the first place, i.e., the trace, iterability, *différance*, etc., “are themselves not only human” and hence do not “give rise to a single linear, indivisible, oppositional limit” between the human and the nonhuman (Derrida and Nancy 1995, pp. 284–85, original emphasis). So-called “human” language would thus need to be considered as fundamentally inseparable from other “forms of marking” including “the complexity of ‘animal languages,’ genetic coding” and so forth (Derrida and Nancy 1995, p. 285). Indeed, as posthumanists like Cary Wolfe never tire of emphasising, what we call human language is itself a form of prosthetic “technicity or mechanicity” (Wolfe 2010, p. 88), meaning that “‘we’ are always radically other, already in- or ahuman in our very being—not just in the evolutionary, biological, and zoological fact of our physical vulnerability and mortality, our mammalian existence[,] but also in our subjection to and constitution in the materiality and technicity of a language that is always on the scene before we are, as a precondition of our subjectivity” (Wolfe 2010, p. 89). In other words, “speech” is not reducible to the human any more than “voice” is; “speech” is not and never has been constitutively or exclusively “human” at all.

What does this mean for our conception of narrative and of the narrative voice? Perhaps we should begin by asking what we mean by “narrative,” a term which is by now so ubiquitous as to have lost all specificity. In order to counteract this diffusion, in his book *Modernism, Narrative and Humanism*, Paul Sheehan proposes the following basic definition: “Narrative, the process of storymaking and storytelling, is language arranged meaningfully over time” (Sheehan 2004, p. 9). The relationship between these three key elements—language, meaning, and time—is complex, and it is this complexity that constitutes the narrative. In narrative, disparate events are joined together to form a series through a logic of causality and mutual implication—one thing leads to another—and through this process, otherwise known as the “plot,” the events narrated become imbued with meaning. Referring to Frank Kermode’s definition of plot as “an organization that humanizes time by giving it form” (Sheehan 2004, p. 9), Sheehan concludes that narrative “is *human-shaped*. It is a uniquely human way of making order and meaning out of the raw material of existence. [...] Put simply, we tell stories about ourselves to give our lives meaning and purpose, and about our kind to maintain the crucial human/inhuman distinction” (Sheehan 2004, p. 9, original emphasis). The human, in short, is a storytelling species—an “autobiographical animal,” to coin a phrase—whose self-image and identity is constituted in and through narrative practices. This applies to myths and folktales just as it does to the discourse of Western, humanist anthropocentrism.⁴ In other words, the “human shape” that Kermode attributes to narrative as such is itself a product of particular narratives that have emphasized certain aspects while suppressing others in order to produce a sense of necessity and order. Narrative, then, is itself a version of what Giorgio Agamben calls the “anthropological machine” (Agamben 2003), a mechanism for producing the recognition of the human, via the “inclusive exclusion” of the animal.⁵ In this case, narrative is a machine for transforming contingency into necessity, chaos into meaning.

And yet, as Sheehan goes on to observe, in order for narrative to appear “human-shaped,” there has to be something in it that pushes against the suppression of contingency and difference that lies at the heart of narrative logic. Otherwise, all stories would be the same. In order to account for this, Sheehan reintroduces the concept of voice, proposing a model of literary narrative as “a composite of voice and machine,” where “machine” refers to the mechanics of plot and causality, while “voice” refers

⁴ The work of Sylvia Wynter, particularly her conception of the human as *homo narrans* (Wynter and McKittrick 2015) and her insistence on counteracting the historical “overrepresentation” of particular “genres of the human” (Wynter 2003), is an important and productive intervention into this debate, though it is beyond the scope of this essay to engage with her thought in the sustained manner it requires.

⁵ Let us remember that the inclusive exclusion of the animal within the human, of ζωή [*zōē*] within βίος [*bíos*], which is the founding gesture of politics, is structurally identical to the inclusive exclusion of φωνή [*phōnē*] within λόγος [*lógos*] (cf. Agamben 1998, pp. 7–8). By the same token, Josephine cannot be said to be “outside the law”—at most she is ‘exclusively included’ within it, as an exception.

to “difference, variation and irregularity” (Sheehan 2004, p. 11). Narrative would thus be characterized by an oscillation between necessity (machine) and contingency (voice). The more “successful” a narrative is in eliminating randomness and contingency, i.e., the more perfectly it conforms to expectations and generic conventions, the less “human” it begins to seem (Sheehan 2004, p. 11). After all, we tend to privilege stories that are not entirely predictable, that seem to depart from the norm in unexpected and innovative ways. On the other hand, if “voice” takes over, then the sense is lost. The “voice-machine complex” can, Sheehan writes, also be thought of in terms of the “play between ‘difference’ and ‘sameness’” (Sheehan 2004, p. 174). It is important to note that at *both* ends of this spectrum represent the end of meaning and signification: either through pure automatism and the “smooth functioning” of mechanicity which eliminates all difference (roughly equivalent to what Roland Barthes calls the “rustle” of language, of which more later), or through the total contingency and randomness of pure vocality, which would eliminate all sameness. Only in the interplay of these two extremes can narrative and meaning emerge.

The narrative innovations of modernist literature, Sheehan’s principal object of study, can thus be read in terms of experimentation with the “voice-machine complex.” And indeed, in order to see this complex at work, one need only open a page of Kafka, where both machines and voices play a crucial role, invariably posing a threat to narrative order, coherence, and meaning. Sheehan’s conception of narrative can thus help us to account for the internal tensions and discontinuities at work in Kafka’s writings. Nevertheless, I find it surprising that in his effort to configure both “human and nonhuman claims” (Sheehan 2004, p. 10) about language and narrative, Sheehan consistently equates “voice” with the human and “machine” with the nonhuman. Why would the contingency and disruption that he identifies with voice be uniquely human? Or, to put it another way, why would Sheehan, whose entire project runs counter to Cartesian humanism, place the animal on the side of the machine? In doing so, he runs the risk of affirming precisely the assumption that he and the modernist authors he reads call into question, namely the constitutive anthropomorphism of narrative as such. “Because narrative is voice *and* machine,” Sheehan writes, “its human countenance is complicated by a nonhuman infrastructure” (Sheehan 2004, p. 175, original emphasis). No doubt, but this supposedly human countenance is *also* complicated by the constitutively a-, in-, or more-than-human nature of the voice itself. In other words, much like Agamben’s anthropological machine, Sheehan’s voice-machine complex presents as a binary what is in fact better understood as what Dominic Pettman calls a “cybernetic triangle,” i.e., an “unholy trinity of human, animal, and machine” (Pettman 2011, p. 5). This would go some way toward liberating the voice from its unquestioned association with human(ist) agency and subjectivity.

With this in mind, let us now revisit Sheehan’s minimal definition of narrative as “language arranged meaningfully over time,” and compare it to the definition of “song” employed in the aforementioned studies of ultrasonic mouse vocalizations: “a sound of animal origin that is not both accidental and meaningless,” consisting of “a series of notes or syllables, generally of more than one type, uttered in succession and so related as to form a recognizable sequence or pattern in time” (Holy and Guo 2005, p. 2178). The resemblance is quite striking. In fact, the two definitions are practically identical, to the extent that, *mutatis mutandis*, the latter could plausibly serve as a definition of human narrative, particularly if we clarify *to whom* this purposeful (non-accidental) utterance is supposed to be meaningful (or at least not meaningless). Moreover, the rather awkward negation/conjunction “not both...and,” with its implicit distinction between intentionality and interpretation, is basically a hermeneutic theory in miniature. Conversely, if we apply Sheehan’s definition to the songs of mice, the question arises: can we identify a “voice-machine complex” there as well? Arguably, this is precisely what the 2015 study mentioned at the outset (Chabout et al. 2015) revealed: namely that the songs of mice are not, in fact, simply mechanical and repetitive, but rather vary according to complex social cues and environmental circumstances. Moreover, these ultrasonic vocalizations seem to comprise both innate and learned elements (cf. (Arriaga and Jarvis 2013)),

meaning that the individual singer is able to introduce variations and permutations into the mouse song 'canon.'

Now, to be clear, I am not claiming that there is *no difference* between an ultrasonic mouse vocalization and a literary text written by a specific human being, e.g., Franz Kafka. Nor do I wish to imply that these diverse practices exist on a scale or within a hierarchy that would once again place human modes of *poesis* and narrative 'above' those of other species. Rather, I am proposing merely that the structural similarity of these two definitions should serve as a further reminder, to quote Derrida again, that there is no "single, linear, indivisible oppositional limit" between the human and the nonhuman to be drawn on the basis of language, and that the growing scientific knowledge surrounding "the complexity of 'animal languages' [. . .] does not allow us to 'cut' once and for all where we in general would like to cut" (Derrida and Nancy 1995, p. 285). Negotiating this zone of indeterminacy, while still paying careful attention to the specifically literary character of particular texts, or indeed, to quote Susan McHugh, how animals and animality function in those texts "as a function of what we think of as their literariness" (McHugh 2011, p. 7)—that, I would say, is precisely the task of an "animal narratology," or, more broadly, of zoopoetics as I conceive of it, namely as both a mode of writing and a method of reading (cf. Driscoll 2015b). In other words, while it is crucial to acknowledge that human and nonhuman modes of communication, including speaking and singing, are evolutionarily related processes, existing on a continuum and not as a strict binary, this does not ultimately tell us very much about the specific ways these processes are at work in any given literary text. Kafka's "Josephine" is not just a story about mice: it is also, importantly, a story about *art*, about language and music; it is a literary text that is fundamentally about its own status as literature. Moreover, this self-reflexivity is inextricably bound up with its engagement with the question of the animal. This is what makes it a zoopoetic text.

This is important to keep in mind, especially because Kafka chooses to approach the essentially poetic problem of literature and writing in terms of music, and, indeed, an unheard, inhuman music. As Burkhard Müller observes, in order to grasp the core of language, Kafka must seemingly "transpose it to a place where it loses its potential to communicate and is reduced to mere sound" (Müller 2010, p. 113). The text is thus predicated on a double transposition, first from the world of humans to the world of mice, and, second, from speech to song. This double transposition is then followed by a third, namely from sound to silence, and this silence, crucially, is a silence of *writing*, a silence in words. Strictly speaking, there is no voice, either human or nonhuman, *in* the text. What the text does is take this absence of voice and transform it into a (zoo)poetic principle. Hence, although music is a central motif in his late animal stories, "Kafka is at pains to prevent it from entering the realm of audibility":

The language Kafka employs attests to the overpowering force of music without giving a hint of what it would sound like—and does so by assuming that quality itself. It plays on syntax like a musician plays on keys and strings; their mechanical properties, however, tell you nothing of the notes that stream forth. (Müller 2010, pp. 113–14)

Although he does not employ this idiom, what Müller is describing here is ultimately quite close to what Deleuze and Guattari mean by a "minor literature" which deterritorializes language and puts it to "strange and minor uses" (Deleuze and Guattari 1986, p. 17). As Deleuze writes in a late essay, authors like Kafka "invent a minor use of the major language within which they express themselves entirely; they minorize this language, much as in music, where the minor mode refers to dynamic combinations in perpetual disequilibrium" (Deleuze 1997, p. 109). Language thus modulated into a minor key (or mode) is always at the limit and on the verge of breaking down. It "stutters," as Deleuze puts it; it introduces a disturbance into the smooth functioning of language by tapping into

a line of variation or subtended modulation that brings language to this limit. And just as the new language is not external to the initial language, the asyntactic limit is not external to language as a whole: it is the outside of language, but is not outside it. It is a painting or

a piece of music, but a music of words, a painting with words, a silence in words, as if the words could now discharge their content. (Deleuze 1997, pp. 112–13)

One of the principal ways that Kafka achieves this “stuttering” is through the asignifying sounds and unheard, inhuman music that pervade especially his animal texts. In Deleuzian terms, the series of transpositions Müller describes could be conceived as successive stages of deterritorialization. First, speech is stripped of signification, “reduced to mere sound,” whereupon that sound is itself reduced to silence, but this silence is a silence *in* and *of* the text and of language itself: “a silence in words.”

3. Josephine Sings the Blues

In order to pursue this elusive, mute music that inhabits Kafka’s text further, I would like to return now to Derrida and the “question of the animal.” Near the beginning of the second part of *The Animal that Therefore I Am*, having reeled off a long list of questions concerning what is “proper” to “the animal,” Derrida wonders whether it would be possible to reimagine the discourse on the animal in musical terms, as a score or stave, and if so, whether one could change the key, or the tone of the music, by inserting a “flat” (b)—a blue note, if you will:

I wish only to indicate a tonality, some high notes [*une hauteur des notes*] that change the whole stave [*toute une portée*, also ‘litter (of animals)’]. How can the gamut [*la portée*] of questions on the being of what would be proper to the animal be changed? How can a flat, as it were, be introduced in the key of this questioning to tone it down and change its tune? [*Comment, en quelque sorte, mettre un bémol à la clé de ces interrogations et changer la musique?*]. (Derrida 2008, p. 63)

The goal of this transposition or modulation, which he says would be “contradictory” or even “impossible,” would be to “render audible” (*faire entendre*, hence also ‘comprehensible’) “an unheard language or music” (*une langue ou une musique inouïe*) that would be “somewhat inhuman,” but a *langue* nonetheless, “not those inarticulate cries or insignificant noises, howling, barking, meowing, chirping, that so many humans attribute to the animal”—and here we should of course add ‘whistling’ and ‘squeaking’—but “a language whose words, concepts, singing, and accent can finally manage to be foreign enough to everything that, in all human languages, will have harbored so many asinities [*bêtises*] concerning the so-called animal” (Derrida 2008, p. 63, trans. mod.). The first *bêtise* to eradicate would thus be the one that reserves language and singing exclusively for human beings.

The idea of the “unheard”—*l’inouï*—is a recurring figure in Derrida’s work, going all the way back to the inaudible distinction between the *e* and the *a* in “difference” and “différance” (Derrida 1982, p. 22). It is thus, fundamentally, allied with the *trace*, with the movement of *différance* and differentiation, in short, the entire “network of possibilities [. . .] without which there would be no language” (Derrida and Nancy 1995, pp. 284–85). As a consequence of this, the “unheard” or “unheard-of” (both meanings of *inouï*) refers to an alterity or exteriority that cannot be assimilated to the text of philosophy, or which philosophy cannot domesticate and organize under the established rubrics of “the Other” and “the Outside,” but which could in some way occupy a position outside, beyond, or prior to the classical dichotomies of self and other, man and animal, male and female, λόγος and φωνή—but also, importantly, beyond the very distinction between audible and inaudible, intelligible and unintelligible. The dream of rendering audible [*faire entendre*] this unheard language is “impossible” and “contradictory” precisely because, as Jean-Luc Nancy puts it, the philosopher is “someone who always hears [*entend*] [. . .], but who cannot listen [*écouter*], or who, more precisely, neutralizes listening within himself, so that he can philosophize” (Nancy 2007, p. 1). The “impossible” task thus involves not only finding a new mode of expression, but also teaching philosophy to hear and understand (*entendre*) the question (of Being, of the animal, of language) “otherwise”: “that is,” as Derrida puts it in *Voice and Phenomenon*, “within the openness of an unheard-of [*inouïe*] question that opens itself neither onto knowledge nor onto a non-knowledge as knowledge to come. In the openness of this question,

we no longer know" (Derrida 2011, p. 88, original emphasis). And it is within this space of openness and indeterminacy that an unheard, inhuman language or music might, perhaps, become audible. This unheard language thus appears to be aligned with the unheard(-of) questions that deconstruction has always sought to open up, and, in this regard, we may observe an affinity between it and that which Derrida had, in the first part of his lecture, referred to as *la pensée de l'animal*—translated as "thinking concerning the animal" (Derrida 2008, p. 7) but which could also equally refer to the thoughts of the animal itself; a thinking, in other words, that would not hinge on the a priori exclusion of "the animal." This animal thinking, he writes, "derives from [*revient à*, also: 'comes back to'] poetry. There you have a thesis: it is what philosophy has, essentially [*par essence*], had to deprive itself of. It is the difference between philosophical knowledge and poetic thinking [*une pensée poétique*]" (Derrida 2008, p. 7). Poetic thinking, by implication, is in some sense synonymous with 'animal thinking,' and both are essentially at odds with philosophical knowledge. Thus, if this unheard, inhuman language is to be made audible anywhere, it will be through literature, not philosophy.

It is not altogether surprising, then, that throughout this passage, Derrida appears secretly to be talking about Kafka. Just a few pages earlier he has reminded the audience that it was in this very *château* that he once spoke of "Freud and Kafka" (Derrida 2008, p. 55), by which he means the Château de Cerisy-la-Salle, where the conference on the "autobiographical animal" was being held, but which also clearly recalls the title of Kafka's final novel, *Das Schloss* [*The Castle*; *Le Château*]. This leads him to ponder the question of the subconscious and whether animals dream, which in turn leads him to his own dream of this unheard and inhuman music: "Before even beginning to dig into the burrow of words and images on the basis of which, in this *château*, I would dare address you, I dreamed for a long time" (Derrida 2008, p. 62). And then, just after imagining how you could sneak a "blue note" into the musical score of the question of the animal, he repeats that he is "dreaming, therefore, in the depths of an undiscoverable burrow to come" (Derrida 2008, p. 63). This is clearly a reference to another of Kafka's late animal stories, namely "The Burrow,"⁶ but I wonder if his references to music and singing aren't also a subterranean nod to Josephine, whose voice is thus literally "unheard" even in Derrida's text. The "dream," then, would be to make Josephine "sing the blues," as it were, in such a way that it would be meaningless to dispute—because *we no longer know*—whether this is singing or whistling, but that she might nevertheless be heard.

Like Derrida, the animal narrator of "The Burrow" has a dream, namely of reconstructing his burrow (which, of course, can be read as referring to the text itself), "altering it completely, swiftly, with titanic powers, in a single night, entirely unobserved, and that now it is impregnable" (Kafka 2007b, p. 168–69). This too is an "impossible" dream, as becomes clear when he is rudely awakened by "a barely audible hissing" (Kafka 2007b, p. 177)—which may in fact be more of a "whistling" (Kafka 2007b, p. 178, trans. mod.). At first he takes this noise to be produced by the small, industrious rodents—presumably mice—with whom he reluctantly shares his burrow. Ultimately, however, it proves impossible to locate the source of the disturbance because, essentially, it is the sound of the "limit," the "outside of language" which "minorization" lays bare, and which, crucially, is not located *outside* language, but rather *inside* it, pervading the rhizomatic burrow of language to such an extent that the very distinction between inside and outside is rendered inoperative. As I have suggested elsewhere (Driscoll 2015a), the noise in the burrow can be read as a form of what Roland Barthes calls the "rustle of language" [*bruissement de la langue*]:

The rustle is the noise of what is working well [*Le bruissement, c'est le bruit de ce qui marche bien*]. From which follows this paradox: the rustle denotes a limit-noise, an impossible noise, the noise of what, functioning to perfection, has no noise [*pas de bruit*]; to rustle [*bruire*] is to make audible [*faire entendre*] the very evaporation of noise: the tenuous, the

⁶ Cf. Denise Reimann's fascinating article on Kafka and "animal phonography" (Reimann 2015), in which she also makes this connection.

blurred [*brouillé*], the tremulous are received as the signs of an auditory [*sonore*] annulation. (Barthes 1986, pp. 76–77)

The “dysfunctions of language,” Barthes writes, are encapsulated in the “auditory sign [*signe sonore*]” of stammering [*bredouillement*], whereas the smooth functioning of the machine of language “is displayed in a musical being: the *rustle*” (Barthes 1986, p. 76). Without viewing these systems or models as simply or wholly compatible and coterminous, we may nevertheless note the parallels between Barthes’s binary opposition of “stammering/sonorousness/sign” vs. “rustling/music/being” and Sheehan’s voice-machine complex. Both extremes, as we noted earlier, result in a loss of meaning and narrative coherence; too much signal or too much noise. By the same token, Deleuze’s “stuttering” [*bégaiement*] would correspond, roughly, to Barthes’s “stammering” [*bredouillement*], occupying the position of linguistic “deterritorialization” and difference, working against the “reterritorializing” tendencies of the machine of language and narrative.

Do Kafka’s animal narratives “stammer” or do they “rustle”? Does Josephine “sing” or does she “whistle” (or “pipe” or “squeak”)? The point, surely, is that *we do not know*: the force of the unheard, inhuman music is such that these binary oppositions have been rendered inoperative; the voice-machine complex has broken down. The “rustle” of language is the sound of the limit, the impossible noise of the linguistic machine functioning to perfection, which means that we do not hear it: hence it is “the noise of an absence of noise” (Barthes 1986, p. 78), the sound of silence. Consequently, it is also impossible for the animal in the burrow to determine whether the noise is a hissing or a whistling, or something else, until finally he asserts that it is neither the one nor the other, but rather “a nothing” (Kafka 2007b, p. 181). (The same verdict, we will recall, is issued by the narrator-mouse with regard to Josephine’s voice.) Since it is impossible to represent this ‘rustling’ directly or, rather, to represent it in *positive* terms, in writing, Kafka’s gliding paradox overloads his narratives with negations, pushing the sentences to the limits of sense and signification, until they begin to deconstruct themselves: “Our singer is called Josephine. Anyone who has *not* heard her does *not* know the power of song. There is *no one* who is *not* carried away by her singing, a fact deserving of all the more appreciation since, by and large, people of our kind are *not* music lovers [*als unser Geschlecht im Ganzen Musik nicht liebt*]” (Kafka 2007a, p. 94, emphasis added, trans. mod.).

In addition to this general rustling or stuttering of the narrative machine, the aforementioned antagonism between the *voice* and the *narrative voice* at the heart of the narrative has significant implications for how we read both the “The Burrow” and “Josephine.” Whereas the narrative voice, even in the case of extra- and heterodiegetic (or so-called third-person) narration, is always ultimately conceived as that of an individual, speaking to us in the first-person singular,⁷ the voice, by contrast, particularly when it is associated with “rustling,” is collective and impersonal. We can see this clearly at the end of Barthes’s essay, where he describes a scene in Antonioni’s documentary *Chung Kuo, Cina* (1972), in which a group of Chinese children all read aloud from different books. This, he says, is a perfect example of rustling: “the meaning was doubly impenetrable to me, by my not knowing Chinese and by the blurring of these simultaneous readings; but I was hearing [. . .] the music, the breath, the tension, the application, in short something like a *goal* [*un but*]” (Barthes 1986, pp. 78–79, original emphasis). At the risk of seeming paranoid, here it seems to me that Barthes is also secretly referring to Kafka’s *Castle*, specifically to the scene when K. tries to call the Castle, in which the sound of the telephone line is described as “the humming of countless childlike voices” or not really humming, but rather “the singing of the most distant, of the most utterly distant, voices—as though a single, high-pitched yet strong voice had emerged out of this humming in some quite impossible way [*in einer geradezu unmöglichen Weise*, also: ‘tune’ or ‘melody’]” (Kafka 1998, p. 20). This would be a fitting

⁷ “Every narrating is, by definition, to all intents and purposes presented in the first person” (Gérard Genette, qtd. in (Gibson 1996, p. 145)).

description of Josephine's voice as well, particularly given the way she is associated with youth and childhood throughout the narrative.

In what is to my mind still one of the most compelling readings of the story, Margot Norris draws attention to the rather surprising punctuation of the title: "Josephine, the Singer or the Mouse Folk." Ordinarily, you would read the "or" as separating the two titles,⁸ but in view of the ambiguous relationship between Josephine and the rest of the mice as thematized in the text, there is also the intriguing possibility of reading "Josephine" as not only "the Singer" but also "the People" [*das Volk*]. Or, to quote Norris: "the opposition is not between Josefine and the mouse folk but between Josefine's identity as a singer and her membership in the pack. The story poses the conundrum, *Is Josefine singular or is she plural?*" (Norris 1985, p. 120, original emphasis). Is hers an individual voice, or is hers the voice of the people? In keeping with the general subversion of binary oppositions, the space of indeterminacy opened up by the 'unheard' language or music, it seems that the only possible answer is that we do not know, and that she can and must be regarded as both singular *and* plural. In fact we might so far as to say that this is the irresolvable tension that drives the entire text.

There is one point in the narrative where this tension comes close to resolution, namely when the narrator describes the dreams of the mice—which, in fact, come quite close to Derrida's dream of making Josephine's singing audible by rendering the distinction between singing and whistling inoperative. In the "scant pauses between battles," the narrator says, the mice dream of being united, "stretch[ed] out in the big, warm, communal bed. And here and there into these dreams comes the sound of Josephine's whistling; she calls it sparkling [*perlend*], we call it stuttering [*stößend*]; but whatever it is, this is where it belongs more than anywhere else, in the way that music hardly ever finds the moment that is waiting for it" (Kafka 2007a, pp. 102–3, trans. mod.). This passage is remarkable, since the narrator effectively (albeit only momentarily) concedes that this is music, no matter what you call it, because of the *effect* it has, namely that of establishing a community, where everyone may find solace in their neighbor's fur (Kafka 2007a, p. 100). "Naturally, it is a whistling," he says, "how could it be anything else? Whistling is the language of our people." They all whistle, but Josephine's whistling is the voice that emerges, impossibly, out of this collective.

The nature of Josephine's singing and her relation to the collective are not the only paradoxes of the story. At the end, the narrator says that Josephine will be forgotten, because "we [the mice] practice no history [*da wir keine Geschichte treiben*]" ((Kafka 2007a, p. 108, cf. p. 100): "in general we completely neglect historical research"), but this too is a paradox, of course, since he is indeed telling a story [*Geschichte*], even if it is a self-effacing one. And hence the foundation of the narrative, and by extension the community of mice, cannot be seen simply as "silence" or as the "absence" of voice and history, but rather history *under erasure*, preserved in its negation: a "no-history." By the same token, at the beginning of the story, the narrator informs us that even though the mice are thoroughly unmusical, they nevertheless have an "inkling" [*Ahnung*] of what song is, and that some ancient songs have been preserved, although, of course, "no one can sing them anymore" (Kafka 2007a, p. 95). But in any case, Josephine's singing bears no resemblance to these songs of legend. The entire narrative is thus framed in terms of a forgotten or erased communal history, which is nevertheless preserved as an "inkling" that can only be described in negative terms: it is *not* like Josephine's singing, but *no one* can say what it *is* like.⁹

4. Mouse, Interrupted

In conclusion, then, I would like to suggest—all too briefly—that Josephine's ambiguously singular-plural identity and her status as the singer of her community resonates quite powerfully

⁸ And, indeed, with this exception of Corngold's, all the aforementioned English translations 'correct' or normalize this unorthodox punctuation.

⁹ In this context, we may see how what Derrida refers to as "Kafka's vast zoopoetics" relates to what, a couple of lines later, he calls his own "negative zootheology" (Derrida 2008, p. 6).

with Jean-Luc Nancy's discussion of founding myths (or legends) in *The Inoperative Community*. All community, he writes, is founded on myth, and all myth is "the myth of community" (Nancy 1991, p. 51), which is to say that it carries with it a sense of completion or fulfillment. This is true both of ancient myths and folktales as well as the more modern myths or "grand narratives" of humanist anthropocentrism: "Myth, in short, is the transcendental autofiguration of nature and of humanity, or more exactly the autofiguration—or the autoimagination—of nature as humanity and of humanity as nature" (Nancy 1991, p. 54). In modernity, this form of immanent, totalizing community has become impossible, co-opted by fascist totalitarianism. The only alternative, however, seems to be liberal humanist individualism, which is synonymous with capitalist exploitation and the myth of progress. Thus, the only hope, as Nancy sees it, is to "interrupt" the myth of community, but to do so without negating it entirely, i.e., without turning it into complete silence, say, since this too can be appropriated and put to work for the dialectical progression towards totality. The term he gives to this interruption that forestalls the putting to work of myth is "inoperativity" (*désœuvrement*): not total silence, but rather the absence or the interruption of sound.

In the interruption of myth something makes itself heard, namely, what remains of myth when it is interrupted—and which is nothing if not the very voice of interruption, if we can say this.

This voice is the *voice of community*, [. . .] of the interrupted community, the voice of the incomplete, exposed community speaking as myth without being in any respect mythic speech. [. . .] When a voice, or music, is suddenly interrupted, one hears just at that instant something else, a mixture of various silences and noises that had been covered over by the sound, but in this something else one hears again the voice or the music that has become in a way *the voice or the music of its own interruption*: a kind of echo, but one that does not repeat that of which it is the reverberation.¹⁰ (Nancy 1991, p. 62, emphasis added)

"A name has been given to this voice of interruption," Nancy continues, and that name is "literature" (Nancy 1991, p. 63). Here we seem to encounter an aporia in Nancy's conception of the inoperative community. On the one hand, he insists that community, as he conceives of it, which is ontologically prior to the theme of man as a *zoon politikon*—and hence prior to the distinction between *logos* and *phoné*—is not limited to "man" and does not exclude "the animal" (Nancy 1991, p. 28). On the other hand, he appears to exclude "the animal" once more by placing "literature" at the heart of this inoperative community. Nancy is the first to admit that he "[does] not reserve any special place for animals" in his world (Derrida and Nancy 2014, p. 84), but only because for him the relevant category is "living beings," which includes both so-called 'human' and 'nonhuman' animals as well as trees and plants. Hence, the apparent anthropocentrism of his emphasis on literature can be at least partially remedied once we understand that "literature" for Nancy does not mean specific "literary texts" or the literary canon, or anything that is clearly specific to human cultures and practices. Rather, the point is that the "literary" as such, its singularity, is the interruption of the myth of community. Nothing can follow from it: "this inaugural act founds nothing, entails no establishing, governs no exchange; no history of community is engendered by it" (Nancy 1991, p. 68). Or, in other words, through the "singular eruption" (Nancy 1991, p. 68.) of this "nothing" of a voice, "we" practice "no history." Hence this voice does not found a new myth or a new homogeneous community, but is always at the limit (Nancy 1991, p. 67), and this limit can and must also be read as the "abyssal limit" (Derrida 2008, p. 12) between "man" and "animal." Hence, perhaps we can risk positing that in order for literature to be the "voice" of a community that does not exclude "the animal," in order for this inoperative community to call into question precisely that distinction (without, however, claiming

¹⁰ As I have argued elsewhere (cf. Driscoll 2011), this kind of echo that is not a repetition is itself a foundational principle of Kafka's poetics.

to have overcome or abolished it, which would, again, plunge us into the realm of mythology), this literature must be *zoopoetic*. Perhaps this is what Kafka's story reveals: Josephine's voice is the silent voice of an inoperative, inhuman community, singing the music of its own interruption. And what is this other than the unheard, inhuman music Derrida was dreaming of? Perhaps, then, it is not a question of inserting a *flat* into the score, but rather a *rest*. And if we listen closely, if we learn to listen "otherwise," we may be able to hear that the rest is not silence, but the interruption of song.

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Article

'In The Empire of the Senses' and the Narrative Horizons of Comics

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Abstract: With their 1980s independent comics series *The Puma Blues*, writer Stephen Murphy and artist Michael Zulli presented a foreboding sci-fi vision of ecological catastrophe in a near-future USA, where mutated manta rays fly the skies, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse roam the desert sands of the southwest and imminent nuclear devastation looms. Yet for all its pessimism, the series (in 2015 expanded, completed and reissued through Dover Press) has rightly earned critical accolades for Zulli's extraordinary nature drawing, in particular of animals. The chapter "In the Empire of the Senses" puts Zulli's stunning nature work most fully on display, utilizing comics techniques such as line work, framing, panel progression and sound effects to create the illusion of a puma's nighttime hunt, often from its perception-rich point of view. Throughout the series, animal and non-human experience/umwelt receives a degree of attention rarely seen in comics, a genre more popularly known for superheroes and anthropomorphized "funny animal" stories. Through a close reading of "In the Empire of the Senses," the paper explores Murphy and Zulli's bid to depict animal ontology through comics' unique capacities, contrasting their approach with that of cinema, viz. Bill Viola's avant garde ethnographic documentary *I Do Not What It Is I Am Like* (1986). My analysis has implications for narratology, the potential of comics' representational strategies and for the depiction of non-human experience more generally.

Keywords: comics; animals; narratology; cinema; sound effects; science fiction

"[M]oral philosophy functions, by and large, within an implicit anthropocentric, subject-centered model, and in order to make a case that can gain a hearing within that model, one has to speak its language and accede to its demands. Of course, it is precisely that moral model, language and demands that have been used to deny animals basic moral standing for centuries . . . ". (Calarco 2008, p. 9)

"If the animal is celebrated it is as a sign but not as a body". (Burt 2012, p. 26)

1. Introduction

With their independent comics series *The Puma Blues* (1986–1989), writer Stephen Murphy and artist Michael Zulli presented a foreboding sci-fi vision of ecological catastrophe in a near-future USA, where mutated manta rays fly the skies, the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse roam the southwest desert sands and imminent nuclear devastation looms. Yet for all its pessimism, *The Puma Blues* (in 2015 completed, expanded and reissued through Dover Press [see (Murphy and Zulli 2015)]) achieved legendary status among knowing fans as a cult work *par excellence* for its lyricism, fractured experimental narrative and Zulli's extraordinary nature drawing, especially of animals. As *Rolling*

Stone put it, “Puma Blues is John J. Audubon listening to Crass and dreaming about the Book of Revelations” (Rolling Stone 2014).¹

But the series’ achievements transcend the artistic. As the first project from maverick publisher Dave Sim’s Aardvark One International, whose alternative publishing model challenged the monopolist comics distributor Diamond—eventually leading to the series’ premature cancellation²—*The Puma Blues* served as full-fledged community space for a sort of gonzo environmentalist politics.³ The paratextual content regularly included in its 23 issues, such as “Notes on the Environment,” “Blue Notes” and “The Fraying Weave,” reported on deforestation, species extinction and problems related to global warming (just then seeing its first glimmers in US public consciousness).⁴ On its letters page, “Blahblahblah,” eco-warriors clashed with enviro-skeptics while animal lovers and concerned comics fans voiced their worries over the planet.⁵

Throughout the series, animal experience saw a degree of attention rarely vouchsafed in comics (a medium more popularly known for superheroes and anthropomorphized “funny animal” stories), in particular through a recurring, unnamed puma character. The early episode “In the Empire of the Senses” (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #5) puts Murphy and Zulli’s commitment to the representation of non-human ontology most fully on display, deploying comics techniques such as line work, framing, panel progression and sound effects for a bravura depiction of the mountain lion’s nighttime hunt, often from its own perception-rich point of view. In so doing, the authors demonstrate not only how a comics focalization on an animal protagonist alters the representational stakes. Their experiment in overwriting readerly preconceptions about how graphic narrative communicates (including “across” the species barrier) carries implications for the capacities of the medium itself, at the same time that it reasserts the very real limits involved in representing a non-human *umwelt*.

In exploring such implications and limits, this essay carries out a close reading of “In the Empire of the Senses,” contrasting its approach with those of ethology, Japanese manga and experimental cinema.

2. Empire of the Ghost Cat

Puma concolor, the most successful and adaptable land predator of the Western hemisphere, thrived there until the conquest and settlement of the ‘New World’. By the 1930s they were believed eradicated from Eastern North America, despite anecdotal reports (Hunter 2006/2007, p. 20).⁶ Their impressive size (specimens often exceed 200 pounds), solitary nature and unmatched stealth have led to a legendary reputation as “ghost cats,” both among native peoples and their conquerors.

¹ Critical reviews uniformly echo the fan discourses. Tim O’Neil of *A.V. Club* calls it “an environmental fable,” effusing: “It seems almost lazy to call the work *sui generis*, but nothing really serves to adequately summarize such a surpassingly odd but also supremely affecting work... it eventually grows to encompass pseudo-autobiography, New Age mysticism, conspiracy literature, UFO-logy, and natural history” (O’Neil 2016). *The Comics Journal*’s Alex Dueben calls it the “missing link—a pop culture precursor to DC’s Vertigo line, *The X Files*, *Twin Peaks* and a thousand other creative works” (Dueben 2016b); while Nerdy Show also emphasizes the series’ wide-ranging influences: “*Transmetropolitan* meets *Do Androids Dream Of Electric Sheep*, liberally dipped in the grittier side of the 1980s and paired with John Audubon-style nature art” (Nerdy Show).

² See the series’ own coverage in *The Puma Blues* (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #16, March 1988) and “Aardvark-Diamond Chronology” (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #20, September 1988), and (Bissette 2015, pp. 532–35).

³ Zulli called *The Puma Blues* “sort of a shot across the bow to wake the fuck up” (Dueben 2016a).

⁴ In a section called “Blue, Blue Oceans,” Murphy sets down a list of sobering statistics, e.g., “lifespan of a plastic six-pack ring, in years: 450” (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #15, February 1988, emphasis in original); “Notes on the Environment” informs: “The United States Supreme Court handed down a decision limiting the ability of citizens to sue polluters for past violations of the Federal Clean Water Act, thus giving industrialists a measure of protection against suits brought by environmental groups . . .” (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #14, January 1988).

⁵ “Blahblahblah” (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #16, March 1988) devoted a section to reader responses to a previous letter-writer’s contention: “I think environmentalism is a lost cause.”

⁶ Despite occasional sightings of specimens crossing over from other regions, the US Fish and Wildlife Service declared the eastern cougar extinct in 2011 (Bolen 2013, p. 37). In part due to increased sightings in Ontario, the Canadian government in 1971 proclaimed the species “endangered” after earlier saying it had disappeared entirely. “There was a time that if you reported a cougar, it was like you reported a flying saucer,” declared an official of the Canadian Ministry of Natural Resources in 1968 (Hunter 2006/2007, p. 19). An ironic statement, considering *The Puma Blues*’ ufological predilections.

“Even its name defies confinement: Generations of hunters have dubbed it cougar, panther, puma, painter, catamount, and more,” writes *National Geographic* (Dutcher 1992, p. 42).⁷

As far back as the 19th century, naturalists were observing the “American lion’s” shyness around humans. “The puma does not ordinarily attack men, but, on the contrary, when surprised attempts to flee from them,” noted Frederick True in 1892, adding, “The puma seeks his prey chiefly at dawn and twilight and under cover of night . . .” (True 1892, p. 170).⁸ More recent researchers have supplemented and augmented that picture. An observational study in California’s Cuyamaco Rancho State Park found “pumas generally showed opposite activity patterns to human visitors,” likely because “puma activity is most influenced by the activity patterns and periods of vulnerability of deer, the major prey of puma” (Sweanor et al. 2008, pp. 1080–82).⁹

Between 1890 and 2005 only about 117 puma attacks on humans were officially documented across the US and Canada. However, over half those attacks had occurred in the previous 16 years. Prior to the CRST study, the park had recorded 18 aggressive puma incidents, including two attacks and one human death, all in the 1990s (Sweanor et al. 2008, p. 1076). Presumably due to human encroachment into the cat’s habitats, the number of dangerous encounters was increasing. (And of course, ranchers had long vilified the animal for taking its cattle, sheep and even horse colts, and had actively sought to eliminate it.)¹⁰

All the same, Sweanor and her collaborators insist that most pumas most of the time will retreat from people; in another field study, they reported that “only 9 percent of approaches to within 50 m resulted in a threat response” (Sweanor et al. 2005, p. 911). They did caution against unwarranted generalizations, however:

Some individuals never showed a threat response, even though they were approached multiple times; others gave threat responses during the first and only approach. We could not predict whether a puma that behaved one way during an approach would behave in a similar way during a subsequent approach (Sweanor et al. 2005, p. 912).

Despite sensationalistic accounts in the mass media, human-cougar run-ins remain rare, deaths from same exceedingly so. A portrait emerges of a quiet, unobtrusive killer, leery of people, content to hunt its preferred quarry of deer, antelope and sheep, though prepared to react with deadly force if cornered, a “ghost” living an unglimped existence parallel to that of humans. A portrait not unlike that painted by wildlife journalist Ben East:

A pioneer farmer, walking a woods-bordered wagon road on the way home to his isolated cabin in the dark of night, could never be sure that a cougar was not keeping pace with him in the timber a few yards away, slinking through the undergrowth with no more commotion than drifting smoke, itself unseen but measuring with its big yellow eyes each step the man took. It was a chilling thought (East 1979, p. 20).

The setting and circumstances described by East oddly mirror those found in the early portions of *The Puma Blues*—albeit without the science fiction sheen. Gavia Immer,¹¹ a government agent stationed by the Quabbin Reservoir in rural Massachusetts in a future 1997, spends his days monitoring the water for signs of acid rain and searching the forest for mutated airborne manta rays and other fauna.

⁷ Disagreements persist even among scientists on the proper designation for the animal. See (Hunter 2006/2007, p. 21).

⁸ Human-on-cougar violence of course occurred much more often than the reverse. Then-president Theodore Roosevelt killed a Tom weighing 227 pounds in Colorado in 1901 (East 1979, p. 51).

⁹ The study did indicate a variation in movements based on sex: “Male pumas in CRSP traveled 1.7–2.8 times greater distances than females (mean of means) during crepuscular and night periods, when pumas were most active” (Sweanor et al. 2008, p. 1079).

¹⁰ Throughout the text I elect to use the pronoun “it” when referring to animals, as a marker of their non-human status. I wish to express my thanks to the article’s anonymous reviewers who helped me clarify my own position on this and other relevant issues.

¹¹ Latin for “common loon”; see (Dueben 2016b).

The animals have been altered by lingering nuclear radiation from a blast which destroyed the Bronx, New York. When he finds them, he uses a matter “transducer” to teleport them to an undisclosed location. Most of the time, however, Gavia has little to do. Suffering from a melancholy disposition, he falls into something like full depression while mourning his deceased father.¹² The series in its first phase shows Gavia in his lonely cabin, speaking to his mother via a video-phone; drinking; listening to Iggy Pop’s *Cry for Love* on headphones; interacting with Jack, a trespasser on the grounds; and watching his late father’s paranoid, UFO-obsessed experimental videos.¹³ Unbeknownst to our young hero, a puma lives and stalks the environs, virtually under his nose (at one point standing immediately behind him) (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 7).¹⁴ Gavia never notices his “ghost” companion.¹⁵

Here and throughout “In the Empire of the Senses,”¹⁶ the anonymous cougar adheres to the broad behavioral parameters for its species sketched in the ethological discourses we have sampled. Indeed, the episode deserves its reputation as a groundbreaking “hyper-real” comics exploration of animal subjectivity. The authors produce an immersive reading experience grounded in a “direct” engagement with the natural world, effected through the unique communicative capacities of graphic narrative. As Murphy explained to an interviewer:

Night. What happens at night in an island wilderness like the Quabbin? That was the starting point. The issue, like certain others, was an experiment with narrative. Could we answer that question while using wildlife and their various vocals as a means of telling a story? As a starting point I used an experience of mine where I’d snuck up on and scared a beaver, prompting the beaver to immediately slap its tail against the water surface in a loud clap in order to warn other beavers of my presence. I then wrote a script centered on the puma making its way through a very noisy night in the Quabbin watershed—an empire of the senses. If you’ve ever spent a night out in true wilderness, especially in spring, it can be really loud. That’s what we were trying to capture (Dueben 2016b).

Apart from a brief framing sequence (addressed further below), the episode remains steadfastly within a non-human milieu for 17 unbroken pages. We follow the puma figure as it strides through a nighttime forest alive with sound and movement, encountering chirping crickets, warring raccoons and a splashing beaver, which spoils its hunt of two deer. The cat seems to lash out at the interloper, who vanishes underwater. The cougar ends up satiating its hunger with the scavenged carcass of some unidentified animal. The simple plot belies Murphy and Zulli’s remarkable technical achievement with “In the Empire of the Senses.” I will examine three key facets of their representational strategy: Time, Sound and Agency.

Comics scholars have long noted an irreducible ambiguity involved in the medium’s depiction of time. Briefly, they tend to describe the comics panel’s immediate function as one of conveying a temporal “unit” of a highly flexible and subjective nature, which combines with other panels (both contiguous, on the same page and throughout a given work) to produce narrative flow. In this

¹² Many of these details, including the late father, follow Murphy’s own biography. See (Bissette 2015, p. 531) and Murphy’s blog *Contains Traces Of* at <http://containstracesof.blogspot.ca>.

¹³ Other characters, including the patrician Ms. Malcolmson and her android chauffeur Ernest, and a loose plot which eventually takes Gavia to a nuclear facility in the deserts of Nevada, and in the conclusion, to Alaska, lie beyond the scope of this essay.

¹⁴ All further references to *The Puma Blues* come from the 2015 Dover collected volume.

¹⁵ East reports a cougar following a man for over a mile and even watching him have lunch for an hour, unnoticed (East 1979, p. 19).

¹⁶ Murphy and Zulli derived the title from the British musician Bill Nelson’s song of the same name, which appears on the 1982 album *The Love That Whirls (Diary of a Thinking Heart)*. It features these relevant lines: “Is there life beyond the curtain?/ All these things are so uncertain . . . /in the empire of the senses,/in the empire of the senses . . . ” The phrase also recalls the morbidly erotic arthouse film *In the Realm of the Senses* (Oshima 1976).

process, textual as well as graphic elements together impart a sense of reader-determined duration.¹⁷ For example, as Scott McCloud writes, “For sound effects, we extrapolate from our experiences of sounds in the real world—the panel lasts at least as long as the sound to which the effect refers” (McCloud 2006, p. 109).¹⁸ Thierry Groensteen puts it perhaps more lyrically:

[C]omics, in displaying intervals (in the same way as persistence of vision erases the discretization of the cinematic medium) rhythmically distributes the tale that is entrusted to it. To ignore speed—its images are immobile and no voice imprints a delivery in dialogue—does not suggest any less of a cadenced reading, or an operation given rhythm by the crossing of the frames . . . Each new panel hastens the story and, simultaneously holds it back. The frame is the agent of this double maneuver of progression/retention (Groensteen 2007, p. 45).

“In the Empire of the Senses” very much partakes of comics’ “progression/retention” dynamic, though here premised on a non-human consciousness modality. The lack of dialogue (in the conventional sense), repetitive page designs, nighttime setting and narrative languors evoke an ambience of suspension, even as events unfold. Most panels take up the entire length of the page, in four- and five-tier arrangements, creating a cinematic “wide-screen.” Zulli’s black and white pen technique, supplemented with zipatone and other graying effects, renders the puma’s hunt mysterious and sensual, an atmosphere accentuated by unusually wide gutters between panels, which accommodate sound effects. For long stretches, nothing and everything happens in a world only partly glimpsed through nocturnal murk, but filled with noise.

The “timeless” mood manifests from the first frame of the “hunt” sequence, as we observe a manta ray gliding above the Quabbin Reservoir, full moon casting shadow-reflections of coniferous trees and mountains onto the ripples. The mutant has an airborne close encounter with an owl before darting off, its body momentarily obscuring a curious puma who looks on from shore (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 100). The imaginary flying creature (not seen again until the end of the episode) thus frames and “reveals” the naturalistic milieu opening up before our eyes.

The cougar, still looking up, starts to move off but stops short, seeming to contemplate some crickets chirping in its path. It dangles a paw at them and leaves the shore, loping into the forest, closely watched by what appears to be a weasel (Murphy and Zulli 2015, pp. 101–2). The panels grow progressively larger and more square; we see the puma in a half-page frame discovering deer tracks, lowering itself to the ground (it could also be stretching). A landscape of the moon over the reservoir,¹⁹ which punctuates the action, here brings the opening “chapter” to a close (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 103).

How long does the cougar regard the flying manta ray? How much time does it accord the crickets at its feet? How many minutes or hours pass before it stumbles on the deer tracks?²⁰ The comics reading experience, fueled by the psychological engagement of a (human) reader, offers no set answers; the effect is very much heightened by the lack of a *homo sapiens* protagonist, or even narrator.²¹ Neither the content of the panels nor the spaces between them (the gutters) supply definitive clues as to timeline or a chain of actions—we don’t even know for sure if we are witnessing the same night,

¹⁷ Of course, panels act in conjunction—and often in tension—with myriad other devices, as Charles Hatfield has written: “the single image functions as both a point on an imagined timeline—a self-contained moment substituting for the moment before it, and anticipating the moment to come—and an element of global page design” (Hatfield 2009, p. 140).

¹⁸ For a similar, if more complicated, view, see (Cohn 2010).

¹⁹ The first of these landscapes depicts the reflection of the moon unrealistically high, so that it encroaches on the mountains’ reflection (the effect is not as stark in subsequent landscapes). Zulli presumably drew it that way to underscore the sequence’s subtle irreality (?) in light of the conclusion.

²⁰ As McCloud writes, “Silence has the effect of removing a panel from any particular span of time . . . Silence also allows readers to step off the twin conveyor belts of plot and dialogue long enough to let their eyes wander and explore your world, instead of viewing it as nothing more than a passing backdrop” (McCloud 2006, pp. 164–65)

²¹ For example, Alan Moore, Steve Bissette and Zulli’s short story “Act of Faith,” set in the *Puma Blues* universe, achieves a very different, more human-centered effect through a narrator commenting on the rays’ behavior. See (Alaniz 2008).

or following the same puma! Put in the position of contending with a non-human focalization, the consumer of “In The Empire of the Senses” must draw their own conclusions about such matters much more so than when reading, say, *Donald Duck*.

Murphy and Zulli augment the defamiliarization still further in moments when they seem to abandon narrative altogether. At one point, they present eight adjacent portraits of various fauna—weasel, raccoon, frog, wolf, moth, owl, katydid, cougar—once more set off by the full moon/reservoir landscape (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 107). Though the reader understands some of them to be vocalizing (the owl “*hoo hooos*”), their sound effects appear separate from the image, beneath them in the wide gutters. Consigning the sound to a separate “track” allows for the panels to remain paradoxically “silent.” While, in conjunction with the preceding page, the “portraits” can be read as reaction shots (which I address in my conclusion), nonetheless these “frozen” panels bear a striking resemblance to nature photographs or even postage stamps (a similarity enhanced by their juxtaposition on (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 107)). They congeal into a sort of visual poetry made up of what McCloud calls “aspect-to-aspect” panel transitions (McCloud 1993, pp. 72, 80–81) which retard story flow in favor of some “natural” tempo.

Even in more narrative-driven “sub-plots” to the puma’s wanderings, like the dramatic instant when a life ends, the authors break down the action in such a way as to confuse a straightforward linear continuity. In one bottom panel/tier, we see stylized “sonar” waves²² wash over a dragonfly perched on a stump. At the top of the next page, a bat swoops down to snatch it, claws mere millimeters from prey (Murphy and Zulli 2015, pp. 109–10). Murphy and Zulli’s “death by page-turn” interrupts the action in mid-kill, taking the reader momentarily out of the storyworld for the duration of the page-flip (or if you will, the “hypergutter”), casting even more doubt on the precise time allotted. A bat zeroes in on its meal, then grabs at it, all over the course of turning the page, the dragonfly’s final milliseconds captured in “snapshot.” I maintain that such sequences in *The Puma Blues* do much to, as Steve Bissette puts it, “steep the reader in the rhythms of animal lives” (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 529). In so doing they pose numerous challenges to the anthropocentric norms of comics reading—while tapping techniques unique to the comics medium for precisely those effects.

“Empire” utilizes another psychologically engaged, highly immersive narrative strategy: sound effects. The use of the wide gutters as an ambient “soundtrack” renders creatures seen and unseen, on- and off-panel, uncommonly “alive”: the calls of birds, the splash of fish, the sniffing of deer, the grunt of the cougar. This running soundscape appears as phonetic spellings, mostly machine-printed,²³ highlighting the repetitive nature of those sounds which form a backdrop to the puma’s hunt throughout the night. The onomatopoeic “tsip tsip” of crickets and the “peep peep” of birds, especially, pervade the chapter, and the authors vary the quality of their din through capitalization, as for example on page 111: “tsip TSIP tsip TSIN peep tsip TSIP tsip TSIP tsip TSIP peep” (emphasis and spelling in original). By contrast, the animals *not* making sounds stand out: the spying weasel, the hiding rabbit.

Variations of the unusual sound effect “KKSCHH!” bookend the nocturnal hunt sequence, at pages 100 and 116—these signal the presence of the flying mutant manta.²⁴ But the stylized letters of this effect (inspired by Japanese orthography) strongly hint at the provenance of “Empire’s” approach to sound: Japanese manga comics. In fact, the chapter seems a consciously transnational attempt to replicate the representational conventions of the world’s most developed comics culture for domestic, “documentary” goals.

Indeed, as argued by pioneering US manga scholar Frederik L. Schodt, “It is in the realm of sound effects that the Japanese language performs magic . . . [manga] artists have wrought miracles of

²² They resemble the “radar” grapheme from the Marvel superhero series *Daredevil* (launched Lee and Everett 1962).

²³ Most mainstream comics at the time used hand-lettering, as did *The Puma Blues* for its word balloons and sound effects in chapters other than “Empire.” As Murphy explained: “It was the only time that I had a hand in the art, in that I helped Michael paste in all those various sound effects over the course of a very long afternoon. But it was fun” (Dueben 2016b).

²⁴ Though it remains unclear whether the sound effect conveys the glide of the manta through the air, or the flap of its wings. Such indeterminacy underscores the creature’s “unnatural,” imagined status.

paradox: the use of sound to depict silent activities and emotions” (Schodt 1983, p. 23). Strategies that marry Japanese’s extravagant number of onomatopoeic forms (far more than in English)²⁵ with the visual pliancy of the language’s writing system produce a rich descriptive field in manga storyworlds, which as Robert S. Petersen writes, “convey the essence of lived sensations by using the sound-like experience to fuse the sign/icon into a single sensation” (Petersen 2007, p. 578). Writing on the “acoustics” of manga, Petersen maintains that works which fully exploit such aesthetic potentialities yield what he calls a Narrative Erotics—moments “when the narrative becomes embodied through a sensual experience,” often prompting the reader to slow down to savor the full effect. “Narrative erotics create an animated interior for the story to live within, allowing it to become more evocative and memorable” he writes. “This presence is not in opposition to meaning; rather it creates a space for meaning to accrue” (Petersen 2007, p. 580).

Petersen’s insights on sound in manga have an especial relevance for “Empire,” in which the soundscape lends depth and vividness to innumerable actions, from the plain (“SHLAPP!” of a beaver’s tail on water, deer loudly escaping through underbrush (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 112)) to the more subtle (the puma panting, then regaining its breath after exertion: “HHUF HHUF hut-hut u!” (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 114)) to the barely “heard” (the beaver’s near-silent response [“wff”] to the cat’s approach, before it quickly slips underwater [“SSPLLIICH”] (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 113)). As noted, Murphy and Zulli also deftly deploy the *absence* of sound: the “page-turn death” of the dragonfly has no sound effect attached (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 110); the weasel seems to silently catch the rabbit (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 113). Finally, style, size and positioning of the sound effects text has a close relationship to such physical/spatial characteristics as loudness and nearness: the “wff” of the beaver accompanies a panel of the animal in close-up, while its “SSPLLIICH” of underwater escape we see in long shot from “afar”—consequently the text beneath appears smaller. The authors take the reader’s relative “distance” from the proceedings into account, inflecting the perception of events on a near-subliminal level.

But for all its incorporation of a transnational “manga” sensibility, I want to emphasize, “Empire” deviates sharply from most manga proper in that its sound effects, as mentioned, are not visually incorporated into the panels themselves, but remain in the “gutter track.” This leads to, firstly, the oxymoronic effect of “silent” panels suffused with sound. At the same time, such a design invokes an earlier, more “primeval” stage in the historical development of comics, to an era before dialogue appeared in speech balloons within the panel, but instead as text beneath. (In a dangerously broad generalization, we can trace the change to turn-of-the-20th century US newspaper comics.)²⁶ The chapter thus yokes its representation of nature to both national and historical “others”—a point which will come up again further below.

We may take the “raccoons” sequence as emblematic of both the breakthroughs and shortcomings of “Empire’s” manga-derived approach to sound. The puma comes to an overlook, as the cricket sounds intersperse with “hhiiiiissss” and “rrrooo.” The cat sees two raccoons circling each other in a clearing, about to come to blows. The soundtrack reads: “RROOowl GGGrrllll HSSSt.” In the third panel, the cougar interrupts the contretemps, enunciating “mmrroowwsssss uuurrf.” Panel four shows the raccoons wide-eyed, in shock at the interloper; the gutter beneath signals not sound but emotion: “!?” “!?” (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 104). The next page presents, unusually, a top panel filled with various sound effects, including “CRUNCH,” “crac,” “RUN,” “SNAAP,” “CLIMB” and “WAEET.” The panel/tier below that places the raccoons atop a tree, clinging to its branches and looking down, partly-clouded-over moon in the distance (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 105). The “empty” gutter beneath the image indicates no one dares make a sound.

²⁵ Kodooka notes upwards of 1600 in the Japanese language (Kodooka 2002, p. 267). See also (Huang and Archer 2014, p. 474).

²⁶ On the historical development of word balloons in comics, and in particular on animal representation’s role in the process, see (Smolderen 2006, p. 104).

This comical sequence (seemingly making light of the procyons' terror of the cat) engagingly depicts actions through close-ups, sound effects and McCloudian closure (the reader deduces that the "sound effects panel" conveys the raccoons' frantic climb to escape a predator). As Petersen holds, "The presence of sound gives force and dimension to the dramatic action" (Petersen 2007, p. 583).

But as mentioned, the vignette goes beyond the onomatopoeic (what the Japanese refer to as *giseigo/giongo*), into the realm of non-mimetic or affectual representation (*gitaigo* aka phenomimes and psychomimes).²⁷ And here *The Puma Blues* inches into the same ethically problematic territory as so many previous depictions of animals in comics: anthropomorphism. The delegation of an interior state via punctuation and humor through "funny" sound effects²⁸ works at cross-purposes to the series' professedly "testimonial" and unsentimental approach to non-human representation.²⁹

3. The Empire Gazes Back

The British historian Jonathan Burt, in his study on animals in cinema, identifies the matter as one of whether or not a given work should

entail or inspire a sense of the real animal uncluttered by the emotional and psychological links that allow for human-animal relations in the first place. The visual animal is caught in an argument over whether the animal should be considered on its own terms or understood through a network of human-animal relations (Burt 2012, p. 188).

What Burt calls "multiple metaphorical significances" lead to "a kind of semantic overload" (Burt 2012, p. 11): the animal figure "means" whatever the reader/beholder alights on (e.g., "patriotic" American bald eagle), while the animal as animal risks becoming fully suffused into the human, disappearing altogether. Numerous scholars, most famously John Berger, thus warn against the colonizing effect of the human gaze; speaking of the denizens of zoos, he declares, "*you are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal*" (Berger 1980, p. 24, emphasis in original). For Akira Lippit, visual/electronic media form nothing short of "a vast mausoleum for animal being" (Lippit 2000, p. 187). Non-human life in our representations, these scholars attest, is doubly dead: as physical body in an age of mass extinctions and as self-determining agent.

"The Empire of the Senses" presents us with a tantalizing test case for such surmises; do the puma and the creatures it encounters reflect, not an "accurate," or even plausible, but *subject-driven* approach to animal life? Readers give the benefit of the doubt easily enough in the case of human-focalized graphic narratives; but a non-human protagonist, as noted, throws up myriad challenges to this sort of "realism."³⁰

²⁷ Huang and Archer describe *giseigo/giongo* as words that mimic the actual sound of an object or action (*giseigo* for animate objects, *giongo* for inanimate), while *gitaigo* conveys a state or abstract quality or condition, for example a sound effect to denote something being done quickly (Huang and Archer 2014, p. 475). Schodt offers these examples of the latter: sound of a penis standing erect (BIIN), the sound of silence (SHIIN), the sound of milk being added to coffee (SURON), slurping noodles (SURU SURU) (Schodt 1983, p. 23). Petersen adds such phenomimes and psychomimes as "noro noro" for moving quietly and "peko peko" for bowing humbly (Petersen 2007, p. 583). Beyond Japan, Joost Pollman cites the invented sound effects of Dutch artist Jeroen de Leijer (e.g., "Kazwierp" for the action of a ticket-dispensing machine); the French artists Dupuy and Berberian ("Pshhrrrrllooo" for a flushing toilet); as well as those of US artists Ben Katchor and Walter Simonson as comparable to the Dada poetry of Hugo Ball and Tristan Tzara (Pollman 2001, p. 14).

²⁸ On different kinds of sound effects and their affectual content, see (McCloud 2006, pp. 146–47). On the use of sound effects for explicitly humorous ends, see Harvey Kurtzman and Wally Wood's *locus classicus* "Sound Effects!" (Kurtzman and Wood 1955). See also John Byrne's parodic depiction of superhero action via sound effect in *Alpha Flight*, (Byrne 1984).

²⁹ See for example such critical responses as Dueben's: "the nature drawings in *Puma* especially, but so much of the detail in the book feels like an act of witness" (Dueben 2016a).

³⁰ One may object that readers of science fiction and fantasy comics routinely engage with non-human characters. These figures (whether Marko of *Saga* or DC's J'onn J'onzz), however, mostly behave as humans. Even Lockjaw, the Inhumans' gigantic dog, acts in ways that meet the expectations for such a long-domesticated species. See comments on "ani-drag" in Alaniz (2017).

In attempting an answer, I proceed from the assumption that full-fledged animal consciousnesses fully divorceable from human expectations and representations exist,³¹ along the lines of philosopher Thomas Nagel's well-known formulation for bat-being as something very real (albeit inaccessible):

Thus we describe bat sonar as a form of three-dimensional forward perception; we believe that bats feel some versions of pain, fear, hunger, and lust, and that they have other, more familiar types of perception besides sonar. But we believe that these experiences also have in each case a *specific subjective character*, which it is beyond our ability to conceive (Nagel 1974, p. 439, my emphasis).

The presumption of a grounded material reality for non-human being, even if one not fully graspable due to the limits of human empathy/mind, seems to me a firm foundation for an ethical project of animal representation. Premising his own argument on Actor-Network Theory, Burt offers a model of animal agency which privileges reciprocity between agents, both within and across species. This approach would

redress an imbalance in the theorizing of human-animal relations by seeking, instead, to outline the impact animals have on humans rather than always seeing animals as the passive partner, or victim . . . [I]n film human-animal relations are possible through an interplay of agency regardless of the nature of animal interiority, subjectivity or communication (Burt 2012, p. 31).

Burt's formulation thus assumes that animals have interiority, without seeking to delimit it. In short, animals "act" in films (true, partly in fulfillment of training, but also for their own inscrutable ends), in turn provoking responses in the human viewer—a transpecies chain of affectual sway. "It is in the context of these unintended effects by the animal itself," he concludes, "that we best understand what it means to talk about the manner in which the animal, *pace* Lippit, does regulate its symbolic effects" (Burt 2012, p. 32).³² In film, humans and animals share a sort of leveling fictional space, through which they interact and influence each other, all the time regarded by a human audience which projects its symbolic presumptions onto the animals (and humans), but is also put in the position of accepting them as agents of their fates, and even falling under their "influence."

To pick a cinematic example with surface similarities to "Empire," the US artist Bill Viola's experimental documentary *I Do Not Know What It Is I Am Like* instantiates a network of missed mutual gazes (Viola 1986). The camera focuses obsessively on close-ups and long takes of animals: fish in water, birds at the San Diego Zoo, bison on the range. Yet none of these creatures seem particularly invested in returning Viola's look. As the title suggests, the video enacts both a quest for identity in the body of the other and as Catherine Russell puts it "an exploration of the undisciplined gaze" (Russell 1999, p. 183), culminating in an oft-cited sequence: a slow zoom into the face of a disinterested owl followed by a series of shots showing the filmmaker's own reflection in the creature's eye.³³

Clearly Viola himself in this intensely personal work, but also the viewer of *I Do Not Know*, is "influenced" by the non-human creatures depicted; she is left to ponder their inner worlds, poignantly seeking a connection, affirmation, recognition which of course never comes. Through the animal scenes, the audience is thrown back to a contemplation of its own bewildering humanity. In Russell's words:

³¹ A historically controversial notion, as is Cary Wolfe's in *Animal Rites*: "[W]e share our world with non-human others who inhabited this planet before we arrived on the scene and will in all likelihood far outlast the tenure of *Homo Sapiens* but also that *we*—whoever "we" are—are in a profound sense constituted as human subjects within and atop a nonhuman otherness that postmodern theory has worked hard to release from the bad-faith repressions and disavowals of humanism" (Wolfe 2003, p. 193, emphasis in original).

³² The animals' "unintended effects" in Burt's model clearly link it to the concept of excess in cinema; see (Thompson 1986).

³³ The sequence seems a literalization of the anthropologist and naturalist Loren Eiseley's adage: "One does not meet oneself until one catches the reflection from an eye other than human" (Eiseley 1978, p. 16).

The naked state that Viola develops strips the gaze down to its scopophilic structure: the desire to see, which is indulged fully, but is always unsatisfying, always leaving a gap of unknowing, of desire that sustains itself through lack. In Viola's portraits of bird, fish and animals, the gaze functions as a form of containment and a site of excess³⁴ (Russell 1999, p. 120).

The question arises: would such a form (of both containment *and* excess) obtain in a non-photographic work of comics such as *The Puma Blues*? Does the absence of sound, motion and measurable time retard the represented non-human subjects' influence? What "unintended effects" on the reader could Zulli's exquisitely-drawn animals bring about?

Despite the obvious objection (cinema and comics "involve" readers in very different ways, leading to different forms of viewer identification), I will insist that some version of Burt's "agency" argument holds in *The Puma Blues*, most potently through Zulli's animal portraiture and "Empire's" various alienating effects (a comics analogue to Viola's long takes and narrator-less imagery). The non-human "acts" through the artist's pen—Zulli, a wildlife illustrator for several years before embarking on a comics career (Dueben 2016a), avidly studied his subjects and their behavior, the better to represent them in a static medium—a first-order agency whose traces pervade the text, transmitting its "influence" on to the reader. Zulli's closely informed drawings thus mirror the "unintended effects" of the film animal "actor." And though Burt emphasizes animal-human interactions, "Empire" exemplifies how we may dispense with the second part of the equation, whether through "missed" gazes (Gavia's blithe unawareness of the puma which stalks him) or by eliminating the human from the visual field *in toto*.

Indeed, the puma's hunt is a tightly choreographed dance of gazes, actions and reactions between non-human species, some of whom affect the lives (and deaths) of others without realizing it. At one point, the feline predator silently closes in on two grazing deer, so intent on its prey that it fails to register a rabbit hidden by rocks and foliage, under its very snout—a situation wryly analogous with that of the clueless Gavia and his elusive ghost cat. Two panels show long-shot and close-up views of the scene: the "objective" and "subjective," the latter emphasizing the lapine quarry's terror as a huge clawed foot passes within inches (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 109).

At the conclusion to the night's hunt, a carefree bathing beaver splashes loudly with its tail ("SHLAPP!"), frightening the nearby deer, who scamper off. Their frantic "snaps" and "crunches" through the undergrowth in turn flush a rabbit from hiding (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 112), make a weasel pause over the body of another rabbit (or perhaps the same one, killed between panels)³⁵ and "enrage" the cougar, whose prey has escaped. Growling, it approaches the beaver, who seems confused by all the clamor. Sitting placidly in the water, it utters a non-committal "wff" and disappears beneath the ripples (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 113). An impressive leap by the puma comes to naught: a bottom-tier panel shows it catching its breath, surveying the empty shoreline, all other actors vanished. The crickets soon resume their chirps (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 114). Whatever else these animal figures express, they decidedly deport themselves with a supple agency generative of manifold "unintended effects"—on themselves and on the reader. It seems no coincidence that reviewers tend to reference "In the Empire of the Senses" more often than any other chapter of *The Puma Blues*; for many readers it conveys something truly visceral and "real."

³⁴ As Russell goes on to say, "The visual economy of *I Do Not Know* is reduced to its purest voyeuristic structure within the context of a crisis of subjectivity" (Russell 1999, p. 187). See Russell for a much fuller treatment of Viola's video art. The more conventionally ethological documentary *Kestrel's Eye* (Kristersson 1998) also makes for a good cinematic comparative case to "Empire."

³⁵ We never know, in fact, if this is the same rabbit that was hiding from the cougar before (it seems to be), or whether this is the same weasel that was previously observing the cougar. Murphy and Zulli leave such questions open.

4. Conclusions: A Tree Falls

But of course, for all its agential “authenticity” and narrative erotics, Murphy and Zulli’s fictional facsimile of the natural world in “Empire” never operates outside an inescapably anthropocentric frame, its depiction of a puma’s nocturnal wanderings as man-made as the Quabbin reservoir and the mutant mantas that ply its skies. One might say such a frame is built into the comics reading experience itself.

Take as an example the horizontal panels which accommodate the cougar’s body (see (Murphy and Zulli 2015, pp. 102–3) for a representative sequence). They mimic the animal’s shape and posture; Zulli also often depicts the cat from a low angle, i.e., from its or other forest creatures’ perspectives (such as the weasel’s). Yet, as Thierry Groensteen reminds, the panel has far from a neutral value, it “can connote or index the image that it encloses. It can go so far as to instruct the reader on what must be read, or even as far as to supply a reading protocol, or even an interpretation of the panel” (Groensteen 2007, pp. 49–50). In other words, the very act of representing the animal in comics—regardless of the artist’s “egalitarian” aims—enframes it within an ideological no less than an aesthetic space. Zulli is choosing which moments of the puma’s hunt to illustrate, choosing how it appears, where it gazes, what it does, how far or close it moves, choosing even the amount of visual space above, below and to its sides. All of this seems, even accounting for Burt’s “agency” argument, a profoundly colonizing practice in regard to non-human life.³⁶

It seems too to risk what Steve Baker calls modernity’s “disnification” syndrome, whereby “common sense” is applied to the animal image, “render[ing] it stupid by rendering it visual” (Baker 2001, p. 174). He elaborates:

[W]hen the animal is put into visual form, it seems somehow to incline towards the stereotypical and stupid, to float free from the requirements of consistency or of the greater rigor that might apply in other non-visual contexts. The image of the animal here seems to operate as a kind of visual shorthand, but a shorthand gone wrong, a shorthand whose meanings intermittently veer from or turn treacherously back upon that of the fuller form of the text (Baker 2001, p. 175).

Particularly at points when the animals in “Empire” appear to express familiar and plausible emotions (the “enraged,” “bemused,” “disappointed” cougar, the comically panicky raccoons), the hand of a human maker most discloses itself. Other such instances include the selectivity of sound effects and their rather arbitrary phonetic renderings, while the representation of a katydid’s call as “*katy-did katy-did*” (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 107) adheres more to cultural convention than verisimilitude.³⁷ Moreover, the use of a “Japanese” font exclusively for the sound of a mutated ray (Murphy and Zulli 2015, pp. 100, 116) invokes troubling associations between animal alterity and ethnic/racial otherness.

The imposition of narrativity itself (even one as fragmented as that of *The Puma Blues*) onto non-human experience also jeopardizes a project to “steep the reader in the rhythms of animal lives” (Bissette 2015, p. 529). Though superficially free-flowing and temporally ambiguous as related above, the cougar’s story essentially adheres to a three-act structure, with rising/falling action and a denouement of sorts.³⁸ Such narrational “press-ganging” of the animal figure subsumes it

³⁶ The authors’ dilemma has a correlate in ethological debates over the use of remote camera traps for wildlife observation. Despite their aleatory nature, they too enframe the animal subject, artificially removing context. Among other things, the very act of introducing the man-made camera trap into the environment risks altering the findings: “Behavioral responses by animals to camera traps potentially introduce biases to ethological and population ecology investigations” (Meek et al. 2016, p. 3217).

³⁷ On the at times vast gulf between different languages on the onomatopoeic interpretation of animal sounds, see (Nunn 2014).

³⁸ I would go so far as to say the “happy ending” to the hunt (the cougar finds a carcass to dine on, apparently just before dawn) also constitutes an “anthropocentric” narrative arc.

within another fundamental attribute of graphic narrative, what Groensteen, ironically enough, calls “anthropocentrism”:

The narrative drawing privileges the character, the agent of the action; it successively accedes to each character the level of protagonist, in the etymological sense of “he who plays the primary role.” Moreover, the format of the panel often appears calculated to be married to the body of the character represented in the frame, as if the panel constituted its natural habitat, its vital space, delimiting the space of its immediate behavior³⁹ (Groensteen 2007, pp. 161–62).

To present the cat as protagonist of its story privileges subject-object relations and biases clearly carried over from a human ontology/ideology; its logic comes to pervade the proceedings even if consciously resisted. We never cease, in sum, “to consider the animal as a visual image in a network of cultural and social associations” (Burt 2012, p. 39), even in fictions such as *The Puma Blues* which seek to meet the animal “halfway.”⁴⁰

“Empire’s” largest cougar portrait, in the top panel of page 109, encompasses these various fraught contradictions of animal representation. Referred to previously, it shows the cat crouched (possibly stretching) over a set of deer tracks. It faces forward, in the center of the frame, picturesquely surrounded by woods, rocks, still water. Tail lowered, it displays no legible emotion. Crickets chirp on the sound effects “track.” Though no human appears in the panel, everything here seems composed, arranged and stilled to put the puma on display for a *human viewer* (the effect enhanced by the animal’s Friedian absorption). “We” are not there, the picture says, yet everything has been calculated to make *there* accessible to “our” colonizing gaze.⁴¹ The image, in fact, could easily adorn a Nature Conservancy calendar.

The foregoing restates in aesthetic terms the anthropocentrism quandary of much recent animal rights discourse, how its parameters are often shaped by human-based models (as articulated in the epigraph by Calarco to the present essay). But the problem long antecedes the current debates, as elaborated by naturalist Konrad Lorenz in 1935:

The observer who studies and records behavior patterns of higher animals is up against a great difficulty. He is himself a subject, so like the object he is observing that he cannot be truly objective. The most “objective” observer cannot escape [sic] drawing analogies with his own psychological processes. Language itself forces us to use terms borrowed from our own experience (quoted in (Lehner 1979, p. 44)).

And yet, crucially, *The Puma Blues* (despite the inevitable shortcomings described) does not wish away the problem, but engages with it. As if in recognition of its own anthropocentric lens, “Empire’s” framing sequence hints at the invented character of the sensual world laid out for our perusal. We see Ruth, Jack’s partner, indoors (we might say, “completely cut off from nature”), before a fireplace, silently examining the photograph of a ray. In a rather startling sequence, her eye in close-up “morphs” over three overlapping panels into the eye of the manta which glides over Quabbin

³⁹ Burt discusses a cinematic correlate to Groensteen’s “anthropocentrism,” emphasizing the highly illusionistic construction of most filmic animal portrayals: “Just as the animal image is divided by cultural contests over its status, so the image is made up, technologically, by a process that usually depends on some form of montage. More than most other forms of filmmaking, animal cinematography invariably requires considerable editing to fit the different shots into the required narrative structures” (Burt 2012, p. 87).

⁴⁰ In fact, “Empire” bears striking resemblances to the episode “Puma Pass” of the TV nature documentary series *Mutual of Omaha’s Wild Kingdom*, which aired in December, 1963. The episode shows a cougar hunting mule deer in Colorado, and even an extended encounter with a beaver.

⁴¹ Such “romantic sublime” imagery instantiates what Kai Mikkonen describes as “the central role of ambiguous and doubled focalization in the medium” (Mikkonen 2012, p. 87). The reader enjoys the fantasy of their own absence from a “wilderness” which they can nonetheless still witness. On the romantic sublime and the deeply-rooted appeal of wilderness in US culture, see (Cronon 1995).

Reservoir, initiating the nocturnal hunt portion (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 99). At its conclusion, we return to Ruth, sitting on her couch, lost in contemplation. Jack returns,⁴² interrupting her reverie (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 117). This turn casts into doubt the “reality” of the entire forest episode (puma, crickets, deer, raccoons, beaver)—we could read it as Ruth’s dream, fantasy, or telepathic vision. The “eye-match” panel sequence tantalizes with an even more radical possibility: that Ruth carries some sort of genetic link to the mutated rays, that the borders between humanity and animal have blurred drastically.⁴³ Thus, in a self-conscious moment, Murphy and Zulli’s scifi comics-ethology acknowledges its highly-subjective, romanticized conception of nature and one of “Empire’s” chief underlying themes: the utopian impulse to “become” animal.⁴⁴

In so doing it isolates a “bio-escapist” strain in late capitalist life, given voice in recent memoirs such as Charles Foster’s *Being a Beast* (2016), Thomas Thwaites’ *Goat Man: How I Took a Holiday from Being Human* (2016) and Helen MacDonald’s *H is for Hawk*, in which she writes: “Hunting with the hawk took me to the very edge of being a human. Then it took me past that place to something where I wasn’t human at all” (Macdonald 2014, p. 195).

The Puma Blues, what Bissette calls a “‘jazz-like’ comic book meditation on our culture’s headlong rush toward ecological disaster” (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 530), functions as just such a fantasy of escape into nature—only to return the reader to an awareness of that escapism’s roots: a pessimistic postmodern environmentalist angst. The cougar’s immersive milieu, with all its rich details, offers a defamiliarized, oblique view of a better place—but accessible, we’re reminded, only through imagining oneself (like Ruth) beyond the human.

“Empire’s” imagined “hybrid” reader—apprehending a work focalized through an animal’s perceptions—suggests the extraordinary potential of a verbal-visual medium for reorienting cognitive engagement. At its best it unlocks the embodied nature of the text, what the phenomenologist Gail Weiss terms the “narrative horizon” of reading. “[T]he body is . . . the omnipresent horizon for all the narratives human beings tell (about it),” she writes. “As such, it grounds our quest for narrative coherence” (Weiss 2008, pp. 70–71). Murphy and Zulli’s quixotic gambit to break through anthropocentric biases—to rebuild the master’s house, using the master’s tools—vicariously “re-horizons” the reader along transpecies lines.⁴⁵

To close: a particularly compelling instance of “Empire’s” “re-horizoning.” Let us return to the eight adjacent portraits of amphibian, mammal and insect life alluded to earlier, which I likened to a visual poem (and to postage stamps) (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 107). The page opposite is dominated by a very different four-panel sequence: a dead tree creaks, sways and tumbles down with a loud crash (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 106). We may thus read the resulting two-page spread as a series of action-reaction shots: the tree drops, the animals bear witness.

A droll revision of the old saw “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?”⁴⁶ the scene answers, “Yes.” Eight times.

⁴² The previous chapter established that Jack had gone to the bathroom, leaving Ruth to regard the photo alone (Murphy and Zulli 2015, p. 95).

⁴³ *The Puma Blues*, even in its completed 2015 version, never definitively confirms or denies this possibility. Consider also the gendered implications of a feminine figure with a deeper “connection” to the natural world than the flailing Gavia or the utilitarian Jack.

⁴⁴ Such human/animal “blurrings” find expression in many turn-of-the-21st-century discourses. The Russian author Viktor Pelevin’s short story “A Werewolf Problem in Central Russia” (first published in 1991), posits a protagonist who transforms into a wolf; the heightened awareness brought on by the change makes him dread ever returning to human form (Pelevin 1998, pp. 15–16). See also “Words of Prey” by Jonathan Menjivar, a 2014 segment on the radio program *This American Life*, which chronicles the intensely anthropocentric reactions of viewers to an “osprey cam” at the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute in Massachusetts (Menjivar 2015). See also Herman’s contribution to the *Humanities* special issue on Animal Narratology (Herman 2016).

⁴⁵ Other episodes in *The Puma Blues* saga imaginatively re-enflesh the reader as animal. See Murphy and Bissette’s short story “Pause,” told from the point of view of a dog, in *The Puma Blues* (Murphy and Zulli 1986–1989, #20, September 1988).

⁴⁶ A philosophical conundrum, variants of which have been attributed to the British philosopher George Berkeley and others. A 2011 National Public Radio report complicates the question for the modern age (Messenger 2011).

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Article

The Function of HumAnimal Allegory

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Abstract: This article presents a critical reading of the function of the animal-human allegory or the “humanimallegory” in both the animated films *Animal Farm* and *Chicken Run*. Based on George Orwell’s novel of the same name, *Animal Farm* provides an allegorical representation of the Russian Revolution and the rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union by relaying Orwell’s story of a revolution led by a group of farm animals and its aftermath. *Animal Farm* ultimately reduces its fictional animal characters to simple metaphors for real human subjects, thus serving the most common function of the animal-human allegory in literature as well as film. In contrast, improvising on the many prisoner-of-war films that were produced during the first few decades following World War II, *Chicken Run* tells the story of a group of chickens who attempt to escape from an egg farm. *Chicken Run* complicates the function of the animal-human allegory, though, by resisting the allegorical reduction of its fictional animal characters to simple metaphors for real human subjects. By presenting a critical reading of these two different films, this article suggests that the literary concept of allegory itself remains circumscribed within the philosophical tradition of humanism.

Keywords: allegory; humanism; literary theory; film studies; animal studies; George Orwell; *Animal Farm*; *Chicken Run*

The neologism that I have coined for the title of this paper is what we might call a second-order neologism—a neologism that is composed of other neologisms—the word “humanimallegory” formed by crossing the words “humanimal” and “animallegory” with each other, neither of which word I can claim to have coined myself. The word “humanimal” was coined in the film *You Never Can Tell*, directed and co-written by Lou Breslow and released in 1951 [1].¹ This word has become quite ubiquitous within popular culture as well as the academic field of animal studies itself over the past few decades, largely aided, I would venture to guess, by its use in the theatrical trailer for the film *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, directed by Don Taylor and released in 1977 [2].² The word “animallegory” seems to have remained

¹ *You Never Can Tell* is a comedy about a pet German Shepherd named King who inherits a fortune of six million dollars from his deceased owner, Andrew Lindsay. When King is poisoned under mysterious circumstances, the primary suspect is Lindsay’s former secretary and the trustee of King’s estate, Ellen Hathaway, who stands to inherit King’s fortune. The word “humanimal” is introduced in an odd scene that is set apart from the rest of the film by its narrative voice-over, its musical score featuring electronic instrumentation, and its various special film effects including negative-image cinematography. During this scene, it is explained that all animals who have died must pass through “Beastatory” before they finally ascend into “the happy fields of Fauna.” Any animal who has sinned and thus “betrayed the name of ‘animal’” is condemned to return to earth in a form “not animal, not human, but humanimal.” Having entered Beastatory himself, King makes the unusual request to return to earth voluntarily in order to reveal the true identity of his killer. The rest of the film unfolds as King returns to earth as a private investigator, Rex Shepard, accompanied by a former racehorse named Golden Harvest who becomes his secretary, “Goldie.” Both Shepard and Goldie appear to be human, but they retain many of their animal qualities like Shepard’s taste for dog kibble and Goldie’s ability to run at great speeds. Toward the end of the film, we discover that many of the characters who had seemed human were actually humanimal all along, although they do not realize it themselves. The implication, of course, is that any one of us film viewers might be humanimal as well.

² *The Island of Dr. Moreau* was the second film adaptation of H. G. Wells’s novel of the same name originally published in 1896 [3], the first film adaptation having been *Island of Lost Souls*, directed by Erle C. Kenton and released in 1932 [4].

much less widespread, though, despite its equally surprising long history. This word was coined in the 17 January 1955 edition of the weekly news magazine *Time* in a review of Halas and Batchelor's recently released animated film, *Animal Farm* [5]. Based on George Orwell's novel of the same name, *Animal Farm* provides an allegorical representation of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union by relaying Orwell's story of a revolution led by a group of farm animals and its aftermath [6]. Besides offering an expedient piece of political propaganda for the capitalist interests of the Western Bloc, *Animal Farm* ultimately reduces its fictional animal characters to simple metaphors for real human subjects, serving the most common function of the animal-human allegory in both literature and film—what I am calling here the function of humanimallegory.

Almost fifty years after the release of *Animal Farm*, Aardman's stop-motion animated film *Chicken Run* was released, marking yet another appearance of the humanimallegory. Improvising on the many prisoner-of-war films that were produced during the first few decades following World War II, *Chicken Run* tells the story of a group of chickens who attempt to escape from an egg farm [7]. I would like to argue that *Chicken Run* complicates the function of humanimallegory, however, by resisting the allegorical reduction of its fictional animal characters to simple metaphors for real human subjects. While *Chicken Run* certainly does play on many anthropomorphic representations of nonhuman animals, the film nonetheless also calls attention to the irreducible heterogeneity among its various animal characters—hens, roosters, rats, and dogs, not to mention human husband and wife—in some significant ways that *Animal Farm* does not. Reading these two different films in my paper, then, I want to suggest that the literary concept of allegory itself remains circumscribed within the philosophical tradition of humanism—which is to say, in so many words, that the theoretical distinction between the referent and the symbol that grounds the concept of allegory is a reiteration of the fundamentally metaphysical distinction between the human and the animal that grounds the tradition of humanism.³

It is fair to say that the concept of allegory has permeated the modern field of literary theory so completely that it is difficult if not impossible to cite any standard definition of this term. For our purposes, though, we may cite a working definition from Angus Fletcher's classic treatise *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, which has remained widely available since its original publication in 1964. In his introduction to the text, Fletcher offers us a definition of allegory by contrasting it against the "open and direct" speech of "normal" language: "In the simplest terms, allegory says one thing and means another. It destroys the normal expectation we have about language, that our words 'mean what they say'. When we predicate quality x of person Y, Y really is what our predication says he [sic] is (or we assume so); but allegory would turn Y into something other (*allos*) than what the open and direct statement tells the reader" ([11], p. 2). In a note to this passage, Fletcher further provides us with an etymological derivation of the term itself: "*Allegory* from *allos* + *agoreuein* (*other* + *speak openly, speak in the assembly or market*). *Agoreuein* connotes public, open, declarative speech. This sense is inverted by the prefix *allos*" ([11], p. 2, n. 1). Following this definition, we could say that allegory introduces a discordance between "meaning" and "saying" that is not present in ordinary speech or language.

The word "humanimals" is used in the theatrical trailer for *The Island of Dr. Moreau* to describe the genetically mutated animals on whom Dr. Moreau secretly conducts his scientific experiments.

³ For some substantial scholarly works on film in the field of animal studies, see Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* [8]; Jonathan Burt, *Animals in Film* [9]; and Paul Wells, *The Animated Bestiary: Animals, Cartoons, and Culture* [10]. Lippit, Burt, and Wells all make a claim on the special status of the animal in relation to the specific cultural forms in which they are interested—modern media, film, and animated films, respectively: in *Electric Animal*, Lippit argues that "[m]odernity can be defined by the disappearance of wildlife from humanity's habitat and by the reappearance of the same in humanity's reflections on itself: in philosophy, psychoanalysis, and technological media such as the telephone, film, and radio" ([8], pp. 2–3); in *Animals in Film*, Burt asserts that "[t]here is no doubt that the animal is a key figure in the history of filmmaking though, curiously, it is a fact that has been virtually ignored until recently" ([9], p. 196); and in *The Animated Bestiary*, Wells suggests that "[a]rguably, the animal is an essential component of the language of animation, but one so naturalized that the anthropomorphic agency of creatures from Winsor McCay's Gertie the Dinosaur to PIXAR's Nemo has not been particularly interrogated" ([10], p. 2). In *The Animated Bestiary*, Wells also discusses both the animated films *Animal Farm* and *Chicken Run* at some length ([10], pp. 54–59, 164–65). However, neither Lippit, Burt, nor Wells critically addresses the function of the animal-human allegory in literature or film as such.

But if we were to question the humanist presuppositions that are entailed by this definition of allegory instead, then we would have to say that this discordance marks ordinary speech or language as well—breaching from the very start, as it were, any original accordance between meaning and saying, between the subject and the predicate, between the person and his or her personal quality or qualities. The function of human allegory is thus to restore order to the literary or filmic representation of the human by the animal as much as it is to restore order to the representation of the referent by the symbol. Yet insofar as this order has never been established or installed within language, literature, or film, this function is bound to fail—or, perhaps, to work only far too well.

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Animal Farm was directed and produced by John Halas and Joy Batchelor for Louis de Rochemont and released in 1954, becoming the first British animated feature-length film to receive a public theatrical release. Halas was a Hungarian-born animator and Batchelor a British-born animator who formed the Halas and Batchelor animation studio together in 1940, marrying each other the same year. De Rochemont was an American filmmaker who was best known for his work as the co-producer and co-writer of the newsreel series *The March of Time* from 1935 to 1943. The film *Animal Farm* was “based on George Orwell’s memorable fable,” as the opening credits put it [6], and its story development credited to Lothar Wolff, Borden Mace, and Philip Stapp as well as Halas and Batchelor themselves. De Rochemont was also instrumental to the film’s story development, however, apparently forcing Halas and Batchelor to change the rather bleak ending of Orwell’s novel for the film adaptation. Produced during the first decade of the Cold War, *Animal Farm* obviously served the ideological agenda of anti-communism quite well. Yet it would not become public knowledge until half a century later that it was the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) who had orchestrated de Rochemont’s procurement of the film rights to Orwell’s novel from his widow Sonia in 1951. Although it is not at all certain whether Halas and Batchelor were aware of the CIA’s involvement in the film, it is not very surprising that they were hired to direct it given that they had produced animated propaganda films for the British war effort during World War II in addition to their short commercial films. On its release, *Animal Farm* was met with both critical and commercial success, spawning a serialized newspaper comic strip and even a line of merchandise.

The film opens on Manor Farm, which is owned and operated by the alcoholic and abusive farmer Mr. Jones. Late one night after Mr. Jones has returned from the local pub in a drunken stupor, the prize boar hog Old Major calls a meeting of all the farm animals in the main barn where he delivers a rousing speech, calling attention to humans’ egregious exploitation of farm animals and culminating in the dictum, “All animals are equal.” Old Major leads the farm animals in a stirring song before he suddenly keels over and dies. The next morning, the farm animals band together in revolt and forcibly drive Mr. Jones from the farm. When Mr. Jones returns with more men from the pub armed with various tools and weapons, the farm animals successfully repel the men’s attack under the courageous leadership of the white pig Snowball. Over the next few days, the animals take control over the operation of the farm, destroying Mr. Jones’s tools of coercion and slaughter and declaring his house forbidden to all. Under the continued leadership of Snowball, the animals change the name of Manor Farm to Animal Farm, and Snowball himself writes the laws of Animal Farm on the side of the barn for all to see: “No animal shall sleep in a bed—No animal shall drink alcohol—Four legs good two legs bad—No animal shall kill another animal—All animals are equal” [6]. Meanwhile, the dark-mottled pig Napoleon has secretly adopted the puppies who were orphaned during the men’s attack on the farm, raising them for his own purposes. Some months later, when Snowball presents his plans for the construction of a windmill to the rest of the farm animals at one of their regular meetings in the barn, Napoleon summons the now full-grown dogs to chase Snowball from the farm and dispose of him. Napoleon assumes leadership of the farm with the support of his obedient follower Fat Pig Squealer, branding Snowball a traitor and discontinuing the farm animals’ meetings.

As the rest of the farm animals begin working on the construction of the windmill, the pigs begin sleeping in Mr. Jones's house and drinking alcohol which they obtain from the trader Mr. Whymper. When Squealer asks the hens to surrender all their eggs for the continuation of trade with the outside world, the hens stage a protest for which they are sentenced to death by Napoleon. Disgruntled by Mr. Whymper's commerce with the animals, the men from the pub decide to attack the farm again but this time without Mr. Jones. Although the farm animals successfully repel the attack under the leadership of Napoleon, they suffer a great setback when Mr. Jones manages to demolish the windmill with explosives. The farm animals begin working on the construction of the windmill again when the largest and strongest horse Boxer, who was wounded during the men's second attack on the farm, is permanently injured in the course of his selfless efforts to rebuild the windmill. While the rest of the farm animals expect that Boxer will be rewarded for his labors with a comfortable retirement, Napoleon and Squealer arrange to have him taken away in what first appears to be an ambulance but what turns out to be a truck in the service of Mr. Whymper's glue factory. Years later, after the construction of the windmill has been completed, Napoleon hosts a delegation of pigs from all the surrounding farms to which the Animal Revolution has spread. Now wearing suits and walking on their hind legs, the pigs have come to resemble Mr. Jones himself. Under Napoleon's dictatorship, Old Major's song has been forbidden, and the laws of Animal Farm have been rewritten. The farm animals are dismayed to discover that even Old Major's dictum has been altered: "All animals are equal *but some animals are more equal than others*" [6]. In a conclusion to the film that departs entirely from Orwell's novel, the rest of the surrounding farm animals finally converge on Animal Farm to overthrow Napoleon and all his fellow pigs in what is presumably the last revolution to be won.

But if we follow the allegorical reading of *Animal Farm* that the filmmakers seem to have intended for us, following Orwell himself—the allegorical reading of *Animal Farm*, moreover, that has totally dominated the critical analysis of both the novel and the film to date⁴—the story is not about any "animal revolution" at all. Rather, each and every character or event in *Animal Farm* only represents some particular human character or event in historical reality: Manor Farm represents Imperial Russia; Mr. Jones represents Tsar Nicholas II; Old Major represents Karl Marx; Old Major's song represents "The Internationale," also known as the International Workers' Hymn; the farm animals' revolt represents the Russian Revolution; Snowball represents both Vladimir Lenin and Leon Trotsky; the renaming of Animal Farm represents the creation of the Soviet Union; the laws of Animal Farm represent Lenin's April Theses; Napoleon represents Joseph Stalin; the windmill represents Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution; the dogs represent the Soviet secret police; Squealer represents Vyacheslav Molotov and the Soviet propaganda machine; Mr. Whymper represents unscrupulous capitalists; the execution of the hens represents Stalin's Great Purge; the men's second attack on the farm represents Nazi Germany's invasion of the Soviet Union during World War II; and the sale of Boxer to the glue factory represents the Soviet Union's betrayal of the workers. Now, I certainly do not want to deny that this allegorical reading of *Animal Farm* offers us a very interesting interpretation of the story. What I do want to point out, however, is that this reading is tightly regulated by the function of humanimallegory inasmuch as all the animals act as symbols for human referents. Although there are human characters in *Animal Farm* who also act as symbols, all the referents remain human. The animal as such never exceeds its purely symbolic function. Indeed, within the strict economy of the humanimallegory, the animal *is* a symbol and the human the transcendental referent. The distinction between the human and the animal thus reiterates the distinction made in linguistics and literary

⁴ Both Orwell's novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* have long become standard references in the scholarly body of work on allegory; in *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, Fletcher mentions both novels during his discussion on what he considers the basic allegorical form of battle ([11], pp. 157–59). Similarly, Halas and Batchelor's film *Animal Farm* has been unanimously viewed as an adaptation of Orwell's original allegory, however faithful or not this adaptation is judged; in *Time* magazine's review of the film, it is affirmed that "[t]he story holds pretty true to Orwell...and the audience is asked to look the Soviet horror square in the eye" ([5], p. 74).

theory alike between the signified and the signifier, between substance and form, between inner thought and outward expression. All of this is to say that metaphor is a metaphysics⁵—or, if you prefer, allegory is a humanism.

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Chicken Run was directed by Peter Lord and Nick Park and produced by Lord, David Sproxton, and Park for DreamWorks Pictures in association with Pathé. Released in 2000, *Chicken Run* was Aardman's first feature-length film. The British animators Lord and Sproxton were longtime friends who formed the Aardman animation studio together in 1972. Their fellow British animator Park joined Aardman in 1985 while he was still working on his short film *A Grand Day Out*, the first film featuring the characters Wallace and Gromit on which he had begun working as a student at the National Film and Television School. Before the release of *Chicken Run*, Aardman produced many award-winning short films including *Creature Comforts* directed by Park as well as *The Wrong Trousers* and *A Close Shave*, two more films featuring Wallace and Gromit and also directed by Park, in addition to their commercial work and their assorted contributions to various television series and music videos. *Chicken Run* was "based on an original story" by Lord and Park, as the opening credits indicate [7], and its screenplay written by the American screenwriter Karey Kirkpatrick. Much like Park's short films, *Chicken Run* is marked not only by its dry and typically British sense of humor and its continuous stream of puns and sight gags but also by its distinctively animated and richly entertaining characters who usually cross the line between the human and the animal in some way. After the critical and commercial success of *Chicken Run*, Aardman went on to produce many more short films as well as feature-length films, including their first feature-length film featuring Wallace and Gromit *The Curse of the Were-Rabbit* and their first computer-animated film *Flushed Away*.

Chicken Run opens on Tweedy's Farm, an egg farm in the English countryside that has been owned and operated by the Tweedy family for generations. In the dark of night, amid high barbed-wire fencing and a roving searchlight, Mr. Tweedy patrols the farm with his two guard dogs as a small group of hens attempt to escape, led by Ginger who digs a trench under one of the fences with a spoon. The other hens fail to make it under the fence, however, and Ginger is cornered by the guard dogs at the farmhouse door when Mrs. Tweedy appears in the doorway, ordering Mr. Tweedy to put the hen back behind the fence. Mr. Tweedy throws Ginger into solitary confinement inside a yard bin before turning to the rest of the hens behind the fence and loudly declaring, "No chicken escapes from Tweedy's Farm!" [7]. The opening credits then roll over a series of other failed escape attempts by the hens, each one of which ends with Mr. Tweedy throwing Ginger into solitary confinement again. The story resumes as Mrs. Tweedy begins her weekly inspection of the chickens one morning. Ginger lines up with the rest of the hens, including Bunt, Babs, and Mac, as well as the old rooster and former Royal Air Force (RAF) officer Fowler. During the inspection, one of the hens who has failed to produce any eggs for the week, Edwina, is removed from the line-up and slaughtered by Mrs. Tweedy herself. That night, after Ginger and Mac present yet another escape plan at one of the chickens' secret meetings held in the sheds, Ginger witnesses a rooster flying through the air in a cape. He makes a crash landing onto the farm and injures one of his wings, while a torn poster reading "Rocky the Flying Rooster" floats down from the air into Ginger's hand-like wings. After he is brought into the chicken sheds, the rooster introduces himself to the other chickens as Rocky the Rhode Island Red, or "Rocky Rhodes" for short, further boasting that he is a freedom-loving chicken who they call the "Lone Free Ranger" back home in America. When Ginger learns that Rocky has escaped from the circus, she forces him to make a deal with her, promising to hide him only if he teaches all the chickens on the farm how to fly. Meanwhile, Mrs. Tweedy discovers a plan to make the farm more profitable.

⁵ On the relation of the literary concepts of metaphor, allegory, and symbol to the philosophical tradition of metaphysics, see Jacques Derrida, "White Mythology: Metaphor in the Text of Philosophy" [12].

Although Mr. Tweedy is convinced that the chickens are “organized,” as he puts it [7], Mrs. Tweedy remains incredulous toward both Mr. Tweedy and the chickens.

After Rocky has begun to teach the chickens how to fly with little apparent success, a large truck mysteriously arrives on the farm, unloading heavy machinery and other equipment. Then, during Mrs. Tweedy’s next inspection, she spares Babs’s life despite the hen’s failure to produce any eggs for the week and orders Mr. Tweedy to double the chickens’ food rations. Ginger realizes that they are all being fattened for slaughter, and the rest of the chickens despair of ever escaping from the farm. When Rocky tries to cheer them up with a dance party that night, Ginger notices that his wing has healed and asks him to personally demonstrate how to fly the next morning. At the same time, Mr. Tweedy finishes assembling the machinery, and Mrs. Tweedy explains to him that instead of producing eggs, their farm would produce chicken pies from now on, using a fully automated production method. Mr. Tweedy captures Ginger in order to test the new machine out, but Rocky rescues her and sabotages the machine in the process. The next morning, Ginger finds that Rocky has gone and left the remaining piece of the torn poster behind, revealing that he is shot out of a cannon for his “flying” act at the circus. As the rest of the chickens turn on each other in frustration, Ginger devises a new plan to escape from the farm by building an airplane, inspired by Fowler’s constant anecdotes about his RAF service. The chickens begin to build the airplane with the help of the scavenging rats Nick and Fetcher, but when Mr. Tweedy manages to repair the machine, Mrs. Tweedy orders him to load all the chickens into it at once. The chickens attempt to launch their unfinished airplane immediately, and Rocky returns just in time to help them escape from both Mr. and Mrs. Tweedy, destroying the machine and most of the farm itself. The chickens fly away from the farm in their bird-like aircraft, while Ginger and Rocky finally kiss. The film concludes as Ginger, Rocky, and the rest of the chickens start their new life together in a grassy paradise, accompanied by Nick and Fetcher and surrounded by many young chicks as well.

Although *Chicken Run* certainly lends itself to an allegorical reading in which the chickens’ series of attempts to escape from Tweedy’s Farm represents the Allied prisoners-of-war’s attempts to escape from their Nazi-run prison camps during World War II, I want to argue that *Chicken Run* cannot be reduced to this allegorical reading. In other words, although there are some elements within the film that do seem to serve the function of humanimallegory, there are also many elements within it that serve other quite different functions. Aardman’s animated characters, both human and animal—and Park’s characters in particular, like Wallace and Gromit—are well known for their expressiveness or, more specifically, for their very human facial expressions. While this anthropomorphic representation of nonhuman animals might be taken as evidence of the animal’s purely symbolic function in *Chicken Run*, I would rather suggest that this highly stylized animation technique undermines the humanist assumption that the capacity for thought, emotion, or “face” itself⁶ is possessed by human beings alone. What I am suggesting is that anthropomorphism does not invariably function in the service of humanism. Some forms of anthropomorphism may even threaten the humanist order of representation. The question of whether the representation of nonhuman animals in *Chicken Run* is anthropomorphic or not, then, becomes much more interesting once we begin to ask what sort of effects—artistic, political, or otherwise—such an anthropomorphic representation of nonhuman animals produces.⁷ Furthermore, while *Chicken Run* is largely based on World War II prisoner-of-war films, many of which were based on true stories themselves, it remains a comical parody or spoof whose own story does not neatly

⁶ On Levinas’s concept of the face in relation to the question of the animal, see Tamra Wright, Peter Hughes, and Alison Ainley, “The Paradox of Morality: An Interview with Emmanuel Levinas” [13].

⁷ For a critical intervention into the scholarly debate on anthropomorphism within the field of animal studies, see Lorraine Daston and Gregg Mitman, eds. *Thinking with Animals: New Perspectives on Anthropomorphism* [14]. In their introduction to the volume, Daston and Mitman argue that “anthropomorphism sometimes seems dangerously allied to anthropocentrism...[b]ut anthropomorphism and anthropocentrism can just as easily tug in opposite directions” ([14], p. 4). While I might challenge Daston and Mitman’s strategic distinction between the “fact” of anthropomorphism and its “value” ([14], p. 6), I remain nonetheless sympathetic to their efforts to “decouple” anthropomorphism from anthropocentrism (see [14], p. 4).

correspond to real human characters or historical events. Indeed, the film derives much of its humor from its sly sense of intertextuality. In addition to its repeated references to the classic prisoner-of-war film *The Great Escape*, produced and directed by John Sturges and released in 1963 [15]—the most amusing of which is perhaps the reference to the solitary confinement scene in *The Great Escape* where the troublesome American prisoner Hilts bounces a baseball against one wall of the small cell to which his Nazi captors have confined him by an early scene in *Chicken Run* where Ginger similarly bounces a Brussels sprout against one side of the yard bin into which Mr. Tweedy has thrown her—there are many allusions in *Chicken Run* to other popular visual texts as well, including the Western-comedy film *Maverick*, the action-adventure film *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, and the science-fiction television series *Star Trek*.

Finally, the function of humanimallegory in *Chicken Run* is greatly diminished if not entirely shut down by the film's attention to species difference, sexual difference, and cultural difference among its various characters, both human and animal. Whereas all the farm animals in *Animal Farm* speak a common language, allowing them to unite together against Mr. Jones and the rest of the men, *Chicken Run* focuses on a group of chickens on an egg farm. These chickens are "organized," as Mr. Tweedy puts it, by their own particular language and not by any common language as such that would lump all nonhuman animals together in an undifferentiated mass. Of course, the chickens do speak to the rats Nick and Fetcher in some kind of common language, but this language is formed by their ongoing economic relations with each other on the farm. It is very telling, I think, that neither the chickens nor the rats speak to the guard dogs who help Mr. Tweedy patrol the farm in any sort of common or universal language for nonhuman animals. And whereas all the female characters in Orwell's novel, whether they are human or animal, are sidelined or simply cut from the film *Animal Farm*, the very plot of *Chicken Run* hinges on sexual difference while overturning some of the most common gender stereotypes in popular film. The story concerns the contemporary practice of hen farming, to be precise, and the main conflict arises when the farm makes a shift from its traditional method of egg production to a more modern method of meat production, transforming the "layer" hens into "broiler" hens all at once. Moreover, the central protagonist of the story is the courageous and resourceful hen Ginger, who is acknowledged by all the chickens on the farm as their leader, while the principal antagonist is the domineering farmer's wife Mrs. Tweedy, who dictates the operation and direction of the farm to her "hen-pecked" husband Mr. Tweedy. Although the film does run the risk of reinforcing certain gender stereotypes in order to challenge more dominant ones, its critical attention to sexual difference among both its human and animal characters is far more interesting than *Animal Farm's* utter neglect of it. And again, whereas cultural difference plays a negligible part in *Animal Farm*, *Chicken Run* is populated by characters with very diverse and distinctive English accents denoting important social and political divisions, an element of the film that is not likely to be lost on any British audience at least. This is not to mention the American rooster Rocky, to whom the older English rooster Fowler takes an immediate dislike, and the Scottish hen Mac, whose strong vernacular Rocky can hardly understand himself in a running joke throughout the film. While both Rocky and Mac serve as references to some of the main characters among the Allied prisoners-of-war in *The Great Escape*, they also provide the occasion for further intertextual references to *Maverick* and *Star Trek*, respectively.

What I am arguing, then, is that the irreducible heterogeneity of *Chicken Run's* various human and animal characters—a heterogeneity that is articulated by their species, sexual, and cultural difference—limits or curbs the function of humanimallegory insofar as the animals in the film do not act as mere symbols for human referents. Although an allegorical reading of *Chicken Run* is possible, it cannot dominate or exhaust all its other possible readings—not because the film remains disengaged from the practice of representation altogether, but rather because it is engaged in a multiform set of representational practices that cannot be reduced to the single function of allegory. Exceeding the strict economy of the humanimallegory, the animal is thus neither a pure symbol nor a transcendental referent. It should be needless to say that this also goes for the human. *Chicken Run* may tell the story of an ambitious escape attempt made by Allied prisoners-of-war during World War II, but this does

not prevent it from telling another story as well—a story about another ambitious escape attempt, whether real or fictional, made by a group of chickens on an egg farm.

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Yet we must not jump to the conclusion that *Chicken Run* is “really” a story about an animal revolution, either. Although Aardman’s film cannot be exhausted by any allegorical reading, the humanist compulsion to read it as an allegory persists nonetheless—a compulsion that is clearly displayed by one of the film’s most authoritative sources, Peter Lord, the cofounder of Aardman and the co-director and co-producer of *Chicken Run* himself. In the short documentary feature “Poultry in Motion: The Making of *Chicken Run*,” after both the actor Mel Gibson who voices Rocky in the film⁸ and one of the film’s executive producers Jeffrey Katzenberg have explained that *Chicken Run* is based on World War II prisoner-of-war films like *The Great Escape*, Lord comments on the film: “The thing about chickens is of course they’re such stupid animals, so immediately there’s this incredibly rich vein of absurdity [running] through it” [16]. Even Lord, then, favors an allegorical reading of *Chicken Run* in which the animated chickens only act as symbols for human prisoners-of-war. It seems that while the function of humanimallegory is only one function among others, it is marked by a particularly authoritarian bent, striving to assimilate all other functions into itself. But Lord is not the sole “author” of *Chicken Run*, and I like to think that Nick Park, the creator of Wallace and Gromit and Lord’s co-director and co-producer, would never have claimed that the film draws its humor from the “stupidity” of real chickens. However, even if Park were to agree with Lord, it would remain all the same that our reading of *Chicken Run* is not determined once and for all by the author’s or coauthors’ “intent.”⁹

It thus follows that we *can* read *Animal Farm* as a story about an animal revolution, after all. For despite John Halas and Joy Batchelor’s intent, despite Louis de Rochemont and the CIA’s intent, and even despite the author George Orwell’s intent, not only does *Animal Farm* tell the story of the Russian Revolution and the subsequent rise of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, but it also tells another story about a revolution led by a group of farm animals and its aftermath. Although the CIA certainly intended the film *Animal Farm* to serve as a cultural piece of anti-Soviet propaganda, I would say that this intention was thwarted by de Rochemont’s insistence that Halas and Batchelor change the ending of Orwell’s story. The film ultimately redeems the Russian Revolution itself, let me point out, by concluding with the farm animals’ last revolution against Napoleon and the rest of the pigs—a revolution that, far from destroying the legacy of Old Major and Snowball, preserves and completes it. Ironically, this final redemption of the Russian Revolution in the film *Animal Farm* is absent in Orwell’s own novel.

Yet Orwell’s intent does not necessarily determine our reading of the novel, either. Of course, Orwell did intend *Animal Farm* to be read as an allegory, calling it a “fairly story” himself in the subtitle of his original text. And Orwell’s novel has indeed been read as a rather simple animal-human allegory ever since its initial publication. In the review of Halas and Batchelor’s film in *Time* magazine where the word “animallegory” was first coined, it is Orwell’s novel itself that is described by this neologism:

⁸ Gibson voiced the character of Rocky in *Chicken Run* some years before he would direct, co-produce, and co-write the controversial film *The Passion of the Christ*, further going on to make some widely publicized anti-Semitic and racist comments that have greatly damaged his professional career. In any case, it is undeniable that our present viewing of *Chicken Run* is inflected by its close association with the film *Maverick* in which Gibson plays the title role, Bret Maverick, as much as it is—for better or worse—by its association with the actor Gibson himself.

⁹ Neither is our reading of *Chicken Run* determined by the viewing audience or by the visual form of animation itself. For although it might be tempting to suggest that adult viewers are more inclined than younger viewers toward a reductive allegorical reading of this film or that animated films in general are more amenable than live-action films to the allegorical representation of human beings by nonhuman animals, I would resist any such categorical assumptions. The point that live-action films are amenable to the most reductive forms of allegorical representation as well is proven by the crassly ideological and nearly unwatchable made-for-television film *Animal Farm*, another adaption of Orwell’s novel featuring both live and “animatronic” animals, directed by John Stephenson and released in 1999 [17].

“George Orwell’s political fable, the famous animalallegory about Communism, has been rendered as an animated cartoon...” ([5], p. 74). Not only are both Orwell’s novels *Animal Farm* and *1984* widely cited and discussed throughout the existing body of scholarship on allegory, but in Angus Fletcher’s work *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode*, he even proposes that there is a peculiarly “Orwellian” structure to allegory as such. Immediately following the passage from his introduction to the text which I have already cited in this paper, Fletcher extends his definition of allegory by referring specifically to *1984*:

Pushed to an extreme, this ironic usage [of language by allegory] would subvert language itself, turning everything into an Orwellian newspeak. In this sense we see how allegory is properly considered a mode: it is a fundamental process of encoding our speech. For the very reason that it is a radical linguistic procedure, it can appear in all sorts of different works, many of which fall far short of the confusing doubleness that made Orwell’s newspeak such an effective brainwashing device. ([11], pp. 2–3).

But again, if we were to question the humanist presuppositions that are entailed by this definition, then we could say that Orwell’s species allegory in *Animal Farm* is not protected against this subversive force or “doubleness” of language any more than his political allegory in *1984* is protected against it. Although Orwell certainly intended *Animal Farm* to expose Stalin’s betrayal of the Russian Revolution, can we not also read his novel as a political exposé of humanism itself? Does Orwell’s novel not also indict the benevolent tyranny of a humanism that continues to thrive in a post-Darwinian world by conceding that humans are animals, all the while maintaining that they are not? Does the last remaining Commandment, which has been corrupted from its original form given in the Seven Commandments of Animalism, not define the governing logic of this post-Darwinian humanism: “All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others” ([18], p. 134, cf. pp. 23–25)? While the function of humanimallegory thus aims to reduce all animal symbols to their human referents, it only does so by breaching the very distinction that it sets out to maintain between the human and the animal, between the referent and the symbol, between the real and the fictional. Far from calling for some sort of return to a literal reading of the text, then, what I am suggesting is an allegorical reading of the function of humanimallegory in *Animal Farm* itself—an allegory of allegory, a hyper-allegorical reading of the text in which Orwell’s allegory for the Russian Revolution may be read in turn as an allegory for the Animal Revolution. Is this kind of dysfunctional or malfunctioning reading not finally “authorized,” so to speak, by the function of humanimallegory itself?

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Article

Seeing Beings: “Dog” Looks Back at “God”: Unfixing *Canis familiaris* in Kornél Mundruczó’s Film *Fehér isten/White God* (2014)[†]

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† I have had to rely on the English subtitles of this film, since I do not speak Hungarian. I quote from the film in English, since the version to which I have had access does not give the option of Hungarian subtitles.

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Abstract: Kornél Mundruczó’s film *Fehér isten/White God* (2014) portrays the human decreed options of mixed breed, abandoned dogs in the streets of Budapest in order to encourage its viewers to rethink their relationship with dogs particularly and animals in general in their own lives. By defamiliarizing the familiar ways humans gaze at dogs, *White God* models the empathetic gaze between species as a potential way out of the dead end of indifference and the impasse of anthropocentric sympathy toward less hierarchical, co-created urban animal publics.

Keywords: animality; dogs; film; *White God*; empathy

1. Introduction

Fehér isten/White God (2014) is not the first film use mixed breed canine actors who were saved from shelters¹. The *Benji* films starred mixed breed rescued shelter dogs (McLean 2014, p. 7). Nor is it unique in using 250 real screen dogs instead of computer generated canines. Disney’s 1996 *101 Dalmations* starred around 230 Dalmation puppies and 20 adult Dalmations (McLean 2014, p. 20). It is also certainly not the only film with animal protagonists to highlight Liszt’s *Hungarian Rhapsody # 2* in its soundtrack. *Cat Concerto* (1947) as well as a host of other animated cartoons featuring anthropomorphized animals use this piece of music. *White God* also fits into the tradition of “lost dog come home” films, although the idea of home in this film is destabilized, and the dog in question very clearly does not “consent” “to be mastered”, which Fudge explains in the Lassie Come-Home story “makes natural the hierarchy inherent in that relation” (Fudge 2008, pp. 29–30). By making the effort to see the dogs as animals, as intelligent, communicative, individual non-human beings in a specific context, by destabilizing the normative animal categories, the narrator shows the inadequacy and unsuitability of the current normalized terms and images in which humans try to confine animals as pets, as consumable and disposable objects, as dangerous and thus killable threats, and as metaphors for human characteristics. Jonathan Burt explains that “the ways in which the animal is seen and not seen—the connection between presence and absence—” are implicated in how the animal is represented (Burt 2001, p. 207). “[W]e choose to find a place for them in a well-organized cultural logic that divides the animal world into categories like pet, vermin, threatened species and expendable species” (p. 204). All of these easily lead to another human construction of animality, because all of them are based on the idea of human dominance (Fudge 2008). As a film, *White God* already has the

¹ The brothers Luke and Body, so the story goes, were found by Theresa Ann Miller in a trailer park in Arizona just in time before they were to go to a shelter (Ventre 2015).

potential to model what Vivian Sobchack terms “actively seeing ‘the’ world or a world through the eyes of an ‘other’” (Sobchack 2016, p. 88), here as a caring and curious narrator who makes visible “their normal invisibility” (Berger 1972, p. 16). By pushing us to imagine a non human-centric urban space we could co-create with dogs outside of the film, it reminds us, that “dogs have been watching human beings for a long time” (Williams 2007, p. 104). It emphatically concludes that it is time for us to pay attention.

2. Synopsis

The “brave and tantalizing” (Nelson 2015, p. 68) *Fehér isten/White God* (2014) is the sixth feature film of Hungarian director Kornél Mundruczó², earning the 2014 Un Certain Regard award at Cannes and the Golden Octopus at the Strasbourg European Fantastic Film Festival. In addition, Luke and Body won the Dog Palme for their performances as Hagen. The film follows how one mixed breed dog, Hagen and his benevolent thirteen-year-old companion, Lili (Zsolia Psotta) come to terms with their forced separation, a separation that occurs after Lili’s mother (Lili Horváth) leaves her daughter with her estranged husband, Lili’s father, Daniel (Sandor Zsoter). Having lost his wife, his job as a professor to now work as a meat inspector in a slaughterhouse, as well as the affection and respect of his daughter, Daniel acts out by refusing to pay a fictional tax³ levied at owners of what animal control terms “mixed breed street dogs” and tosses Hagen out of the car on the side of the highway in Budapest. Hagen, separated from Lili, experiences the streets of Budapest alone. He finds a dog companion, a terrier, Marlene (Ally and Stella) with a rope leash around her neck, and a dogland in a no man’s land, part abandoned building site, part garbage dump. He is caught by a homeless man (János Derzsi), who sells him to a fighting dog seller, who sells him to a dogfighting trainer (Szabolcs Thuróczy), who renames him Max, and proceeds to turn the pet into an animal. Hagen/Max becomes a dogfighting champion, kills another dog, escapes, and refinds dogland and the terrier. The ever-present animal control (Gergely Bánki, Tamás Polgár, and some uncredited others) catches them. Hagen witnesses the euthanasia of another dog. He stops eating. He snarls at the hand of a girl (Orsolya Tóth) and is sentenced to death a second time (the first because of a wound). He rips open the neck of an employee who is trying to put him in the cage of dead dogs waiting. They escape, run freely through the streets of Budapest. Widespread panic ensues on the streets and in the concert hall, which the dog pack enters and disrupts. There is a curfew. The fighting dog trainer, the fighting dog seller, the butcher (Ervin Nagy) who threatened to kill Hagen with a cleaver when the dog was looking for scraps in the garbage, and the nosy neighbor (Erika Bodnár) in Lili’s father’s house, who called the authorities on Hagen the first morning, are killed by the dogs in seeming acts of revenge. The pack ends up at the slaughterhouse, presumably looking for the Lili’s father. There they find Lili—who plays her trumpet—leading to the re-relating at the end.

While Hagen is experiencing a new Budapest to the one he had previously known, Lili bikes and then runs through the streets putting up signs looking for him, hating her father, then reconciling with him, and playing a solo in the orchestra. When the dogs disrupt the performance, she leaves to look for Hagen, feeling that their presence there is a message for her. She witnesses the bodies of the fighting dog seller, the body of the butcher, and the body of nosy neighbor. She goes to save her father from Hagen’s revenge. She sees Hagen in the “canine beast” before her and asks him to see Lili in the “human beast” before him. She plays her trumpet. They share silence and a gaze; re-relate, “become with”.

² Mundruczó films include *This I Wish and Nothing More* (2000), *Pleasant Days* (2002) which won the Silver Leopard in Locarno, *Johanna* (2005), *Delta* (2008) and *Tender Son: The Frankenstein Project* (2010).

³ A dog tax was proposed on all “mutts,” but did not pass a few years before the film was made (Taubin 2015, p. 87).

3. Alternative Globalizations

Haraway suggests that the process of “becoming with” is “a practice of becoming worldly”, that is a potential shared “retying” of what she calls “the knots of ordinary multispecies living on earth” into a “more just and peaceful other-globalization” (Haraway 2008, p. 3). The film *White God* imagines this retying between street dogs and humans in the courtyard of a Hungarian slaughterhouse, defying the usual association with the place as one of “finality” and death”. To get there, however, the narrator first presents the current normative animal categories/“knots” as defined by humans: street dog (free-roaming but hunted and successfully contained as shelter dog), pet, wild beast, pest, disposable object. By having a single dog, Hagen, represent all categories throughout the course of the film, the narrator attempts to destabilize these categories and open up the possibility for alternative ways for humans and dogs to share urban space, ways “for getting on together with some grace” (ibid, p. 15), “in specific difference” (p. 16). Both Haraway and the film’s narrator call for “companionate relations” (ibid), but leave “becoming” room in the term. Both urge viewers to look respectfully at the other, “[t]o hold in regard, to respond, to look back reciprocally, to notice, to pay attention, to have courteous regard for, to esteem” since “all of this is tied to polite greeting, to constituting the polis, where and when species meet” (p. 19).

4. Why Dogs?

McLean structured her edited volume *Cinematic Canines: Dogs and Their Work in the Fiction Film* around the question: “Why dogs in film now?” (McLean 2014, p. 10). Mundruczó has stated: “*White God* is “a dog movie, but it’s not about dogs” (Dollar 2015). I argue that the answer to the question: why dogs in a Hungarian film in 2014? Is that dogs help represent the instability of the idea of home, of Hungarian national identity in the 21st Century. According to the director, “Europe’s current fear [is] the uprising of the masses”. Since the 1990s, Hungarian national identity has had several iterations from being a member of the Eastern Bloc, to becoming a transit country for migrants from the Eastern Bloc, a member of the EU, and a transit and sometimes destination country for migrants from Afghanistan, Libya, Syria etc. Even before 2015 put Hungary in the international news due to Prime Minister Orbán famously proclaiming that the refugee crisis is “Germany’s problem” (BBC News 2015); before the Budapest Keleti train station became the site of “stuck” migrants; and before Hungary’s anti-immigrant border fences were erected, there was a growing sense of displacement in Europe in general and Hungary in particular. The film alludes to this identity “crisis” not only through the fictional dog tax that urban officials have put in place to prevent the “self-selected breeding” (McHugh) of the “non-Hungarian purebred dogs” in Budapest, but also through the film’s repeated use of *Hungarian Rhapsody 2*, a product of Hungarian nationalism of the 19th century, one which Mundruczó considers “an emblem for Hungary and also for something has passed” (Fehér isten/*White God* 2014). Much like the mongrel dogs who are not seen as individuals, the migrants are embodied by the negative and flat figure of “the Afghan” (as listed in the film’s credits) restaurant owner who is not viewed with compassion, but simply as a consumer (he is shown and heard eating, he owns a grill, he buys and sells dogs whom he mistreats, and is shown counting money while eating—i.e., he is the stereotype of the migrant who simply takes from his adopted country⁴). Anti-Roma racism is present directed

⁴ Here is not the place to discuss this figure in detail. While one could of course read the director’s vague statements about the masses rising up as alluding to nationalist masses who feel that they are in the minority, I choose to read the film as one which critiques subjugation of one group by another. I think this very one-dimensional figure, one of the one-dimensional figures killed by the one-dimensional construction “wild beast”, appears in this film to remind us that humans do not only “flatten” and have “low expectations” of “mutts” but certain people, too. Smuts describes “dog-human relationships” until now “have more to do with ... [his] limited expectations and mistaken assumptions than with who they really are” (Smuts 2006, p. 124). The same could be said about our expectations and assumptions about other others. It seems significant that the only figures that Hagen the Beast kills are completely one dimensional. We never see the dead body of the trainer, although, it is clearly implied that he will die from being torn apart by the dogs. Similarly, although we do not know for certain whether the pound director dies from being knocked down and run over by the dogs, we do not see her “dead.” She,

toward the marginalized figure of the dogtrainer, whom interestingly the narrator does not portray as one-dimensionally as the “Afghan”. Mundruczó makes no bones about using dogs as symbols in his film, declaring that “the dog is the symbol of the eternal outcast whose master is his god” (*Fehér isten/White God* 2014). He justifies his choice of “animals as the subject instead of minorities”, because he wanted to “focus [...] as freely and with the least amount of taboos possible” on what he terms “a caste-system [which] has become more sharply defined”, “parallel to the questionable advantages of globalization” (ibid). While he seems to use “animals”, “dogs”, “minorities” and “masses” almost as synonyms, Mundruczó clarifies that his “intention was to demonstrate that mankind and beasts share the same universe. [...] [I]f we are able to position ourselves in the place of different species do we have the chance to lay down our arms” (ibid). Like Haraway, he seems to also hope for a type of “autre mondialisation.”

5. Homing Dogs

Dogs are often associated with home. Fudge goes so far as to say that home is “where the pet is” (Fudge 2008, p. 23). Franklin credits canines with giving humans “ontological security” (Fudge 2008, p. 17). The “story of the return of the lost dog” represented by the *Lassie Come Home* novel is “an important interrogation of the role of the pet in the construction of the human home and thus of the human” (Fudge 2008, p. 27), one whose “constant re-use and revision” (p. 15), indicates an important connection between the figure of the lost dog and the idea of home. Indeed, this film is a version of this come-home story, one fitting to the current instability many feel. If home has become unfamiliar, what better way to represent displacement than to destabilize the figure of *canis familiaris*? If one can find ways to communicate with a *canis unfamiliaris*, then perhaps one can find ways of feeling at home in a home that has become unfamiliar.

White God's narrator appears to agree with Horowitz, that “[f]amiliarity is both a boon and a bane to the domestic dog, *Canis familiaris*.” It “prevents us from seeing dogs for who they are” (Horowitz 2014, p. 219). Horowitz claims that “[m]ovies using dogs represent various manifestations of the use of dogs as props, as veritable family members, or even as nonindividuals, instead of animals” (Horowitz 2014, pp. 219–20). For her, seeing dogs as animals is necessary to stem our misreadings of dogs, that is seeing them as animals defining themselves specifically and in context, not subsumed under a generalized human term. Erica Fudge agrees, believing that “we need to try to find an alternative way of engaging with the presence of the animal that emphasizes its status as *animal*” (p. 39). Indeed she goes so far as to describe pet dogs as “animals out of place” (Fudge 2008, p. 19). To see a pet, then, as an animal “the pet would need to have a status that has not yet been traced” (p. 40), a status which includes the “recognition that pets themselves can make meaning” (p. 41), and thus that they can “escape our understanding” (p. 46). For Fudge and Horowitz, seeing dogs as animals, allows a “humbled” (p. 46) viewer to reengage with them differently, to “reimagine their place and his/her own space in normally human ordered spaces. In *White God*, the pet Hagen is defamiliarized by not choosing to come home. At the end, however, Lili is “humbled” and sees Hagen as an “animal” though not as a figure of human defined “animality.” In a world in which “movement is the common state of humanity after globalization” (Fudge 2008, p. 35), a world which for Berger in the 1990s already was a world in which “being homeless is becoming a norm” (ibid, p. 34), an unfamiliar dog might help one create a sense of home. If “home” is no longer a “space under control”, as Mary Douglas defines it (Fudge 2008, p. 19), then the pet is no longer associated with a place that is controlled. This opens up possible new ways of relating to dogs in an unstable world in which “[e]migration, forced or chosen, across national frontiers or from village to metropolis is the quintessential experience of our

too, although certainly not a positive figure, is not as one-dimensional as the others. Both she and the animal trainer claim dominance over the dogs, but both also to some extent show a type of “affection.” In some sense these two figures embody Tuan’s “dominance with a human face”, or “[d]ominance [...] combined with affection” (qtd in Fudge 2008, p. 21).

time" (Fudge 2008, p. 34). If Lassie no longer has a home to come home to, she is open to creating a home anywhere and with anyone. In some sense, the idea of home, is always that of a lost stable and unchanging idyll. It never existed. As Fudge admits "in reality the human is never made secure by the existence of a pet. But that does not mean [...] that we do not search for stability, that we will stop telling ourselves the story of Lassie" (Fudge 2008, p. 38). She also reminds us that "[t]he story of the come-home is also its other: the story of the forever lost" (p. 33).

6. Mood Cue: Displacement

The narrator's basic mode is to disorient the viewer, even if only slightly. The film manipulates our moods particularly through its music and through the progression of images that relate to each other not only in terms of the plot, but in terms of normative categories for dogs/animals. As Carrol explains: "Moods are incorporative and inclusive." (Carrol 2003, p. 527) As such they "pervade perception rather than focusing it" (ibid, p. 528). He points out that "pre-title sequences [...] are often used to establish the mood in the audience that the filmmaker supposes will best suit the reception of the film" (p. 542).

The pre-title sequence certainly establishes the mood that stays with the viewer throughout the film, a mood of displacement and disorientation, of being discomfited, unsettled. There is a certain fear, but it is not overwhelming. The narrator provides an extreme long shot, showing an eerily empty Budapest. A bridge splits the image longitudinally at an angle and empty highways stretch out horizontally. The music is very muted at first, plaintive, then becomes foreboding and ominous. Then one spies a lone figure on a bicycle coming towards the viewer at an angle on the bridge. One also sees a white bird land on a lamppost next to another bird. Unsure what to make of this little bit of life in this barren and unfamiliar because empty urban landscape, the viewer is tense. Indicated is a post-apocalyptic space of sorts, but one without dead bodies or building ruins. I associated it with a city vacated because of some environmental toxin. When the dogs arrived, I thought of the dogs left and roaming the streets of the abandoned towns of the Fukushima prefect. The scene is enigmatic, slow; we are given time to see the girl approach, to see the emptiness as the music builds up. We hear the car blinker of the abandoned car on the bridge very loudly; we hear the bicycle chain as it moves; we hear an eerie windswept sound motion as it were. The girl in a green hoodie is shown from a low angle in slow motion. She is clearly looking for something, some sign of life, which appears unexpectedly with a tense and dramatic crescendo which is followed by galloping, panting, and barking. We see a pack of dogs running through the streets. The camera gives us time to see this pack, to see the individual dogs in the pack from a low "dog" level angle, from the side, and from above. While at first the music and the sudden appearance of a huge pack of dogs was frightening, when we look at the pack, especially at the individual dogs in the pack, our assumptions that this galloping pack of panting and barking dogs is threatening and ominous, that this is pure "animality" unleashed, is replaced by the realization that many of the dogs are wagging their tails, that they seem to be enjoying their freedom, that they are focused but not intent on prey. The girl, too, does not react as expected. She looks back at them, but her face, although perhaps showing awe at this incredible life force coming toward her, does not necessarily show fear. She does not pedal faster does not seek shelter in one of the buildings, but keeps pedaling. For a while it almost appears as if they are following her, but then the dogs part and move past her, they are moving with her, sharing this space. It is unsettling and enigmatic. Is this a dream? Before we can decide, it cuts to the title *White God* written white on a black background as the credits had been, tying back to the credits and joining the next scene, similarly bright in the afternoon sun, an idyllic park scene this time, in which the same girl plays with her dog surrounded by other dog owners. Both figures are full of life, running and actively playing. There is a big black dog to the side of the shot. The girl tells her dog to give her the toy, that "it is not yours." (*White God*) and then pets him praising him for being "a good boy" (*White God*). All seems well and whole in the world, except that a voice calls Lili and the girl puts her dog on a leash and talks to her mother about her mother's imminent departure for three months to Australia.

The spell of solid, stable home is broken, not only by the talk of the mother leaving for an extended period of time, but more strongly by the unexpected cut from this safe place to an image of blood pooling on a white tile floor. We then see what we later find out is the meat inspector looking out of place and slightly sad/unsettled and then we see what he is looking at: a cow carcass whose feet and head have been cut off being slowly skinned. There is no music, just the sound of the knife scraping the skin, then later the heavy sliding sounds and overpowering sight of the cow being disemboweled. The disemboweled cow is then sliced in half by a giant machine. The meat inspector takes a tiny knife and cuts open the heart—we see and hear this clearly, and announces that the cow is “suitable for consumption” (*White God*). Then he stamps the carcass that is then electronically transferred to other hanging cow carcasses. Then we cut to the girl and her mother sitting in the car in the parking lot of the slaughterhouse seemingly oblivious to the carcasses that are being moved into the waiting truck. Even the dog lies quietly on the girl’s knees, not at all responding to the smells of the place, as if this were just any old interchangeable parking lot. Inside the slaughterhouse, Daniel, the meat inspector for whom those in the car are waiting, tries to wipe off blood that dripped onto his shirt, gives up when he simply makes more of a mess, and then blows bubbles from a bubble blower he has in his pocket into the mirror in the bathroom. Similarly as incongruous as dropping your daughter off at a slaughterhouse is the act of a grown man blowing soap bubbles in a slaughterhouse bathroom with blood on his shirt. The slaughterhouse foreman interrupts him and hands him a package of meat now wrapped in brown paper for the daughter. The inspector signs one more piece of paper outside as a giant muscle man waits and other meat pieces are transferred to a truck. And then the “handoff” of the daughter occurs in the middle of the slaughterhouse parking lot as if this is a completely normalized space for such an exchange. When the mother drives off after some tense words with the father, the narrator watches Lili and Hagen standing where the mother’s car had been, the distance between the father and the pair seems to grow. When they drive off after another strange exchange, the camera shows us two cows being led orderly on the crosswalk by two old men leading them to their slaughter. Then we cut to the girl and her father opening the door to the building and being immediately accosted by a neighbor woman who is affronted that he would bring “that mutt” in here, that such mutts “need to be reported” (*White God*), that there is a list “now”. In hindsight, the enigmatic pre-title sequence seems almost idyllic compared to how people treat each other and non-animals in this crowded city.

I do not have space to discuss each scene, but this description of the beginning shows how the film makes surprising cuts and how important diegetic and non-diegetic sound is. The diegetic sound often seems overloud, as if the narrator is focusing on the sound. The soundscape of the film is significant in setting the mood, of making the viewer seem slightly displaced even as many of the images of animals and social behaviors shown on screen are familiar. This soundscape includes the sounds of dogs—barking, whimpering, howling, breathing, running, hitting the pavement as part of the sound world of the city—cars, buses, church bells, bikes, doors opening and closing, TVs running, money bills being counted, parking brakes being pulled, water dripping from faucets, sirens firing, gunshots, bike chains, television newscasts, meat being cut, cooked, and chewed, rain, wind, thunder, people bickering, screaming, crying, putting down others, the cries of victory, the lulling sounds of pity, the barking of commands, the sounds of dismissal and of praise, diegetic music of connection and loss, and non-diegetic music. There are many scenes that do not include non-diegetic music. These are often long, but they are not silent. The narrator is attuned to the sounds around it. It makes us hear what we might normally (like to) drown out, makes very present that which we might (like to) “over” hear as it were. Perhaps it does this because it is trying to imagine how the world sounds and looks not just from a human perspective but also from the “invisible” dogs, whom it also makes very visible and audible. The film cannot provide a smell scape, which is so significant to canine experience, but at least invokes a soundscape that sometimes competes with the visuals. The running faucet in the bathroom in which Daniel locks Hagen is an example of this. Lili’s loud footsteps in a city under curfew also help create the experience of emptiness and loneliness. The “real” sounds also link the fictional space

to the outside world, to the cars in the background of the space in which the viewer is watching the film, for instance.

In a relatively short amount of time, enough to establish the relationships between the main characters, we have been confronted with dog categories of pack, pet, meat, and mutt. This fairly quick succession from one category to the next destabilizes the categories, especially since, with the exception of being seen as meat, (although Daniel and the neighbor see him as disposable), Hagen ends up embodying all of them. He signifies the pack because he is the “leader” of the pack. The narrator sometimes keeps his distance, sometimes is very present as embodied by a handheld camera that sometimes moves jerkily or shakes. Everything seems a bit over the top—the mean father, the mean neighbor, the mean conductor, the sounds, the pristine white uniforms of everyone in the slaughterhouse (except for Daniel’s shirt) etc. Although we empathize with Lili and with Hagen, the narrator always keeps us distanced by moving our focus, whether because suddenly we hear a loud sound, or the camera cuts to something unexpected, or the music does not quite fit the actions of the scenes. It also lets us see Hagen give the “same” expression in very different circumstances—he gives the cocked head, quizzical look when looking at the father in the slaughterhouse courtyard as he does to Marlene, the terrier, he meets at the butcher, as he does to the director of the pound after he has just killed a man. Additionally, the pack’s meaning is ambiguous, portrayed as it is as both individualized and as spectacle. Thus while destabilizing, unsettling Hagen’s meaning for the viewer and for Lili, the narrator also shows how others stabilize his meaning by forcing him into their constructions.

7. Spectacular Pack

The pack of dogs which appears in the pre-title sequence, then in the middle after we have learned the context, and which remains prominent to the end of the film is filmed as spectacle. According to Nick Browne, the “the rhetoric of the spectacular” includes three things: it must be big, it must be viewed often or for a long time, and it must be at an angle which highlights the force of the thing being filmed, but “not its meaning” (Murray and Heumann 2006, p. 47). The pack of dogs certainly fits these requirements: it is very big—250 dogs; it is shown repeatedly and for a long enough time to experience its force from the side, from overhead, and low angle face on. Our automatic assumption that a pack meant “unbridled animality” was unsettled in the pre-title sequence. When the pack appears again, this time in context, and accompanied with similar urgent, throbbing, ominous, rhythmic music, it is almost disappointing, because this time the human reactions seem somewhat comic, somewhat out of place and extreme for the reality of what the dogs are doing. Indeed, the humans disrupt the beauty of the moving spectacle. On the one hand, it seems natural that when faced with a pack of running dogs one would run and feel threatened. Yet, the dogs for the most part ignore the people screaming and stumbling as if in a different movie. Those dogs who do “attack”- attack bags and hoses. A few bark at specific people, but in the specific context it appears as if the dogs are “putting on a show”, as if they have decided to “act” the part they have been labeled, since the people are already responding to that part. It is almost as if they are enjoying the chaos—Hagen snarling at a particular person and another big black dog who hit a car door barking into the window of the woman who is screaming her head off. The narrator witnesses the human reactions to the dogs in a way that keeps the viewer from identifying with those screamers. Since the film here seems to be a combination of slapstick and horror genres, we are unsettled, but not necessarily scared. What is under scrutiny here, is our automatic assumptions, and our automatic relating to particular animals, here particular dogs, based on general assumptions. In addition, the dogs playing the “pack” here are not aggressive dogs. They really are just running and playing and snarling/barking on command. This destabilizes the image of the pack as dangerous threat to humans. As Sheehan explains, “[t]he recalcitrant actuality of animal being inevitably stymies all attempts at complete anthropomorphosis” (Sheehan 2008, p. 123). Burt agrees: “any form of [animal] representation will be either a fiction or in some way *falsely motivated*” (Sheehan 2008, p. 128). In this way the dog pack, a normalized human category to refer to animals as threat “signifies a node of resistance” not just “to the technological goal of complete image control” in terms

of film, but also against the goal of containing the animal other in clear categories. As Burt explains, “the animal is caught in an uncertain space between the natural and the contrived. The elements that make up the response to animal imagery appear to compose a similarly ambiguous space” (Burt 2002, p. 10). The narrator portrays the entire city as this ambiguous space, a space in which “the animal” is meant to follow “contrived” human orders, orders which the street dogs refuse to obey.

In *Dog*, McHugh gives the history of the mongrel dog as a figure of tension or resistance. She explains that by the 19th C the “urban stray dog” “embodying freedom of movement and especially the ability to move (and mate) among different classes [...] actively threatens bourgeois notions of stability.” As an “alternativ[e] to the status quo”, she notes, the “non-breed dog initially served as a figure of ironic contrast or chance, especially random public violence” (McHugh 2004, p. 134). Later, the stray mutt was used “as an exemplary victim” in literature demanding social change (McHugh 2004, p.135). Surprisingly constant, the stray dog today, “has become a cross-cultural trope”, one that “symbolizes even as it stakes out the limits to this process of seeing ourselves as well as other people in dogs” (McHugh 2004, p.136).

8. Lying Knots

“At one extreme, terms like mongrel and mutt make breed a kind of measuring stick, according to which most dogs fall short. Paralleling their use as ethnic racial epithets among humans these words imply degeneracy, degradation, and ultimately social chaos” (McHugh 2004, p. 129), precisely those things that according to the director not only Hungary fears but all of Europe. Mongrel, Mutt, fleabag, mixed breed street dog are all used in the film by those characters who degrade Hagen, the father, the butcher, and the nosy neighbor. The father is not thrilled with the news that he has to live with a dog for three months, but he truly turns against the dog after the neighbor humiliates him, implying that that his allowing that mutt to enter the building, that he is degrading the building. For the nosy neighbor, a mutt is a threat to order. She has no problem lying to animal control that the mutt “bit” her. The father and the conductor, too, see “mutt”, “fleabag”, disrupting presence as synonymous with social chaos and thus with animality. In order to be allowed back into the orchestra which she left when Hagen didn’t stay in the closet in which she put him during practice, the orchestra conductor not only expects an apology but also an admission that a “dog like that” conforms to his idea. He prompts her in her father’s and in the rest of the orchestra’s presence to “admit” that a mutt like Hagen belongs at the shelter because he bit her father. While it is clearly difficult for her to say this, she does so in order to be allowed back into the “community” of musicians. This is the second time in the film that Hagen has been accused of biting those who in fact have hurt him. It will occur one more time, after which, Hagen then does turn into a biter. I argue that the repetition makes the meaning. Hagen has been accused of biting three times and therefore in the eyes of the white god he is a biter. Of course, he never had a chance since a “mixed breed street dog” by definition needs to be “contained” by the urban authorities for their “non-Hungarianness.” The film shows how the dissemination of animal types regardless of accuracy ends up “producing” that those types. It doesn’t matter that Hagen does not bite, or that it was humans who goaded him to violence first as a fighting dog and then in order to save his life. He was a “dead dog” simply by being labeled a mutt, a mongrel, and thus a violent dangerous presence. In fact, the first time we see him playing with Lili in the park, the very picture of beloved pet, there is a large black dog off to the side sharing the space. Perhaps this is an ironic nod to Seurat’s painting which contrasts the black urban street dog with the little pug pet as McHugh describes in Chapter 3 of *Dog*. In this particular park, the big black dog and the mixed breed Hagen are both pets, but in hindsight, the black dog seemed to warn of the Hagen’s impending sinking into “street dog status”. The black dog, particularly the big black dog, has the tendency to be used by humans as symbols of outliers, of possible chaos, even death. In the film’s “pack” there are a lot of big black dogs, as indeed (Woodward et al. 2012) reveal- there are more big black dogs in shelters than nonblack dogs. However, they find that the “Big Black Dog Syndrome”, like other labels, does

not need empirical evidence to be repeated. The film's narrator reveals the damaging power of such labeling, and how it can actually engender the very "animality" which it names.

9. Mirror Beasts

Chaudhuri explains that "the human descent into primitive emotionality is figured as animality" (Chaudhuri 2003, p. 654). In part this is indicated by the fact that Hagen becomes what he has been labeled, i.e., literalizes the animal construct with which he has been defined: beast, animal. "The Animal" is visualized in the film when at the moment Hagen kills a man, he becomes the leader of a pack. The moment Hagen kills the employee, he becomes animal and Hagen the animal is not separate from the pack. Similarly, the moment that the dog seller sees Hagen as an uncontrollable "beast," he sees the rest of the pack appear. The news reporter (Csaba Faix) reports that, "The city's biggest shelter has become a battlefield. According to eye-witnesses the most alarming sight was how the dogs acted not like animals but like a well-organized army (*White God*)." As if on cue, the dog trainer who had been watching the news sees the pack in his house. While being pulled apart by the pack in front of his TV, he beseechingly looks for mercy from a powerful Hagen looming over him and snarling, who becomes the mirror image of the "beast" the trainer had impersonated by dressing up in a black hoodie, with a black bandana over his face and dark sunglasses. Much as the bum who first rescued him "turned" on him and declared that "I will show you who is master here" (*White God*) and like the trainer who at first seemed to gaze at Hagen respectfully but then grew ever more abusive, Hagen "turns" on humans by becoming less "doglike" and more "human." Lili only sees the pack after Hagen has snarled at her and has refused to "fetch." Yet, she is capable of moving past this and is able to see not only Hagen as an individual if unfamiliar dog but also the individual dogs in the pack. For her, the pack is not "the animal." At the end of the film, Hagen is one of an individualized pack of dogs, each dog with his/her own story, even if this story is as "invisible" to us.

Even before we see the pack and pet as images of dogs, we see them as words. While many films that use animal actors begin with a declaration that "No animal was harmed in the making of this film," this film begins with the declaration that "All of the untrained dogs who perform in this film were rescued from the streets or shelters and placed in homes with help from an adoption program" (*White God*). The former, as Rule following Lippert points out, "betrays a view of animals as collective beings not individuals." And that in so doing, "cinema reassures its spectators that they are singular and animals are plural" (Rule 2010, pp. 539–40). *White God's* white-worded declaration reassures its spectators that the dogs in the pack are singular, too, since each was "individualized" by finding a home. Indeed, the film begins with the claim that all the untrained dogs were adopted (*White God* 0:00:06) and ends with the same claim, after a list of names of "our dog friends" (*White God*) who made up the pack. In short, in becoming a pet who has found a "new famil[y] after the shoot" (*White God*), an invisible, thrown-away "Dog" is reanimated into this dog, this dog with a name and a person. A study found that "people ignorant of shelter dogs' outcomes rated dogs who had been adopted as more attractive than dogs who ultimately had been euthanized" (Hecht and Horowitz 2015, p. 154). Perhaps it senses that the many black shelter dogs in the film might not elicit positive responses from the viewers since, "[r]egarding coat color, a yellow-dog picture received a higher rating on 'agreeableness,' 'Conscientiousness,' and 'Emotional Stability' than an identical picture of the dog with a black coat" (p. 155).

10. Terrier Bridges to Dogland, a Self-Selected Home for Peopleless Dogs

now, somewhat arbitrarily, you are considered very cute by us humans . . . and we put you in television shows, and movies, and . . . and" (*Beginners* 2011)

As Lili is tentatively building a "home" connection with her father, Hagen escapes from the dogfighting arena and returns to dogland, that is, to the space Marlene had brought him after the two elude the butcher's cleaver. This place seems known to Marlene, who barks as she does periodically throughout the film to communicate to Hagen that he should follow. Here dogs run freely with no

humans in sight or on site. They run through the water and the mud. They urinate, run, sit, lie where they want to and when they want to. Marlene and Hagen, the two “character” dogs except for a brief initial running into the middle of dogland and thus into the space of the other dogs, stay separated from them, but by their own choice. Both find a spot on top of a hill and observe the other dogs. The narrator shows a long shot from behind them overlooking this no-man’s land where it seems all dogs are equal. The dogs running around in the water are free and do not appear to be acting, that is performing for a trainer and thus for the camera. They appear to be simply doing what they want. Marlene and Hagen, however, are set apart from these dogs, in part because they form their own group, but also because both have a history of being pets in the film’s story. While we do not know Marlene’s story, Marlene has a rope around her neck, which resembles the leash the homeless man tied around Hagen’s neck. Visually at least she is associated with having been “owned,” that is tied to a particular person. In addition, being a terrier, she is a familiar dog type in the movies, TV, and advertisements, indeed, like Asta in *The Thin Man* series a “guide” (Ross and Castonguay 2014) between worlds, here, not between human classes, but between petland and dogland. While Hagen and Marlene share the space with the other dogs, they are also removed from the others by their perhaps more recent ties to humans. The other dogs have no collars like Hagen and no ropes like Marlene. They are “freer” as it were, perhaps more at ease in this dogland. Marlene and Hagen do not appear ill at ease, but they choose a thrown out sofa on which to lie at night instead of the mud on which other dogs lie. Visually they are set apart from the other strays, in an “elsewhere” between “petland” and “dogland”. However, they seem perfectly content, having found “home” in their companionship. They communicate with the other dogs. Marlene even warns them when the animal control since from her vantage point she sees their arrival sooner than the other dogs. While the film showed dogland without accompanying music, by only giving the natural sounds the dogs might hear—they splashing in the water, barking, the sound of cars and car alarms, ominous non-diegetic music is added when animal control arrives. This is similar music to the music that accompanies the “pack” when it runs through the streets normally labeled “human” (or at least human vehicle space). The music lends a mood of tension, of fear, or disorientation. Here, however, it is the humans who are encroaching, who are breaching an “animal” space.

Animal control arrives by opening the green doors that close off this site where houses used to stand, doors that are similar to the shelter’s outer green doors. This no-man’s land, however, is much more of a “shelter” than the shelter, much more of a home space, that is a secure canine space than the “shelter” is. It is humans who enter this dog space and attack the dogs, rounding up these peaceful dogs as if they were vermin, ridding this human empty, human unused space of canine life. Although Marlene and Hagen escape from animal control the first time; they are hunted down and are found and rounded up by 6 animal control officers, as they are playing on the banks of the Danube. Unlike the dogs in dogland, Hagen and Marlene play tug of war, as Lili and Hagen had played when they were introduced. While Hagen in the course of the film is presented in the guise of dangerous beast, Marlene never is. She is always associated with pet, at least for the viewer, even if the animal control officer who kills her sees her and every dog that night as beast. She still plays the traditional sidekick role, although here, she chooses to be Hagen’s sidekick, not a human’s.

Often associated with screwball comedy, the terrier plays an important role in bringing the film’s main couple together. In this film, Marlene provides glimpses into how *White God* could have ended happily as part of a screwball comedy film, in which chaos leads to a happy end. Yet, a happy end would imply a return to human order, to clear categories of pet. In the rationale of this film, then, such a happy end would not be desired. Her murder makes clear that no dog in this film will be coming home. The home the terrier is associated with at least traditionally in movies, is one the film is criticizing as well. Indeed, *White God* asks the viewer to re-see the terrier not only as reliable “quasi-human” side-kick and quirky companion, but also as animal in Horowitz’ sense. Although Marlene and the dog euthanized on the table in the shelter are victimized, there are brown terrier

mixes in the pack, who are very present running with the pack and at the end, in this temporary space of seers being seen.

Like Asta, whose image in six films of the *Thin Man* series was used to approach “charged issues that are salient in the screwball comedy, such as class, labor, gender, romance, and marital dynamics” (Ross and Castonguay 2014, p. 80), Marlene the terrier alludes to how pets, specifically terriers have been used in films, and how these images have informed constructions of dogs outside of film. The narrator asks us to examine our response to her on-screen murder and compare it with our response to the on-screen murder of many pack dogs in the tunnel, dogs whom we see dying individual deaths, but whom we have not engaged with on a personal level before their deaths. Do we respond less to the yelps and falling of the “unknown” dogs than to Marlene’s quivering, bleeding body? Do we feel differently toward the anonymous police shooters behind the barricade than we do towards the one animal control man who responds to Hagen licking his hand, positively? If so, why? The narrator makes visible the death of the “invisible” dogs that happen daily in shelters. It also visibly kills Marlene, the more “visible” dog in human society, that is, the pet. It asks us to consider both the stray and the pet as equals, not in death but in life. Killing those pack dogs in the tunnel, the narrator argues, is equivalent to killing Marlene. Each dog is an individual even if we do not know the backstory.

At its extreme, the chaos that Asta embodies threatens to overwhelm social order, write Ross and Castonguay (2014, p. 91). “Somewhere between rigid and utterly anarchic lies the irreverent balance that is at the heart of the screwball comedy” (ibid), a between space that is also to a certain extent promoted in the film *White God*, despite its not being a screwball comedy. I argue that this space is represented by dogland in the film.

11. Saved for Dogland

The butcher then notices them and since for him, the dogs are vermin/pests that threaten his business, he defines them as the expendable enemy. Not only that, but the narrator shows him treating dogs as meat; when he threatens Hagen with a cleaver he tells him “I’ll gobble you up” (*White God*). We not only see, but hear him hacking through bones, seeing all animals as containable if cut up into pieces. The narrator also implicates the unseen but heard customer, who asks for the piece of meat which the butcher then divides. In short, as in the slaughterhouse scene the narrator focuses on the violence of butchering.

In this scene, the butcher is shown as the villain, shown from a lower angle in a medium shot wielding a huge weapon and cornering Hagen into a small space. Marlene prevents his demise, by biting the butcher as he is about to strike. Non-diegetic music suddenly is heard and the potential horror film turns into buddy movie as the two dogs run through the streets and end up in dogland. The music, however, bridges this low angle scene of dogs running through the streets together with the earlier scene of the pack of dogs running through the streets. While different, the tone is similar, or the mood that it creates. The music is foreboding and ominous. It would have fitted the scene from which the two dogs are escaping. We might expect music that seems more uplifting since they have escaped the enemy. Of course, it could indicate that there is only worse to come, and yet the dogs look do not look menacing. While people scared of dogs, might react by being frightened at the site of these two running dogs, and while terriers can of course bite, the terrier running with the bigger dog, deflates the possible danger of the image of a big dog running through the city streets. Plus, we already know the dog and that he is friendly. However, by using music evoking a similar mood for the scene of two dogs running through the streets as it does with the images of 250 dogs, including terriers, it asks us to consider how numbers affect how we read dogs. In that scene, the music seemed fitting; what was unsettling was that the dogs did not seem to be in attack mode, they seemed just to be running not attacking. There seems a mismatch between the images and the music as there is in this scene. Here as Marlene and Hagen run away from the butcher, most viewers will be rooting for them.

The narrator takes us gently into dogland as it were, by giving “it” a familiar “face”—that of Marlene. In contrast to the “big black dogs” with whom she is first seen outside the butcher shop, Marlene the terrier is familiar and seemingly “safe.” It is she who brings Hagen to dogland, to the land that is full of “big black dogs.” Yet, then *White God* shows us Hagen rejecting Marlene, becoming more like the “big black dogs”—less familiar, less “safe; , and then finally her being shot in front of us. Without the terrier, has Hagen finally crossed over to the side of animality? In the clear categories of the white God, yes, he has. Why is it necessary to kill the terrier; to leave us with Hagen as leader of the unfamiliar mongrels? The narrator is tearing away the bandaid as it were, bringing us into unfamiliar territory at the end without the crutch of the familiar terrier dog so associated with pet. It does this to test us, to see if we will engage with these unfamiliar dogs assembled in the *abattoir* courtyard.

Described by a critic as “a scene-nibbling Jack Russell terrier named Marlene” (Dargis 2015), her terrier looks are familiar to those interested in films with dogs or to many from advertisements⁵ seemingly more “readable” than those of Hagen perhaps, or the other street dogs because the terrier-type, especially Jack Russells, have performed as sidekicks, eliciting sympathy, mirroring their “owner’s” emotions, a kind of shorthand or gauge. Sometimes a foil, pitting his will against that of the owner or another human, but in the end loyal above all else. The film expands and diversifies the cinematic dog figure not only through the diversity of dogs in the film but also to a large extent by not anthropomorphizing these dogs. There remains a distance between the dogs and the viewer, even with Hagen. In a sense Hagen and the other dogs remain closed off, maintain a distance.

Interestingly, although we are never given Marlene’s name during the film, we find out that the nameless terrier has the name Marlene and is played by Stella and Ally. Her lack of name at least while we were watching the film does not prevent her from being a character despite not having a name, despite being personless in the film story. Giving the fictional dog performed by two real dogs, a name outside of the film, that is in the credit frame of the film draws attention to how important naming dogs can be for our perception of them as individuals. The character on screen was individualized because of her ability to communicate with and befriend Hagen; a name did not individualize her any more than the list of names of the adopted dogs helps us to visualize which dog the name refers to. Also striking is that Pimpa’s whelps are named Pimpa’s whelp 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5; and that another six whelps are named whelp 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. The lack of “human” name for these puppies seems to call into question that they were truly adopted; that outside of the film they are seen as individuals.

The “generic” terrier is the type of dog one is used to in films in which dogs play the cute “almost human” role; it is anthropomorphized like Tom in *Tom and Jerry* cartoons, and like them reappears again and again portrayed by different dogs, often several of a generation (Asta was played by several dogs, as was Eddie in *Frasier*). Significantly, it is this dog whom we see get killed, away from the pack. She is given an individualized death, is not killed as one of many like the dogs in the tunnel.⁶ Like the dog seller, the trainer, the butcher, the animal control officer, the nosy neighbor, this particular terrier is difficult to separate from its role, here as “being cute.”⁷ Indeed, this one is visually linked to humans by a noose-like rope leash, which she wears even as a street dog. When this leash is finally removed in the

⁵ Terriers, whether Boston Terriers (see Mastercard’s Lost Dog ad available at <http://www.businessinsider.com/advertisers-are-obsessed-with-boston-terriers-2013-8>) or Jack Russells (see McDonald’s 1995 Lost Dog Television Commercial, available on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9to3kVTCPY> or the VW ad available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nLTh6PhCCmQ>) are popular in advertisements.

⁶ Even the dog who gets the lethal injection while Hagen is watching seems to be a terrier-type dog. However, other terrier mixes are part of the pack, like the one given an unanthropomorphized moment in the end, as the narrator focuses on another unnamed terrier-type lying down in the last scene.

⁷ The AKC (American Kennel Club 2017) “often link[s] physical appearance to temperament characteristics” (Hecht and Horowitz 2015, p. 255). On the akc.org/dog-breeds/groups/terrier, for instance, the terrier group as a whole is described as having “the distinctive terrier personality. These are feisty, energetic dogs [...]. In general, they make engaging pets, but require owners with the determination to match their dog’s lively characters.” The site describes the Parson Russell Terrier as “bold, friendly, athletic, and clever;” the Rat Terrier as “friendly, lovable, inquisitive, fearlessly game for just about anything;” and the Russell Terrier as “alert, lively, inquisitive, and friendly.” The nameless terrier in *White God* exhibits these characteristics.

pound, she is symbolically cut off from generic “cute” terrier to become just another generic street dog. In short, she is always generalized. Individual, small, cute, “white”⁸ dogs are usually labeled “suitable for human consumption” (entertainment), that is, if they have an owner. This is made clear in the white god language of the film that alternates generic breeds—“Speciality Rottweiler Trainer” (*White God*)—and generic street dogs—“all of the *untrained* dogs” (*White God*)—with named “dog friends” (*White God*) and the very broad “animal” objects of the “animal trainers.” The credits state that the “[p]rincipal dog characters supplied by Teresa Ann Miller” and that “Hagen is owned and trained by Teresa Ann Miller (*White*).” It is clear that Teresa May Miller, is not only the trainer of Luke and Body, their dual identities erased by the character name, but also that she is the owner and provider of the professional canines in the film, that is of Luke, Body, and Stella and Ally (*ibid*). Of course, terriers can bite, and were bred to kill what humans deemed “vermin,” but shooting this dog at point blank range to take control of the “pack” that is taking revenge elsewhere is an empty gesture of human revenge. Not that the killing of the other dogs in the tunnel is not revenge, but the fact that a single dog is equated with the pack is telling. Granted, this animal control officer is now out to kill animal control officer killers, i.e., dogs. For him and for most of the Budapest populace in the film shown as frightened for their lives, even this little dog is just a “figure of animality,” just one more dead dog object to kill and throw in a body bag.

Significantly, when Hagen turns into the “beast” he is separated from the “pet” Marlene. The terrier had disappeared from Hagen’s side after Hagen killed the pound employee. Separated from the pack, she had reappeared after the dog pack’s revenge is already in progress, where we (and Hagen) first encountered her at the meat market. She remained behind at the butcher shop now no longer hampered by the butcher. The horrified Lili has just come upon the dead butcher, throws up in response, and calls her father to warn him that he might be Hagen’s next target. It is then that the little terrier barks at and leads Lili on her bike in her search for Hagen. The terrier is guide dog to death (for the butcher) and guide dog to Lili and to Hagen (in terms of helping Hagen survive and acclimate to life on the streets). She is faithful companion, playmate, guide—positive roles often associated with dogs. But there is no room for her as representative of the domesticated cute companion in the “beast pack.” And so the little dog keeps running toward *mal* (Steeves 2011). As the terrier shakes in pain, bleeding from a shot wound, the man stands over her and delivers the kill shot up close and personal. This terrier is expendable, since she does not “hear [her] master’s voice.” In the white god’s world a street dog is a street dog is a street dog.⁹

12. Inconsiderate Sympathy

We have witnessed a bloody dogfight; we have witnessed a trainer beating, injecting, and goading Hagen into “beast.” In the shelter examination/killing room scene, we see a dog being put to death. And shortly after this scene, the narrator will show us Hagen’s bloody face with a piece of a man’s neck hanging from his teeth, as well as the blood-spattered windows of the restaurant, and the bloody bodies of the butcher and the neighbor. In including this piece of the cartoon, the animation of a cat dressed in a Tux mimicking a performance of a piece of High Culture, the film not only emphasizes the trappings of “civilization,” but recognizes its own acts of mimicry. Tom mimics the expected “deep” feelings of a pianist interpreting Liszt’s music, dressed in the proper attire for the part. The shelter director is dressed as the authority figure that she is, here in a white coat, usually associated with doctors or vets who are meant to heal. In this white coat, with Liszt’s music turned into “dying room”

⁸ When potential adopters are looking at the dogs in the pound, the pound director tells an older woman, “There are white ones (*White God*),” implying, that at least for this woman, a white dog might be more desirable than the other “mutts” in the pound.

⁹ I am making the assumption that the terrier did not participate in killing and mauling the dead butcher, in whose establishment Lili finds her. At that time, however, she is not with the body and she is not bloody. The butcher’s wounds look to have been made by a larger jaw, but, I still am just assuming this. Even if the dog did participate, she is not attached to the pack at the time that the man shoots her. That man has no idea that this dog was associated with the “killer” dogs.

musak as it were, the woman plays the role of caring, pitying, benevolent “god” who kills in order to save the “object” from more pain. Yet, while Lili’s authoritarian orchestra conductor had praised her playing by saying “play that at my funeral” (*White God*), these euthanized dogs get no personal memorial; they are not remembered, but are wrapped in garbage bags and incinerated. Intriguingly, when the employee comes with the bag for the body of the dog the pound director has just killed, she asks, “Last one?” He answers, “Yes. The rest is routine.” (*White God*) What exactly he means by this remains unknown. As she pets the dying dog with the hand holding the empty syringe, she promises “You won’t have any enemies where you’re going. No one will hurt you anymore. It’s not lie. I mean it” (*White God*). Legally (Tasker 2008, p. 9), euthanasia is prohibited according to Hungarian national law, except in “mercy killing of animals in order to avoid or prevent the unnecessary prolongation of their suffering” (Zoltan n.d.). Aggressive dogs can also be killed (Tasker 2008, p. 9). In this shelter, the director seems to be the arbiter of what constitutes “suffering.” This role, however, when witnessed by another dog, seems to cause her shame.

The five dogs are watching a cartoon that features an anthropomorphized cat, prone to violence against a mouse, who gazes at them. They gaze back (sort of). The music is the same music that Lili had played Hagen in the bathroom to calm him, to commiserate with their new unfamiliar situation in the apartment of her father. In the cartoon, the part she plays on the trumpet is played on the piano. The narrator first focuses the shot of the cartoon, we see the the frame of the TV around the image of the cartoon, but what is on view is the cartoon not anything outside of it or the TV. This in itself is destabilizing, since the previous shot was of Hagen walking through a row of caged dogs to be placed separately, since he has been deemed unadoptable and thus a “goner” (*White God*). The next shot is of Tom. Then we see Hagen and the other dogs watching. The narrator calls attention to the position of these dog spectators. First it shows them in a long shot from a high angle looking up. Then it enters their space and looks up from a very low angle position, revealing Hagen looking up and the TV placed high on the wall. It is not just Hagen’s perspective, but one in which we watch Hagen watching. The camera angle indicates that this is the position of a dog, but none of the dogs in the room are that short. It is almost as if this would be the position of what looks like a terrier type dog being given a lethal injection next door. It calls attention to this dog’s absence. At this moment the dog is presumably still alive; but having been marked as a “goner” as well, he is already marked absent. It is only after this invisible dog point of view, that Hagen gets up distracted by the soothing voice next door and goes to investigate through the crack in the door. In this way, just as in the slaughterhouse scene and the butcher shop scene, the narrator pays attention to a dead body, although in this scene the body lying prostrate on the table is just a simulated dead dog, unlike the dead in real life cows.

The whole scene is strange. We had been led to believe that Hagen was to be put down because of the shelter director’s analysis of his leg wound: “That wound is pretty nasty. No one will take it. It’s a goner. Put it separate” (*White God*). Then we see the opening of the *Cat Concerto*. In her white coat, wielding the emptied syringe, the pound director pets and pities the dog before her. This is a shelter, where unadoptable dogs are killed, by a euthanizer who pities the euthanized. Is her pity valuable? Is her white coat of death different than the white coat of the butcher who sleeps in his office in a building full of hanging carcasses? Is white the habit of regarding animals as objects? Is her promise that no one will hurt the dog anymore where he is going anything but empty?

The shelter director recognizes that Hagen has seen her. Both the dog’s look and her look are open to interpretation, but I interpret her look as that of shame for the mistreatment of dogs by other humans, and shame, because of her own part in ranking dogs on the basis of human acceptability. Is her sympathy for the dog during its last moments different than the two old men an invisible dog showed leading their cows over the crosswalk to their slaughterhouse ends? These two cows were personally accompanied to their deaths, instead of simply dropped off en masse. Yet, their haunches will be interchangeable with those already anonymously hanging on meat hooks. While the pound director tries to save dogs, she still generalizes, is willing to sacrifice some to save others, is stuck in

the impasse of sympathy. Pity, although a move beyond indifference, is still not going to change the situation of the massive number of strays in Budapest's streets due to the white god's indifference.

The anthropomorphized cat looks back at dead dogs seeing, sitting and at a human audience seeing. Hagen looks back at Tom and looks back at the shelter director, who is not as flat a character as the dog seller, for instance. She does give Hagen a second chance. Normally, she maintains her distance, a strict, business-like arbiter of canine value. She seems to see herself as a savior, berating Lili, who comes to see if Hagen is at the shelter, for abandoning her dog. She "kills" Hagen three times in words, after which he "rises again" as a beast. The first time, she tells Lili that a dog on the streets has no chance of still being alive after a number of weeks. Never shown with glasses, she pretends that she cannot clearly see the picture on Lili's "lost dog" flyer. In a sense, she does not see Hagen clearly. He is just another stray dog, one more problem for her to deal with. With only so much funding and space, she culls the pack into those she deems more likely to be adopted, that is those that fit nicely into the human idea of canine possession, the cute, the friendly, the docile, the nonthreatening. Hagen becomes a specific problem for her when he lunges at the hand of the girl looking to adopt a stray. His uncontrolled behavior destabilizes her authority and therefore also hurts the chances of all the other dogs she has deemed "adoptable." Like the animal trainer who can not grasp that Max would come back to kill him, since the animal trainer somehow felt a connection despite his abuse of Hagen/Max, the shelter director seems personally affronted by the actions of a dog whom she had shown pity/mercy in letting him live despite his leg wound. Hers is a practical approach, and, the narrator shows, a defensive approach of "false witnessing." Hers is a White God approach—all business, vengeful god, or, with the dogs she puts down "the merciful approach of 'benevolent dominion'" (Kao 2014, p. 750). She still treats the dogs as objects that only have value if "fit for consumption" (here: adoption). While she pities those that are not, her pity does nothing to change the status quo of white god over dog.

13. Wild "Eastern" Stare-off

After the cartoon/euthanasia scene, Hagen is returned to the kennel. Hagen's response to associating the piece of music Lili had played him in order to soothe him with his uncomfortable witnessing of another dog's euthanasia is to stop eating. When he stops eating, he also stops engaging with and connecting with others. In the next cage, Marlene, the terrier from "dogland" looks at Hagen and wags her tail; Hagen does not respond, is indifferent to the terrier's attempted engagement. In the next scene in which potential adopters walk along outside kennels, his warning to be left alone is misinterpreted by a young woman seeking to adopt a shelter dog. By barking and lunging defensively at the fingers put into his cage by this young woman, he is simply expressing his choice. Like Lili, who had told her father that "I don't want a dog" when they reconcile and he suggests they go to the pound to adopt a dog, Hagen does not want "a girl." (At this point in the film, not even the companionship of a girl dog.) He is done trusting humans to treat him with respect. He did not immediately lose trust; even after Lili's father threw him out of the car, he licks the animal control officer's hand, who says surprised, "he doesn't hate us!" (*White God* 0:36:09). He has learned, however, to respond to his repeated objectification by treating humans as humans treat him—as objects to control. He targets specifically those who have hurt him. To the others, both he and the "pack" are shown to be indifferent.¹⁰

After the pound director yells at Hagen, "Have you gone mad? It's over. This is the end!" (*White God*), Hagen is led away by a pound employee to join the other dogs who will be killed. At the door of the cage the man has opened, Hagen slips out of his "noose." Unlike Marlene, who acts similarly whether she wears her rope leash or not, the "free" Hagen acts like the "captive" Hagen, the Hagen

¹⁰ If humans are in the way of the pack, the dogs will simply run them down as if they weren't even there. The few times the narrator shows the dogs "attacking" random pedestrians, the dogs grab things (garden hoses, bags), not people.

who learns to see humans who control him as the enemy, an enemy who teaches him to bite the necks of those he fights. The narrator shows us both the employee's perspective of a snarling, fang-revealing animal in the defensive position, as well as Hagen's view of the employee's scared, defensive face. Both share a look, but Hagen only attacks the pound employee when this man yells at Hagen to "back off" and whips at him. Hagen rejects cages and he rejects obeying. He had given the white god a chance, but the white god refused to respond in any other way but by attacking him physically. Hagen responds in kind, and attacks as he has been taught to attack by biting "Just the neck! The neck!" (*White God*). In contrast to his reaction after the dog fight, Hagen looks at the man's body without empathy, the bloody piece of the man's neck in his mouth, seemingly becoming the picture of terrifying animality, becoming exactly that which the pound employee had feared. Yet, fear for his own life, lead both the pound employee and Hagen to attack the other as they do. It is not personal, yet; this is not revenge for revenge's sake. Hagen then looks at those in the cage, who begin to come out, and turns to leave the pound. Before he escapes, however, Hagen and the pound director share another moment.

Of all his victims, only this woman does not get a look accompanied by snarling fang-displaying growls and raised hackles. Hagen shakes himself as if shaking off the blood from the last encounter and calmly stops to look at the woman across the water trench between them. The pound director looks back. Perhaps she is trying to stare him into submission, but she realizes that she is not in control. Her twitching hand belies her calm; she is scared. Yet, even in her fear she seems to pity him again, his fight to survive in the world of the white god. He then looks quizzically at her, cocking his head twice, in an attitude humans typically like to read as "cute"¹¹, initiating a connection perhaps. Yet, this seems so incongruous here. He has just shaken off the blood. Without the cocked ears and head, Hagen looked like a mean dog viciously looking at the pound director. Yet, he then cocks his ears and tilts his head. Viewers have grown to read this as the cute look of an anthropomorphized dog. It is a look that is often shared and interpreted in a dog-human pet relationship, in which the human interprets the cocked ears and slight head tilt as proof of the adorableness and/or the manipulative charm of a dog who knows how to control his/her human. [Hecht and Horowitz \(2015\)](#) cite a 2013 study that revealed how "a picture of a floppy-eared dog led the dog to be rated higher on 'Agreeableness' and 'Emotional stability'" (p. 161). The look is clearly elicited by the trainer beyond the camera. Yet, the narrator uses it here not, to destabilize the image of "animality" which he has just become as well as the image of the "readable cute pet" often assumed when a dog cocks his head. Hagen has repeated this throughout the film, when he wishes to initiate a conversation. However, like the shelter employee, the pound director, is unable or unwilling to renegotiate with him.

He gives her, like he does all of his victims, the possibility of a connection before pouncing. Yet, this look is different than the look he gave the dead body in the street and the dead body in the dog fight. It is almost as if he is mimicking he look of sympathy, the look of pity. Is he mocking her? Is he pitying her as she has pitied the dog she euthanized? Or is the viewer falling precisely into the anthropomorphizing trap that the film both uses and criticizes? I argue that this look does that—it manipulates the viewer into anthropomorphizing, into simplifying, into naming the dog's emotions to make sense of the preceding violence. Most viewers have probably been rooting for Hagen, want to protect him, want the happy end. Yet, after this line-crossing, can we continue to do so? Or has he irrevocably joined the dark side of "beast?" Can we reconcile cute and friendly with independent, self-protector? The narrator makes us look at how we read "dog," how we turn "dog" into readable "friend" and into evil, "beast," in short, it asks us to be cognizant of how we separate and simplify by naming. It asks us to see Hagen as a complex being, as much as it asks us to see the pound director as not just pure evil because of her "murders." It manipulates us into anthropomorphizing Hagen into

¹¹ [Hecht and Horowitz 2015](#) point out that, "[w]hen classifying dogs by breed, dog breeding organizations such as the American Kennel Club employ specific language to describe the requirements of each breed's physical appearance and often link physical appearance to temperament characteristics" (p. 255).

one who mimics and mirrors his human abusers in order to take canine human revenge. Yet, even as the narrator does this, it also keeps the viewer distanced enough from Hagen and the pack to be aware that she (and it) is anthropomorphizing Hagen's and then the pack's motivations. In so doing, however, the narrator clarifies the difference between pity and empathy. By having it look like Hagen is showing the pound director what it feels like to be the recipient of pity, the narrator also makes the viewer recognize how the film itself models this human tendency to "pity" in the *White God* rhetoric at the beginning and at the end in order to expose it. The viewer is torn into wanting Hagen to be "redeemable" and have his happy end, and recognizing that this is not going to happen. To deal with this recognition and this loss, do we turn him into the "beast" so that it is easier? In this sense, Péter (Károly Ascher), the boy Lili likes in the orchestra, was right when he tries to convince Lili to stay in the concert hall after the dogs have disrupted the concert that "You can't go out. They're rabid" (*White God*). This would be a way out of taking responsibility, of distancing ourselves, and making the individual dog invisible under the generic beast. If they are rabid, it is not their fault. No one is to blame. It happened to them, this "illness" where the familiar turns wild. Lili will not accept this. She still wants to save Hagen or at least connect with him before he is put to death. In her narrative, she can still save him. "I think they came because of me" (*White God*). For her, Hagen is still a pet who has a relationship with her despite weeks of being on the street. She is unwilling to see him as a beast. When the porter at the orchestra tries to prevent her from leaving the building by calling the dogs "Wild beasts!" Lili responds with "You're the beast!" (*White God*).

Interestingly, however, the pound director does not call Hagen a beast. The woman's hand twitches, and he has been trained to associate hands with human enemies. Hagen begins to run at her, not baring his fangs, but simply running at her and knocking her down. It is Hagen's version of "this is the end!" of the pound director's previous declaration after he had lunged at the girl who was considering adopting him. In other words, he has reached his tolerance limit with her behavior as much as she had reached hers with his behavior. The narrator has Hagen mirror the pound director's behavior to make the viewer recognize how differently similar behavior is interpreted if the actor is human or canine. Much like pound director had seemed indifferent to the fact that the body which she had just petted/killed is being put into a bag. Hagen, too, after their shared look, now seems indifferent towards her as the rest of the pedestrians who get in his way as he runs through the streets. However, she only yells at him as he starts to run toward her, not before. It is not even a command, but a powerless "You can't do that, you hear?" (*White God*)¹², before he knocks her down from the white god position. His act of "mercy" is to spare her from a neck bite, but not from a stampede. He is in the white god position; he deems who lives and dies. He doesn't have a syringe masking as "benevolence;" nor does he wear a white coat of authority. He does, however, now seem to wear the "coat" of animality.

14. Bridge to Animal

Ingold encourages us "to think of animate beings in the grammatical form of the *verb*. [...] Wherever and whenever we encounter them, humans are humaning, baboons are babooning, reindeer reindeering." He continues that "[h]umans, baboons and reindeer do not *exist*, but humaning, babooning and reindeering *occur*—they are ways of carrying on." (Ingold 2013, p. 21) And so Lili's "Stop! Stop! Come back! Stop! No, don't go! Come back!" (*White God*) to the terrier and "No!" (*White God*) to the animal control officer who shot the terrier was wrong. In a sense she was telling the dog to stop dogging so that she would protect herself from the animal control officer humaning. She stopped and witnessed both "carrying on" until the little dog could no longer carry on. The film, however, carries on and ends in the hybrid space of dogging, humaning, and godding. In this last space, Lili's

¹² In one sense she is right, a dog "cant' do that"—that is attack humans if s/he wants to be accepted in this human dominated society.

"No! Dad, stop it! Enough! All of you!" (*White God*) works, but not because she commands it, but rather because she doesn't respond in (defensive—barking, snarling, shouting, flame throwing) kind, but by playing her trumpet. This unexpected reaction causes 251 dogs and one man to stop, to listen, to look, and to feel. It is a pausing to look at the other dogging and humaning and to hear the birding going on. Everyone including the moving camera "carries on" in this shot. And this is the point of the film: to "narrate" both humaning and dogging to the best of its godding ability. As Ingold explains, "to move forward, in real time, along with the multiple and heterogenous becomings with which we share our world, in an active and ongoing exploration of the possibilities that our common life can open up. And just as in life, becoming continually overtakes being" (Ingold 2013, p. 21).

Kao argues that "[t]hose seeking to change (and not simply interpret) the status quo must think carefully about how to inspire others to action" (Kao 2014, p. 746). *White God* attempts to inspire its viewers to action, to rethink their own relationships with animals in general, but specifically with dogs, and more specifically with stray dogs. It "examin[es] our assumptions about who the knowing subject can be" (Wolfe 2009, p. 571), shows "communication, response, and exchange" (ibid) between species. Lili plays the trumpet, communicates not through language but through music with Hagen, who howls/barks in "response." They then exchange a silent look; this shared, nonverbal gaze is a shared space, a close distance as it were, a shared separateness. This is repeated as we, the audience of the film, watch via an invisible dog perspective individual dogs from the "pack" sit down. We, too, are invited into this space. Like the father, we have a choice. The "pack" of dogs stares at the "pack" of humans.

Through its pluralized yet individualized gaze, the narrator reminds viewers that "modern publics are necessarily animal publics" (Blue and Rock 2014, p. 504). "In the twenty-first century world, interaction, not hierarchical separation, is what enables living together" (Huff and Haefner 2012, p. 165). Although the film ends in a place not of living together, but a place in which animals are brought to die together, it shows the place as a Harawayian "living room" (p. 66).

In the space of "the intersecting gaze" (Huff and Haefner 2012, p. 166), Lili finds a bridge to the dog she used to know, but whom she realizes that does not know. In hearing it, he finds a bridge to the girl he used to know, but who is also different that the girl who had a pet. Lili does not see Hagen as a part of her anymore. After a moment of seeing Hagen as "beast," she sees the individual dog before her, but one from whom she is now distanced. He is both familiar and unfamiliar. In this way, Lili sees a Hagen who is neither beast nor pet, but a complex, independent living being whom she not just loves as a former dependent but now also respects. In a sense, she proves to Hagen at the end what she had promised him when both sat on the hill and observed an old man training his dog to sit and to stay, namely that she would not treat him as a possession.

Lili moves from the benevolent ownership paradigm in which she feels she must speak for Hagen, to an acceptance of Hagen as an independent actor who does not "need" her and whose motives she may not understand. Her act of playing music to provide an alternative soundscape to the defensive barking and shouting is a leap of faith into empathy and the way she initiates a conversation with this unfamiliar dog who will not play the "good dog", will not "fetch". She hopes not for a reprisal of the bathroom scene in which she and Hagen are on the same side and she plays benevolent owner to a beloved pet, but rather for the possibility of communicating on equal terms with this independent Hagen who is part stranger.

When she first sees Hagen in the courtyard, the frightened Lili tries to be in control. She scolds Hagen, "What have you done?" (*White God*). Neither scolding, nor pretending that everything is the same, by throwing a stick and expecting Hagen to be a "[g]ood dog. Fetch! Why are you staring like that? Fetch the stick!" (*White God*) works. Finally, she negotiates with Hagen, asking him to see her: "Hagen, it's me. It's me, Hagen!" (*White God*). She asks him to see and recognize her as the individual Lili with whom he once lived. In so doing she is "letting go the lead, drawing closer, apprenticing herself to animal ways of being and knowing" (Fraiman 2012, p. 98). She draws closer not in terms of bridging the physical gap that remains between them. In a sense, this scene reviews Hagen's different

“incarnations”—the controllable pet, the uncontrollable beast, and finally political partner in the animal public. In responding to the music as Hagen and not as a beast, Hagen takes his subjecthood back from the plurality the label of animality forced upon him. He is not the product of human abuse. He is not the product of human benevolence. He is an agent, not an object. Lili tries to “shame” Hagen with her look and her voice, but is shamed by his look and his growl. But both keep looking, extend their gazes to move beyond shaming, beyond fearing, beyond pitying. The dog trainer had picked Hagen from a room full of street dogs for sale because “You’ve still got a heart” (*White God*) and then tried to turn him into a monster. Whereas the beast is heartless machine, the dog who sits at the end still has heart, despite everything, where heart is the ability to empathize.

The statements about dogs and animals made in the opening credits bridge into the fictional world by being the first example in a series of animal representations provided by the film. It links the dogs in the real world to the dogs in the film. These dogs whom we see seeing at the end of the film, are again linked to the outside world by the ending credits in which these dogs are named and represented. If we watch the film to the end, how we read these statements that refer back to the dogs both in and out of the film is informed by what we have witnessed in the film. How can one credit the dogs in the film respectfully? Does calling the “pack” dogs “our dog friends” and the “professional dog actors” “our dog colleagues” patronize them or level the playing ground? Does pointing out that these colleagues are owned problematic? The fact that the title of the film is in white font on a black screen like the credits seems to indicate an awareness that the whole film is in the end a product of the white god, even if the white god narrator attempts to imagine how dogs might experience the world narrated in the film. It is a product for consumption by humans and nonhumans (should they be interested in looking or be in the vicinity of a human watching it and hearing its sounds) in which humans manipulated dogs into performing in front of the camera and manipulated the images of dogs through editing to create a performance readable in human terms. It has, however, shown how humans simply assume authority over animals, but by destabilizing the assumption that this is the only way to relate to animals it at least makes visible that “we fail to see the animal’s behavior on its own terms, because we have defined the term” (McLean 2014, p. 13) and that “in commercial cinema, they are characters in our stories not theirs” (McLean 2014, p. 13). *White God*’s narrator insists, however, that their stories and our stories while not the same are interrelated and that our relationship with dogs could evolve as it has “over millennia” (ibid, p. 11). The dogs in the film did not decide to make a film in which dogs play a significant role. However, the dogs co-created it not just in performing on command, but also in being dogs and therefore unpredictable. Mundruczó admits to using dogs as a metaphor for current human hierarchical social relations. At the same time, however, he found that in working with dogs he had to change his own methods of directing. Working with dogs was “a shooting process where we had to adjust to them and not the other way around”. By being themselves, especially the nonprofessional dog performers “bring a kind of indeterminate *otherness* into the frame, the otherness of the non-manipulable. Animals in feature films are thus always to some degree ‘troubling’, as they break through the falsely protective aura of the image, the aura that rules out the accidental and the unintentional” (Sheehan 2008, p. 122). The narrator does not “erase” the unintentional. There are plenty of shots in which the dogs are clearly looking either at their trainers or not at the object or person they are supposedly interested in in the film world. Examples are the five dogs “watching” the Tom and Jerry cartoon as well as, wonderfully, a black dog at the top right of the screen behind Hagen in the scene at the end who calls attention to him/herself by not lying quietly and attentively looking at Lili. In *White God* specifically, and in film in general, animals have a “rupturing effect, both in terms of the way it unavoidably points beyond itself to wider issues in its capacity to resist or problematize its own meanings on screen” (Burt 2002, p. 13). The film’s narrator uses “animal imagery [that] does not merely reflect human-animal relations and the position of animals in human culture, but is also used to change them.” (p. 15) Burt continues that the “transformative aspect” implicit in an animal on screen “reveals broader cultural tensions and anxieties about our current treatment of animals” and in *White God* the current treatment of other humans as well.

15. Conclusions

Recalling the tale in which members of Plato's Academy ended up defining man as "a wingless biped" and then being mocked by Diogenes who having plucked the feathers off a chicken "threw it in their midst as a representative of "man," Danta and Vardoulakis argue that the violence toward the chicken "becomes a primal scene of the human-animal relation—and thus a scene that is repressed" (Danta and Vardoulakis 2008, p. 3). They continue that "philosophers [and other writers and thinkers and artists] have not [...] shied away from defining the human in opposition to other animals. In a fable that is no longer fabulous, human being constitutes itself through a definite violence against the animal" (ibid). This scene is often carried out behind closed doors—whether in the slaughterhouse, the pound, and illegal spaces like dogfights—and it is this scene in its variations that the film *White Dog* focuses upon, albeit with dogs and cows, not chickens. Although the narrator presents a pessimistic view of current animal-human (and human-human) relations, it does offer the possibility of an alternative scene, one in which non-human animals and human animals redefine this relationship together. Indeed, it posits that dogs, like humans, should be considered "political animal[s]," (ibid) in terms of having a voice in shaping the organization and institutions of the modern metropolis, which in *White God* becomes the site of reconsidering the constructions of Budapest's urban order. Instead of the "human political animals" "avert[ing] their gaze from (and so derogate[ing]) the alternative sociality of nonhuman animals" (ibid), the narrator suggests that human sociality could be improved by seeing and listening to the "animals" who share the urban social space. Instead of trying to deny the animal presence in the modern city like Budapest, the narrator insists on making the animal, specifically, the street dog, visible and audible. It reminds the viewer that "the animal", that is the living, forceful, uncontained, and unknowable other, is not absent, but very much a part of the city's public space. Instone and Sweeney feel that "[i]n many regards, dogs offer new ways of being in public" (Instone and Sweeney 2014, p. 774). They "suggest that dogs themselves are agents in the making of publics and public space and that dog bodies constitute a non-speech, non-text form of public address that calls attention to them as a sort of animal public" (p. 776).

The narrator gives the invisible dogs it makes visible and audible space to relate with each other and with us. In a sense, it "trusts" them to just be and to see, and for us to see them being and seeing, or as Haraway explains, it "cares" about them, where "[c]aring means becoming subject to the unsettling obligation of curiosity, which requires knowing more at the ending of the day than at the beginning" (Haraway 2008, p. 36). The final scene, in this space normally indicating finality—the *abbatoir*—becomes a space of curiosity and caring. And while "[c]uriosity gets one into thick mud" according to Haraway, it also "is the kind of 'looking back' and 'becoming with companions' that might matter in making autre-mondialisations more possible" (Haraway 2008, p. 38). It might even begin with a quizzical look from the cocked head of an unfamiliar dog.

The spectators do not witness this mass killing at the end; instead we are left listening to birds and seeing in a bird's eye view the dogs looking at the human girl looking at Hagen and the father also lying down in front of the dogs and next to his daughter looking at his daughter. No *deus ex machina* will appear from the sky to save the dogs in the *abbatoir*. But the father, the original "White God" of the film tells the white coated slaughterhouse foreman who sleeps near his meat to pause, to wait, to postpone the destruction of these dogs, "to give them [Hagen and Lili, the 250 other dogs] a little more time" (*White God*).

It's not much, but it's a start; a start in a public space that for non-humans at least is associated with a dead-end.

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Article

Whiteout: Animal Traces in Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* and *Encounters at the End of the World*

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Abstract: Literary animal studies are confronted with a systematic question: How can writing, as a human-made sign system, represent the nonhuman animal as an autonomous agent without falling back into the pitfalls of anthropomorphism? Against the backdrop of this problem, this paper asks how the medium of film allows for a different representation of the animal and analyzes two of Werner Herzog's later documentary films. Although the depiction of animals and landscapes has always played a significant part in Herzog's films, critical assessments of his work—including those of Herzog himself—tended to view the role of nature imagery as purely allegorical: it expresses the inner nature, the inner landscapes of the film's human protagonists. This paper tries to open up a different view. It argues that both *Grizzly Man* and *Encounters at the End of the World* develop an aesthetic that depicts nonhuman nature as an autonomous and lively presence. In the close proximity amongst camera, human, and nonhuman agents, a clear distinction between nature and culture is increasingly blurred.

Keywords: animal agency; filmic representation of animals; material ecocriticism; *Moby-Dick*; Werner Herzog

1. The White Whale

In *Moby-Dick*, whose legibility both as a novel and as a whale is constantly put into question, Ishmael reminds the reader that the sperm whale has never “written a book, or spoken a speech” (Melville 1983, p. 1164). Nonhuman animals do a lot of things, a lot of things human animals don't quite understand. Even though the whale's fin might cover bones whose structure is similar to that of a human hand, it never held a pen. Melville's Leviathan does not step on the stage as the narrator of a novel that, after all, bears his name. This “pyramidal silence” (Melville 1983, p. 1164), as Ishmael puts it, marks a curious mismatch: As has been sufficiently stressed, *Moby-Dick* is steeped in cultural, economic and scientific discourses. Taken from “any book whatsoever, sacred or profane” (Melville 1983, p. 782), the vast abundance of cetological knowledge and narratives that both constitutes the novel's dusty paratextual library and structures its encyclopedic series of 135 chapters stands in stark contrast to what is said, told and known by the whale itself—which is nothing. Instead of being an autonomous subject, the whale becomes an eagerly sought-after object of understanding. The metabolic rhythm between surfacing in the air and submerging into an unfathomable depth seems to constitute an allegorical game of hide and seek with a narrator who is bound for a breathless chase. “Wonder ye then at the fiery hunt?” (Melville 1983, p. 1001). Unlike Ahab and similar to the reader, however, Ishmael is not hunting for revenge and blood but for a more pressing issue and a more subtle substance: meaning. Comparing the features of the whale's bulky physiognomy to “wrinkled granite hieroglyphics” (Melville 1983, p. 1165), Ishmael transforms the whale into a coded text, which can or could be deciphered, if only one had the right translation manual: “[H]ow may unlettered Ishmael hope to read the awful Chaldaic of the Sperm Whale's brow? I put that brow before you. Read it if

you can." (Melville 1983, p. 1165). With this encouragement, the reader is sent on a mission which the narrator himself has already failed. Right from the novel's beginning, Ishmael is a survivor of the events he is about to relate, the only one who "did survive the wreck" (Melville 1983, p. 1408) of the fatal ending. The human being gets away with his life and a story to tell: "Call me Ishmael". (Melville 1983, p. 795). The animal, however, remains both elusive and untranslated. Undeterred, the white whale dives and stays hidden under the untroubled surface of an ocean that bears no mark or writing.

In this light, *Moby-Dick* could be seen as the exemplification of a structural problem in the relationship between animals and narration. Recent debates in animal studies and ecocriticism have challenged the view of human exceptionalism and stressed the similarities, mutual dependencies, and histories of co-evolution that shape the relationship between humans and animals. As a consequence, agency and other forms of meaningful self-expression are no longer considered as exclusively human capabilities. Kate Rigby, for instance, points out:

[t]he necessity of an ecological enlightenment, in which the nonhuman is resituated as agentic, communicative, and ethically considerable, while human consciousness is recognized as embodied and interconnected with a more-than human world that is neither fully knowable nor entirely controllable (Rigby 2014, p. 219).

In this context, practices of storytelling have been attributed a particular importance and critics are asking for new, more holistic ways of representation and stylization that would change the view of the animal as the mere witless other of humanity. This approach, however, poses problems of its own that can be put in narratological terms, for, lacking the faculty of speech, animals don't tell stories in a strict sense. As Ahab remarks in regard to the (dead) sperm whale's head, "not one syllable is thine"! (Melville 1983, p. 1127). But the symbolic system of human language not only constitutes the material that literature is made out of. In the history of philosophy, throughout its various attempts to establish an essence or unique capability of the human, language use was virtually always identified as marking a distinctive frontier or even "abyss", as Martin Heidegger puts it, between humans and the realm of nature. From this perspective, the prosaic means of literature could be seen as particularly unfit for any approach to nonhuman animals. To understand them, we have to rely on acts of interpretation and meaning-making, operations that easily transform their subject into an otherwise empty screen for anything we want to project onto it. This highly anthropocentric view of the animal as a kind of allegorical device becomes particularly notable in the case of *Moby-Dick*. As Melville's readers are informed, the whale not only provides a wide range of materials, due to its absence of color, the white whale is so polymorphic in its symbolic meaning that it can signify virtually anything, including the very outmost container of this "anything": "the heartless voids and immensities of the universe" (Melville 1983, p. 1001). However, in order to realize this versatility, its absence of color is first and foremost that of a blank page upon which the human hand inscribes its designs. The whale itself, we are reminded, "has never written a book", even though its oil might have provided the light for the book's completion.

If, however, an animal in literature starts to speak or even appropriates the writing materials of its oblivious masters, it is only insofar as it behaves similarly to human beings or, more precisely, mockingly mimics a certain idea of the human. Jonathan Swift's only too well reasoning Houyhnhnms, E.T.A. Hoffmann's writing Tomcat Murr, and Franz Kafka's Red Peter all question and trouble the very notion of the human whose language they speak so eloquently. Still, these different mappings and transitions of the border between the human and the animal are articulated through the code of human language. As Philip Armstrong puts it:

Of course novelists, scientists and scholars can never actually access, let alone reproduce, what other animals mean on their own terms. Humans can only represent animals' experience through the mediation of cultural encoding, which inevitably

involves a reshaping according to our own intentions, attitudes and preconceptions (Armstrong 2008, p. 2).

The structure of the problem seems to entail a dilemma, for either the animal is seen as a mute automaton, devoid of speech and all capacities it entails or it becomes animated by a voice that barely disguises its human origin. Instead of arguing in favor of one of the horns, one option in dealing with dilemmas is to refute their validity altogether. One could ask, for instance, if whales, grizzly bears, or seals could ever access, let alone reproduce, what human-animals mean on their own terms. But for all his interest in animals as autonomous narrative instances, it seems that Armstrong reserves the creative activity of “cultural encoding”, and thereby the realm of culture generally, to humans and their language games. Nonetheless, he suggests a kind of reading that tracks down the material traces that animals might have left in artistic forms of representation. Traces that could hint at a nonhuman world as an origin of meaning and subjectivity in its own right:

Hence, in seeking to go beyond the use of animals as mere mirrors for human meaning, our best hope is to ‘locate’ the tracks left by animals in texts, the ways cultural formations are affected by the materiality of animals and their relationship with humans (Armstrong 2008, p. 3).

To elaborate on this notion of materiality, the following paper will leave the realm of the literary text in a strict sense and focus on two of Werner Herzog’s later documentaries in which the medium of film is brought into close quarters with the physical presence of nonhuman nature: *Grizzly Man* (2005) and *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007). In this attempt, the notion of the material will inform the paper’s general perspective. While Ishmael, himself a narrative *specksnyder*, cuts through layers of whale blubber in order to reach an imaginary kennel, I would like to focus my attention upon all the greasy stuff that is cut away and usually discarded. This implies a more pronounced attention to the material fluxes and exchanges, the melees amongst nonhuman animals, cameras, and humans that are made prominent in Herzog’s later works. My hope is that the specific qualities of film will allow for a different representation of human and nonhuman animals and develop a gaze that is able to reach beyond the anthropocentric confinements of language.

2. “The Ripple of Leaves”: Filming in the Wilderness

Herzog’s relation to nature seems contradictory. While the depiction of sublime, wild and oftentimes hostile landscapes plays a huge part in virtually all of his works from *Aguirre* to the most recent *Into the Inferno*, he has distanced himself from sentimental and anthropomorphic appropriations of nature on several occasions. Scattered throughout various interviews, statements and other paratextual forms, his approach to questions of nature and its aesthetic representation is most explicitly and extensively addressed in *Grizzly Man* from 2005. *Grizzly Man* retraces the life of Timothy Treadwell who spent 13 summers in Katmai National Park in southern Alaska among wild brown bears, claiming and believing that only he could protect them against poachers and other intruders into an otherwise pristine natural habitat. As it becomes clear during the film, no such threat ultimately existed for the bears. Timothy spent his summers amid a healthy population of brown bears and if there was any imminent danger, it was for the human being. When Treadwell and his partner Amy Huguenard prolonged their stay into the fall of 2003, a season when the bears prepare for hibernation, both were fatally attacked.

What makes such a fascinating figure for Herzog’s film is Treadwell’s role as a passionate amateur filmmaker who shot over 100 h of videotape under challenging conditions. The original videotapes, which constitute the raw material of Herzog’s approach, are not only edited and presented by a narrative voice-over but placed within a complex network of interviews with Timothy’s friends and colleagues, a former girlfriend, his parents, biologists, ecologists, and even the coroner. Some of the difficulties in coming to terms with *Grizzly Man* stem from this multiperspectival form: It forces the viewer to differentiate between Treadwell as a historical figure, as the director and main character of

his own recordings, and, on yet another level, Herzog's representation of him as a filmic subject and the film's particular storytelling, which introduces substantial deviations from Treadwell's viewpoints. While all these different perspectives and layers can be understood as interpretative attempts to explore the possible meaning of Treadwell's work, their interplay functions as a kaleidoscope or echo-chamber, in which new and unforeseen possibilities of understanding start to proliferate.

Despite his often playful mannerisms, Treadwell does not come across as naïve and shows a keen awareness of the potential threats that he faced every day: Referring to one of the older bears that would attack him only a few days later, he stresses that "[...] these are the bears that on occasion do for survival kill and eat humans. Could only the big old bear possibly kill and eat Timothy Treadwell?" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:14:53). It might seem puzzling that this awareness never translated into a resolution to leave. Treadwell had a deep trust in his intimate understanding of the animals he lived with for thirteen years, seeing some of them grow up from cubs to full grown carnivores. "I know the language of the bear." (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:14:27), Treadwell claims, a belief that separates him from the more skeptical voices in the film that question both the existence of such a language and Treadwell's competence in performing this feat. Against the backdrop of this view of nature as essentially mute, *Grizzly Man's* representation of Treadwell is structured by the spatial figure of a fateful transgression. Right at the film's beginning, Herzog's narrative voice claims that Treadwell "crossed an invisible borderline" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:04:15), and other characters appearing in the film vary this pattern of thought only slightly, stating that he crossed an "unspoken boundary" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:29:13) between humans and bears. One of the most moving, yet disturbing scenes of the footage shows Treadwell hesitantly trying to touch a bear when both of them encounter each other in the liminal region at the shore of a lake (see Figure 1) (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:28:57–00:29:32).



Figure 1. Treadwell filming himself with a bear.

What are the rhetorical and ideological currents that are at play in Herzog's narration of Treadwell as a figure of transgression? It is noticeable that, in spite of its designation as an "unspoken boundary", the film reproduces a strict distinction between animals and humans repeatedly and in quite an audible manner. It is spoken all the time. The apparent need to establish this distance seems to be related to the bear's status as a carnivore. This could be conceived as too obvious to merit any discussion. Of course I do not want to deny that there can be good and very practical reasons why humans should evade

grizzly bears, not least for the latter's benefit. With reference to the local Alutiiq community that he is both a scholar and a descendant of, Sven Haakanson points out to Herzog that "if you habituate bears to humans, they think that all humans are safe. Where I grew up, they avoid us and we avoid them." (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:28:54). Yet, I wonder if Herzog's view of the grizzly bears as "metonyms of wild nature" (Ladino 2009, p. 54), as Jennifer Ladino accurately puts it, does not reiterate a more complex and problematic opposition between human and nonhuman animals on a general level. To illustrate this point, I would like to refer to a seemingly more timid animal that is mentioned only briefly in the film. Every now and then hikers in the Alps are attacked and eventually killed by cows that probably feel the need to protect their calf.¹ However, it is rather unlikely that the victims of these bovine encounters could create a "story of human ecstasy" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:03:55) and be depicted as the sublime yet lamentable trespassers into a "world" of cows. In regard to *Grizzly Man* it therefore seems important that the bear is not only a wild, undomesticated omnivore that is able to kill, but that it eats and eventually digests the human body as it would do with any other form of meat.

In fact, the bear's metabolism and its various stages constitute a minor yet recurring background process of *Grizzly Man*. Treadwell himself is obsessed with the feces of Wendy, one of the bears, and cannot resist touching it with his hands. This fascination with an object that was "just inside of her" (Grizzly Man 2005, 1:06:38) develops a rather uncanny meaning, since Treadwell seems passionately drawn to the final product of a digestive system that he himself is eventually going to be a part of, an aspect that was already made explicit by the pilot Sam Egli earlier in the film. Egli was present after the park service shot and opened the bear that killed Amy Huguenard and Timothy Treadwell. In a restrained tone of disgust he reports that the body of the bear was "cut open, it was full of people, it was full of clothing, it was—we hauled away four garbage bags of people, out of that bear." (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:17:37). One of the interesting things about disgust is that its cause, effect, and content are all related to the borders of the human body. At first, the sight of a disintegrating human body can be discerned as the essential cause of disgust. At the same time, the disgusted person's own body and its relation to the spatial environment constitute the site of the feeling itself. As Winfried Menninghaus writes: "The fundamental schema of disgust is the experience of a nearness that is not wanted. An intrusive presence, a smell or taste is spontaneously assessed as contamination and forcibly distanced." (Menninghaus 2003, p. 1). Therefore, one of the most logical effects of disgust is a sudden expulsion of the interior to the exterior: vomiting. Finally, the act of vomiting makes it clear that disgust is a corporal reaction that overwhelms the human body. In this context, Egli's slight tone of disgust is given a different ring that concerns the quasi-ontological relationship between animals and the human: The spatial figure of "nearness" and "contamination" that Menninghaus writes about refers to the sight of a human body that is absorbed by the digestive system of a carnivore. Designated as "people", the human being not only loses its identity as an individual person but as a supposedly exceptional species. It finds itself right in the middle of a food chain that humanity is supposed to be in control of and normally is set apart from. As James Hatley argues, the sheer fact of edibility blurs a strict line between human and animal:

In merely the *threat* of being eaten, one finds oneself in the situation that the very body that sustains one's own life suddenly is also the body that is to be ingested, in order that another's life might be sustained. What was most intimate becomes most strange, and what was most strange becomes most intimate (Hatley 2004, p. 23).

It seems that exactly this kind of uncanny replacement between inside and outside and its ontological connotation is the object of Egli's disgust. However, what is so gratifying about Treadwell's found footage is exactly that it circumvents stereotypical images of the bear as a bleak carnivore and emphasizes forms of behavior that are indicative of a complex social being. Human being and bear are

¹ See for instance Nadine Ayoub (Ayoub 2014). "Autriche—des "vaches tueuses" dans les alpages". *Arte.tv*, 10.09.2014. Available online: <https://info.arte.tv/fr/autriche-des-vaches-tueuses-dans-les-alpages>.

not reduced to the same (edible) corporeality.² Both life forms resemble each other by virtue of their respective engagement in practices of meaning-making, an aspect that leads me back to the question of animal expressiveness that this essay started with. Treadwell neither had a background in biology nor was he interested in adhering to norms of intellectual or academic rigor. Nevertheless, empirical research on grizzly bears does make use, if carefully, of “culture” as an explanatory term for their behavior. Regarding the question of social relationships and forms of communication among grizzlies G. A. Bradshaw writes:

Bear country is riddled with intricate bear trails and marker trees that serve to convey information in the absence of bear-to-bear physical proximity. These communiqués create an invisible web of messages that brings coherence to a physically dispersed community. Bears’ psychology is thus uniquely suited to their habitat. We might then envision bear collective life as a dynamic network of relationships that is shaped by resources and terrain, much of which [. . .] is hidden from human eyes (Bradshaw 2017, p. 78).

Bradshaw invites us to imagine the bear’s landscape as replete and entrenched with meaning, maybe similar to a network of hiking trails whose system of signposts is constantly modified and rewritten by each individual hiker. Her description sheds light on a rich material semiotics that certainly differs from human sign systems, yet is no less real. Unsurprisingly, this interpretation of the bear as an expressive being would be fundamentally at odds with Herzog’s view on nature as dominated by “chaos, hostility and murder” (Grizzly Man 2005, 01:08:09). Showing the face of the bear that probably killed Treadwell in close up, Herzog’s voice-over scorns at the rhetorical means of prosopopeia:

And what haunts me is that in all the faces of all the bears that Treadwell ever filmed, I discover no kinship, no understanding, no mercy. I see only the overwhelming indifference of nature. To me there is no such thing as the secret world of the bears and this blank stare speaks only of a half bored interest in food, but for Timothy Treadwell this bear was a friend, a savior (Grizzly Man 2005, 01:32:51).

Prosopopeia is typically considered as a sub-form of metaphor and is defined as the attribution of human features to animals, plants or inanimate objects. For Herzog, no such metaphorical transaction of expressive features to the natural world, be it animal or plant, seems legitimate. The animal is the absence of all meaning. For if the “blank stare” is able to speak, then only to indicate its own muteness and “indifference”. As I pointed out with reference to research by Bradshaw, this assessment of the animal as devoid of any meaning or expression would seem doubtful from an ethological perspective. But even within Herzog’s own work, the marginalization of the animal by reference to its lack of expression is less evident than it might seem. To elaborate on this point, the remaining part of this section will consider the role of the camera in both Treadwell’s and Herzog’s work.

As Herzog suggests, Treadwell held a fatal misconception. He did not realize that, instead of waiting for a big, furry, moving automaton to accept his tedious attempts at courtship, he could have pursued a probably less thrilling yet more dependable relationship: “Beyond his posings”, Herzog states, “the camera was his omnipresent companion.” (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:39:05). This notion of companionship with the camera also has consequences for the question of genre. According to Herzog, Treadwell’s footage constitutes “something way beyond a wildlife film” (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:37:36). In Herzog’s terms, however, this “beyond” implies nothing but the irrelevance of “wildlife” altogether:³

² In his reading of *Grizzly Man*, James Goebel reaches a similar conclusion: “The “human” is no longer effectively or definitively marked off from the rest of the material world, but is constituted and de-constituted by it: animal, vegetable, and human occupy a shared plane of creatureliness, zones of exchange that attest to their porosity, openness, and vulnerability”. See James Goebel. “Uncanny Meat”. Caliban (Goebel 2016, p. 181). I try to reach beyond this interpretation in stressing the dynamic and lively aspects in this relationship.

³ On several occasions, Herzog described his use of landscapes as externalized signs for inner visions, a transaction that critics frequently trace to German Romanticism: “For me a true landscape is not just a representation of a desert or a forest.

Treadwell is gone. The argument how wrong or how right he was disappears into a distance, into a fog. What remains is his footage. And while we watch the animals in their joys of being in their grace and ferociousness, a thought becomes more and more clear: that it is not so much a look at wild nature as it is an insight into ourselves, into our nature (Grizzly Man 2005, 01:35:42).

While refusing an anthropomorphized view of the environment as overtly naive, Herzog refers to the notion of “wild nature” as the metaphorical vehicle for Treadwell’s excessive inner states. Referring to the ragged surface of a glacier that is located some miles from Timothy’s camp in the Alaskan backcountry, Herzog concludes “that this landscape in turmoil is a metaphor of his soul” (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:57:42). Apart from its function as the material of signification, nature remains insignificant, without features. Both the slowly moving glacier and the forceful mammal might have a complex history of its own, its own story to tell, but for the moment this aspect remains in the background. It strikes me that this metaphorical conception of nature as designating human phenomena is not so different to the anthropomorphic view that Herzog rejects. Similar to Ishmael’s projection of writing onto the white surface of Moby Dick’s rugged skin, Herzog attributes any desired meaning to nature just as he does to Treadwell. At this point, a historical qualification seems to be warranted: When Herzog links the human environment that Treadwell is trying to escape from with “the same civilization that cast Thoreau out of Walden and John Muir into the wild” (Grizzly Man 2005, 01:22:20), this historical analogy to American Transcendentalism seems equally true for Herzog’s own conception of nature. When Ralph Waldo Emerson analyses the relationship between language and the tangible environment in his essay *Nature* from 1853, he refers to the structure of metaphor:

We are like travelers using the cinders of a volcano to roast their eggs. Whilst we see that it always stands ready to clothe what we would say, we cannot avoid the question whether the characters are significant of themselves. Have mountains, and waves, and skies no significance but what we consciously give them, when we employ them as emblems of our thought? Parts of speech are metaphors, because the whole of nature is a metaphor of the human mind (Emerson 1983, p. 24).

How, Emerson asks, can nature have significance apart from our language games and practices of interpretation? This question that “we cannot avoid”, cannot be answered either, or so it seems. In a strange form of distraction, Emerson circles back to the assumption whose validity he wanted to contest: “the whole of nature is a metaphor”.

But what the Transcendentalists could not have yet considered and Herzog cannot get around is the technical make-up of the camera and its relationship to the natural environment. Similar to Herzog’s own tendency of prolonging scenes to a point when his interviewees visibly start feeling awkward and uneasy, Treadwell’s material is most interesting to Herzog at exactly those transitory moments when a scene is already terminated, but the camera is still running and thereby creates a kind of surplus: “In his action movie mode, Treadwell probably did not realize that seemingly empty moments had a strange beauty. Sometimes images develop their own life, their own mysterious stardom” (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:38:55). Here, Herzog’s voice-over refers to a view of bushes and grass that are stirred by wind and rain. In an almost iconological way, this image recalls Siegfried Kracauer’s *Theory of Film*. In a chapter entitled “A whole with a purpose”, he writes:

[F]or a film built from elements whose only raison d’être consists in implementing the (pre-established) “idea conception” at the core of the whole runs counter to

It shows an inner state of mind, literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through the landscapes presented in my films”. Quoted in: Laurie Johnson: “Werner Herzog’s Romantic Spaces” *A Companion to Werner Herzog*, edited by Brad Prager (Johnson 2012, p. 511). See also Brad Prager. *The Cinema of Werner Herzog: Aesthetic Ecstasy and Truth* (Prager 2007), especially chapter 3 “Mountains and Fog”.

the spirit of a medium privileged to capture “the ripple of leaves in the wind” (Kracauer 1960, pp. 221–22).

Emerson regards “the whole of nature” indeed as “a whole with a purpose,” since it provides humans with the material to clothe their words and thoughts. By contrast, the technique of film introduces a different perspective. For Kracauer, the medium’s unique potential lies in its ability to record the minuscule and seemingly insignificant, the purposeless manifoldness of the physical world that lies beyond the limits of narrative schemes and grand ideological frameworks. In this aspect, it differs fundamentally both from the genre of the novel and the drama, in which, according to Kracauer, every single element plays an integral part in the process of storytelling. In a similar way, Herzog seems to imply that it is exactly when the filmic stylization and well-wrought narration give way to unplanned moments of emptiness and quietude that not only Treadwell’s recordings, but also the medium of film fulfill their own potential: An ephemeral grassy landscape in the middle of nowhere set in motion by wind and rain; foxes that surprisingly enter a scene in which Treadwell just completed his practiced monologue with the camera. The film offers the possibility of an excess that exceeds human narration. As Herzog puts it: “now the scene seems to be over but as a filmmaker sometimes things fall into your lap, which you couldn’t expect, never even dream of.” (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:24:22).

This is one of the decisive aspects of Treadwell’s raw footage: Installed on a tripod, the camera constitutes an ambiguous, dynamic space that is habituated both by human and nonhuman agents. Treadwell’s footage shows him, brown bears, and other animals within the same frame, sharing the same living space and at times, these fleeting moments constitute an almost geometrical choreography, a cycle of different life forms, as it can be seen in Figure 2. Here, Treadwell appears less as a transgressive intruder into a hostile realm of wild nature than as a part of an assemblage. This closeness does not necessarily imply a relationship of unconditional harmony. In the beginning of *Grizzly Man* there is an encounter with a bear that slowly trots towards the camera and eventually gets so close to it that the picture becomes blurred. Something is going wrong, but this becomes manifest only by the fact that Timothy suddenly loses his balance, gasps and almost drops the hand-held camera (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:04:34–00:04:42). In the sudden interruption, the seemingly transparent medium of filmic representation is stressed and thus becomes located as a part of the natural world that it tries to depict. As I would like to suggest, this kind of physical exposure slightly alters the image of nonhuman nature. In the immediate contact with the camera the animal leaves traces on the film and thus gains an autonomous, unruly presence, a possibly disturbing agency that counteracts any attempt to read it as a mere metaphor for cultural or psychological phenomena. Furthermore, this precarious interconnectedness also concerns the question of the film’s genre. Principally, though for different reasons, Herzog is right when he claims that Treadwell’s footage is “beyond a wildlife film”. In the realistic aesthetics of the wildlife film, the camera seems to imitate a disembodied gaze with almost magical abilities: itself invisible, it sees everything and, while remaining distant, it discloses the natural world in every detail. This way, the view emerges of a self-contained, transcendent environment that is undisturbed by the presence of humans. However, as William Cronon has pointed out, when nature is defined by the absence of humans, and humans, accordingly, by the absence of nature, the idea of a fundamental difference between both realms is reinforced.⁴ This view of the wilderness as sublime and untouched has problematic effects. Cronon writes that:

if by definition wilderness leaves no place for human beings, save perhaps as contemplative sojourners enjoying their leisurely reverie in God’s natural cathedral—then also by

⁴ With regard to the aesthetics of nature documentaries Karla Armbruster makes a similar point: “They [nature documentaries] can also erase difference within nature by constructing it as a place without room for human beings, ultimately distancing humans from the non-human nature with which they are biologically and perceptually interconnected, and reinforcing the dominant cultural ideologies responsible for environmental degradation”. See Karla Armbruster. “Creating the World We Must Save: The Paradox of Nature Television Documentaries”. In: *Writing the Environment: Ecocriticism and Literature*, edited by Richard Kerridge and Neil Sammells (Armbruster 1998, p. 221).

definition it can offer no solution to the environmental and other problems that confront us. To the extent that we celebrate wilderness as the measure with which we judge civilization, we reproduce the dualism that sets humanity and nature at opposite poles (Cronon 1995, p. 81).

Granted, Treadwell's self image was constituted by the idea of (masculine) solitude and the absence of other human beings in a landscape that he refers to as the "sanctuary" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:09:49). By carrying a very situated and corporeal camera around with him, however, he creates an aesthetic form that disturbs the ideological view of an external realm of nature uncontaminated by human beings.



Figure 2. Bear, foxes, Timothy Treadwell.

How does this analysis relate to my initial question about the relationship between animal expressiveness and human narration? When Herzog emphasizes how Treadwell's images are able to "develop their own life, their own mysterious stardom" (Grizzly Man 2005, 00:38:55), he refers to a potentiality and vivacity of reality that lies beyond the control of the person that operates the camera. Drawing on Kracauer's considerations regarding ideology and film I would argue that the filmic gaze suspends a solely human perspective and narration and is able to open up new and quite lively possibilities of perception. When Treadwell's monologue with the camera is interrupted and he is shown amid the presence of bear, fox, and cub, the possibilities of different, non-human worlds can become accessible. Just as the images of the Alaskan grass landscapes can "develop their own life", they might give presence to differing forms of meaning-making. I think, for instance, of the semiotic network of trails and marked trees that configure the bear's material environment and thereby constitute a storied place as Thom van Dooren uses the term. The adjective "storied" refers to "the way in which places are interwoven with and embedded in broader histories and systems of meaning through ongoing, embodied, and inter-subjective practices of 'place making'" (Van Dooren 2014, p. 67). These practices of appropriation are not unique to human beings. Corresponding to its "invisibility" for untrained human perception, the system of trails and signs is part of a grass landscape that is only "seemingly empty", as Herzog puts it. Treadwell's footage therefore could be seen as the engagement with a particular place and how it is shaped and inhabited both by human and nonhuman beings. However, and as the following section will argue, this image of an entanglement across the borders of

seemingly different ontological realms is not necessarily limited to a notion of place, understood as a scene of dwelling. It can also be taken a step further and expanded to a global perspective.

3. Whiteout

Since Treadwell spent much of his time in Alaska alone, he oftentimes filmed himself talking to the camera or even filmed himself filming the environment. *Grizzly Man*, one could argue, is not least a meta-fictional film about the act of filming and bringing a camera to a place that is called the wilderness. Indeed, the triadic arrangement between human perception, technical recording device, and nonhuman nature has become a constant feature in Herzog's later work as a filmmaker, most notably in *Encounters at the End of the World* (2007), shot in Antarctica. The film title's plural form seems to be well chosen. In a rather loose sequence of appearances, *Encounters* shows the people that work and live in the surrounding of McMurdo Station, a United States research center on Ross Island, situated close to the mainland of Antarctica, that was established in 1955. Described by Herzog both as an "ugly mining town" (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:09:16) and as coming "closest to what a future space settlement would look like" (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 01:09:46), McMurdo is introduced as a place that oscillates between the banal and the unreal. Its inhabitants are ascribed an "intention to jump the margin of the map" (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:11:23), as philosopher and forklift driver Stefan Pashov puts it at the film's beginning. Indeed, the quirky microcosm of mechanics, biologists, plumbers, glaciologists, volcanologists, physicists, and a seemingly somewhat out-of-place linguist seems to merge into the dreamlike. When Herzog interviews them in their respective working environments and fields of study, they all seem to struggle with phenomena of nature that exceed the means of a purely empirical approach and demand indirect means of representation such as the dream—or the film they are about to take a part in.

Therefore *Encounters* does more than show the sometimes peculiar proceedings of a remote research center within a seemingly barren and lifeless icescape. The film displays a particular curiosity for different ways of interaction and confrontation between humans and nature, including various animals that range from penguins, seals, starfish, and underwater crustaceans all the way to single-cell organisms. Furthermore, the film engages with complex natural systems and their inherent, stretched temporal scale such as drifting icebergs, volcanism, climate, and the impact that human civilization has on them. This way, a holistic view evolves of humans as entangled within a complex multitude of various life forms and material forces whose dynamic seems intractable. This depiction of nature as animate and elusive is emphasized by a distinctly self-reflexive form of representation that puts the camera, as it is used both in scientific and artistic contexts, into physical proximity with a more-than-human world.⁵ The effect of this aesthetic is not only a defamiliarized image of the environment, but also of human observers and their spatial position in regard to nature. All inhabitants of McMurdo are required to participate in a two-day survival school, part of which is the "bucket-head whiteout scenario" that tries to imitate the meteorological conditions of a whiteout. In situations of severe snowfall or fog, conditions of visibility can be blurred to such an extent that any spatial orientation in regard to the corporeal outline of objects and the horizon becomes impossible; an experience that is understandably described as disconcerting and frightening. With some amusement, *Encounters* shows a hopelessly disoriented training group that gradually loses any orientation and is neither able to reach its supposed destination nor its point of departure (see Figure 3).

In other words, "whiteout" means the loss of one's self; a collapse between perceiving center and outer environment. At the same time "whiteout" is the name of a white correction fluid used to erase

⁵ In this regard, I strongly disagree with readings that deny the relevance of nature for Herzog's *Encounters*, such as Reinhild Steingröver, who claims "that ultimately the subject of Herzog's nature films is not nature". See Reinhild Steingröver, "Encountering Werner Herzog at the End of the World." *A Companion to Werner Herzog*, edited by Brad Prager (Steingröver 2012, p. 467).

writing. A thick liquid, it blurs the borders between the written letter and its formless “environment”, the blank page. In the previous Section 1 argued that *Grizzly Man* creates a lively space that is inhabited both by human and nonhuman life forms. As the following part of this paper suggests, *Encounters at the End of the World* both enlarges and intensifies this image of entanglement, as it situates human beings among the fluxes of various interacting ecosystems, the sum of which seems to constitute the earth system. In this whirl of various forces, Herzog’s filmic approach to Antarctica creates the disorienting conditions of the whiteout-scenario in which the line between humans and their so called nonhuman environment starts to dissolve.



Figure 3. The “bucket-head whiteout scenario”.

On its surface level, Antarctica is a quiet place. It is so quiet that, as the physiologist Regina Eiser remarks in *Encounters*, you can hear the sound of your own heart beating. This silence also enables an increased awareness for the sounds and voices that stem from underneath the ostensibly solid ground of the frozen Ross Sea, where seals swim and hunt for prey. The underwater soundscape is given extensive attention in the film, and in the next scene one of Eiser’s colleagues euphorically describes the “chucks and the whistles and the booms [. . .] which make you realize that there is a whole world underneath you” (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:31:05). While underwater recordings of seals are playing, the biologists are seen lying down and putting their ears close to the ice—a scene that lasts over a minute within the film (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:31:17–00:32:27).

This rather uncomfortable *tableau vivant* manifests a literal freeze-frame of the human body (see Figure 4). The temporal continuity of the film is interrupted, the three figures are arrested in their movement and thus seem to embody the very act of attentive listening to the calls of the seals. The ice above the Ross Sea turns into the vast membrane of a loudspeaker, from which the sounds of a foreign and utterly strange world right underneath one’s feet resound. Just like bears, seals are predators. However, they are depicted sinking elegantly into the deep like gentle and peaceful torpedoes. Eiser compares their calls to the music of Pink Floyd or even to a sound that originates rather from outer space than from organic nature.



Figure 4. Nutrition physiologists listening to seals.

More than anything else, the ensuing moment of strangeness seems to be the common denominator that keeps the film's different representations of animals together. This is particularly vivid when *Encounters* turns to another being that lives at the intersection between water and the mainland: the penguin. The engagement with this particular animal, however, is loaded with symbolic meaning since it also works as a commentary on the contemporary filmic representation of Antarctica. When, right at the beginning of *Encounters*, Herzog states that "I would not come up with another film about penguins" (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:02:36), this is to be understood as a quite forward pun on Luc Jaquet's *March of the Penguins* from 2005. Jaquet depicts the life and reproductive cycle of the emperor penguin within a sublime and untouched ice landscape. Although this vision of Antarctica does not show any trace of human presence, including the film team, for some this absence seemed conspicuous. As critics have argued, *March* is about the very beings that are absent: humans. Framed by the sympathetic narrative voice of Morgan Freeman, the heartwarming story about the hardship and toil that penguins go through in bringing up their offspring was read as a stand-in for the nuclear family that makes up its main audience. Presented as a timeless and eternal cycle of life, it naturalizes a certain ideology of sexuality and society. Apart from Herzog's tendency towards self stylisation, his representation of the penguins differs indeed from Jaquet's "story [. . .] about love." (*March of the Penguins* 2005, 00:03:18).⁶ At first, when Herzog interviews the marine ecologist David Ainley in front of the object of his studies, a colony of penguins that he has been observing for years, the scene is reminiscent of the conventions of a wildlife film and its epistemological hierarchy. Ainley finds himself on a slightly elevated position from which the colony below can be observed. Herzog gently but perseveringly tries to undercut this frame and baffle the taciturn Ainley with an array of rather unusual questions. Asked about the possibility of insanity within the animal world, Ainley eventually points out that sometimes they "do become disoriented"

⁶ As Jennifer Ladino describes the role of nature in *March of the Penguins*: "A stunningly beautiful Antarctic landscape provides the backdrop for the film's anthropomorphic tale of tradition, stability, and continuity. Morgan Freeman narrates the penguins' journey in terms that are alternately serious and humorous, but always pacifying and grandfatherly". See Jennifer K. Ladino. "For the Love of Nature: Documenting Life, Death, and Animality in *Grizzly Man* and *March of the Penguins*." (*Ladino* 2009, p. 54).

(*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 01:13:40) and after a cut the next scene shows a penguin stopping on the route between its colony and the feeding ground at the open sea and suddenly heading toward a mountain landscape in the distance, a place where it will have no chance to sustain itself. No explanation for this behavior is given; it remains incomprehensible. However, when the penguin is described as “disoriented”, he becomes in fact quite similar to the humans that lose any orientation in the so called bucket-head whiteout scenario and whom Herzog describes as “drift[ing] completely off course” (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:25:06). In other words, within the logic of *Encounters* there is no presupposed stable human perspective from which the actions of animals could be easily discarded as lacking expression or reason. While there is an apparent need to paint human physiognomies on the white bucket-heads, as seen in Figure 3, they are less expressive than the bear’s alleged “blank stare”. The structure of “whiteout” I am trying to describe is a blurring of distinct lines between inside and outside or even a form of reversal. While the communicative exchange among seals constitutes a “whole world” of signification, human beings seem to have lost a clear perspective.

This gradual dismantling between humans and their “environment” is intensified as Herzog quite explicitly considers the impact of human civilization on the seemingly timeless landscapes that he is filming and thus extends his approach to the realm of non-organic nature. In this context the introduction of the glaciologist Douglas MacAyeal is of particular importance since it begins right away with the account of a dream in which the sleeping scholar finds himself on top of his subject matter, the gigantic iceberg B15:

At night, lying in my bed here at McMurdo, I am again walking across the top of B15. Might as well be on a piece of the South Pole, but yet, I am actually adrift in the ocean, a vagabond drifting in the ocean and below my feet [. . .] I can feel the rumble of the iceberg, I can feel the change, the cry of the iceberg, as it’s screeching and as it’s bouncing off the seabed, as it’s steering the ocean currents, as it’s beginning to move north, I can feel that sound coming up through the bottoms of my feet and telling me that this iceberg is coming north (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:13:15).

MacAyeal’s recurring dream is about a primordial awakening. While he is sleeping, the iceberg transforms itself into a living being that moves its weary limbs and expresses its slowly increasing vigor in a series of sounds and calls that find their way from the ice into the human ear. As it becomes clear in the following scenes, this dream presents a means of understanding in its own right, with its own epistemological status. As MacAyeal points out, the heroic period of Antarctic exploration, shaped by figures like Amundsen, Scott and Shackleton, commonly conceived of Antarctica as “a static, monolithic environment” (*Encounters at the End of the World* 2008, 00:17:05). Understood as the mere scenery for the drama of reaching the South Pole, an endeavor fueled by nationalistic pride and colonial striving, the unmarked ice landscape functioned as a blank field on which the human was able to inscribe its designs and ideology. In this view, Antarctica appears as a featureless object that can be crossed and thereby symbolically conquered. Its structure thereby bears similarities to the whiteness of the whale, that can be used to “symbolize whatever grand or gracious thing” (*Melville* 1983, p. 997), and the bear’s “blank stare” that functions in a similar way.

As I argued at the beginning of this section, whiteout erases human writing. In the sped-up sequence of satellite images that MacAyeal points at, the environment of Antarctica is not seen as a mere object of signification but as an agent. Of course the nature of climatic changes manifests such a large temporal and spatial scale that it cannot be perceived from a singular point in time and space. Almost invisible in real time, the slow changes of climate and the movement of the icebergs need forms and media of visualization, such as the accelerated rate of the satellite images. Seen from this unusual perspective, Antarctica becomes increasingly defamiliarized and uncanny. The frozen and barren landscape does not present itself as a stable and unchanging entity but as a complex and living system in which human beings are not the exclusive origin of agency and meaning. The iceberg’s movements become animated and reality itself has become dreamlike:

Now our comfortable thought about Antarctica is over,” Douglas continues. “Now we’re seeing it as a living being, it’s dynamic, it’s producing change. Change that it’s broadcasting to the rest of the world. Possibly in response to what the world is broadcasting down to Antarctica ([Encounters at the End of the World 2008](#), 00:17:15).

Here, Antarctica is depicted in a reciprocal, productive interplay of various subsystems such as climate, cryosphere, ocean currents, and the landmasses. The earth seems to display a functional interaction and thus exhibits similarities to Donna Haraway’s terms of sympoiesis or holobiont. In continuity of the model of symbiosis as a mutual dependency of different life forms, sympoiesis understands relationships as the basic and irreducible structure of natural phenomena. Unlike symbiosis as a form of mutual dependency or advantage, the notion of *poiesis* emphasizes the productive and constantly evolving aspect of such a relationship.⁷ Haraway writes:

I use holobiont to mean symbiotic assemblages, at whatever scale of space and time, which are more like knots of diverse intra-active relating in dynamic complex systems, than like the entities of a biology made up of preexisting bounded units (genes, cells, organisms, etc.) ([Haraway 2016](#), p. 60).

However, Haraway does not limit her model to a distant realm called nature or the environment but understands human agents as an integral part of sympoietic processes, a fact that is made prominent by her use of the term “natureculture”. In fact, a surprisingly similar view is expressed by MacAyeal’s remarks on Antarctica that he describes as “a living being” that sends and receives data to and from “the rest of the world”. What is so remarkable about his statement is not only the changed understanding of nature as an active agent, but also its articulation in terms of a radio or television transmission. While Herzog’s Fitzcarraldo steadfastly blared his opera recording of Enrico Caruso into the jungle, this unidirectional relation has changed into the rhetorical structure of a chiasmus. The iceberg and its stirrings not only affect the complex interplay of ocean currents, water temperatures, and the meteorological patterns of the atmosphere, but its voice also affects the receiving set of Herzog’s film. This emphasis on the technical media of recording is telling because ultimately *Encounters* is, again, also a film about filming and how the medium of film is related to other media used in the depiction and understanding of the environment. When Herzog accompanies a group of volcanologists to Mount Erebus, an active volcano on Ross Island that reaches an altitude of almost 4000 m, the crater is completely covered in clouds and fog. But apart from the scientists that heave their material through the unreal scenery of fog, snow and rocks, particular attention is paid to the cameras, microphones and other technical devices that are installed at the rim of the crater and point into the abyss. Similar to Timothy Treadwell who filmed himself filming the Alaskan wilderness, Herzog directs his camera at cameras that are designed to monitor the environment in Antarctica (see [Figure 5](#)).

⁷ Bruno Latour, among other theorists, has broadened the notion of agency so that it includes nonhuman animals, entities and processes. See for instance Bruno Latour ([Latour 2005](#)). *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. This conceptualization of agency does not necessarily entail the attributes of self-consciousness, free will, or reasoning, but constitutes rather a deflated account of agency that does not presuppose intentionality. As a consequence, his position has become the object of criticism. For instance, Bob Carter and Nickie Charles point out that his model of nonhuman agency deludes the notion of agency to a point where it starts becoming useless: “since every thing has agency, and agency is the ability to have an effect, we arrive at the banal conclusion that everything affects everything else in some way or another”. See Bob Carter and Nickie Charles. “Animals, Agency and Resistance.” ([Carter and Charles 2013](#), p. 328) This is a fair point to make. In the context of this paper I cautiously use the term of agency with regard to natural processes in order to emphasize their relevance and dynamics with regard to human beings.



Figure 5. A camera pointed into the crater of Mount Erebus.

This depiction of the camera enshrouded in mist and fog alludes to the whiteout scenario that *Encounters* introduces at its beginning but it can also be read as a commentary on the general position of the human observer towards nature as a subject of study. Throughout the film, the viewer watches ecologists listening to seals, studying penguins and other sea animals, glaciologists measuring the movements of the allegedly eternal ice, and geologists reconstructing the history of volcanic activity. In Herzog's take on these configurations, the attempt at translating natural phenomena into a human sign system is never entirely successful or complete; humans are not placed in a privileged and distanced epistemic or aesthetic position from which they can comprehend and contemplate the sublime wonders of nature.⁸ Just as the camera is enshrouded in mist, humans and their natural environment become so entangled with each other that the presupposition of a center loses its meaning.

This study began with the question of how animals and, on a larger scale, nonhuman nature, could become present as independent sources of agency and narrative energy, maybe even as narrative instances in their own right, with their own perspectives and their own story to tell. Since Herzog is not relying on animation, the films in question do not reverse the hierarchy between narrating human and narrated animal in a literal sense—a structure I outlined in the beginning through the relationship between Ishmael and the white whale. Herzog does not try to stage an imaginary entrance into the consciousness or subjective perspective of animals, not to speak of inorganic forces. Nevertheless, both *Grizzly Man* and *Encounters at the End of the World* focus on a range of various animals like bears, foxes, seals, penguins and sea animals, and they consider larger natural phenomena such as climatic and geological processes that develop their own irreducible physical presence and cannot be considered as mere background phenomena for the story of human individuals. As has become clear at several points of the analysis, this conception of nature as an active and autonomous force is not necessarily a comforting notion. Herzog's gaze shows a human body that is entangled with dynamic

⁸ In a similar way, Laura McGavin reads *Encounters* as a “nonanthropocentric vision of Antarctica as a complexly alive environment where single-celled organisms, Wedel seals, forklift operators, subatomic particles, PhD dropouts, and volcanic magma actively intermingle.” Laura McGavin. “Terra Incognita.” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature & Environment* (McGavin 2013, p. 53). However, McGavin seems less interested in the various media of recording and representation that Herzog portrays in *Encounters*.

nonhuman agencies, and both films linger on resulting moments of incomprehension, disorientation, and physical danger.

The lack of distance between human and nonhuman agents emerges also on a medial level. Both films explore forms of representation that indeed reach “beyond a wildlife film”, as Herzog puts it in regard to Timothy Treadwell’s work. As I pointed out in my analysis of *Grizzly Man*, the conventions of the wildlife film tend to obscure the physical presence of the camera and the mere fact of filmic representation remains mostly hidden; a strategy often associated with the rhetoric of unmediated realism.⁹ By contrast, Herzog’s gaze is not a disembodied view from nowhere. *Grizzly Man* and *Encounters* employ a purposefully self-reflexive way of representation and go to great lengths to emphasize and display the different technological media that are used to record and visualize their respective environments: Treadwell’s video recordings of the brown bears, the soundtrack of the hunting and swimming seals, furthermore the sped-up depiction of floating icebergs in fast-motion, and the video recordings of the volcanic crater of Mount Erebus. Finally, it is also Herzog’s own camera and his way of figuration that are alluded to by the various cameras that appear on the screen. In a meta-hermeneutical meditation on human’s epistemic and medial stance, both *Grizzly Man* and *Encounters at the End of the World* take a step back and ask about the different ways of narration and representation by means of which the human is trying to make sense of nature. The effect is a defamiliarized image of the human observer and his spatial position in regard to nature but also of nonhuman animals. As a common feature of the various animals that have been introduced in this essay, they all seem to disturb or interrupt human forms of narrative signification and use the resulting gaps in order take on an autonomous and expressive status. While Melville’s white whale eludes the attempts of representation or translation, Treadwell’s camera shows human and nonhuman animals in a dynamic relationship that is not controlled by the human operator. In a similar way, yet with a more global perspective, *Encounters* situates the human in a vast system of natural processes, a situation I brought into connection with the semantic ambiguity of the whiteout. Representing both the erasure of human writing and the dissolution of corporeal lines in meteorological conditions of severe snow and fog, it can also be understood as an aesthetic form that attempts to leave behind the limits of an anthropocentric perspective on nonhuman nature. In my view, Werner Herzog’s work can be understood as walking in this whiteout.

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⁹ See Cynthia Chris. *Watching Wildlife* (Chris 2006, p. 71): “The preference for unpeopled landscapes also bolsters an implicitly positivist belief in the veracity of direct observation, that is, in the camera’s capacity to represent reality. [. . .] In other words, rather than relationships, conflictual or otherwise, between natural environment and human society, the strategy of minimizing human presence in wildlife films seems to invite viewers to forget that their view on nature is mediated, even as the very act of nature spectatorship underscores its distance and unfamiliarity”.

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Article

Barking at Heaven's Door: Pluto Mehra in the Hindi Film *Dil Dhadakne Do*

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Abstract: In this article, I discuss the representation of pets in the 2015 commercial Hindi comedy-drama (commonly known as Bollywood) *Dil Dhadakne Do* (DDD), which translates to Let the Heart Beat; this is the first ever case of a Hindi movie having a dog as a narrator. For centuries, Indian animal tales have had a habit of anthropomorphizing, but generally narratives about dogs uphold the basic prejudice that they are polluting and degraded animals. DDD introduces a dog named Pluto Mehra, not only as a pet, but as the fifth member of the Mehra family, with the role of the *sutradhaar* (storyteller, narrator) who recounts the story of a rich, dysfunctional family. Pluto knows the Mehra's foibles and follies, and he is the only voice of reason among them. A generational shift in one's outlook towards pets has taken place in the Indian middle classes: pets are no longer perceived as animals that must serve some purpose, but are actually considered to be equal members of the family, even becoming a statement of style for pet owners. I analyze this attitude reversal toward animals within the context of a globalized economy and consumerist ideology.

Keywords: Hindi cinema; Bollywood; speaking animals; animal narrator; human-animal studies; world literature

1. Pluto Mehra and His Humans

Brutality and benevolence and cruelty and compassion are contrasts that have marked the relationship between humans and dogs [1], and also the history of India. For centuries, Indian animal tales have had a habit of anthropomorphizing, but generally narratives about canines uphold the basic prejudice that dogs are polluting and degraded animals, for they are stigmatized as scavengers and eaters of carrion. Most caste-minded Hindus consider them execrable, in the same way that Jews and Muslims abhor pigs. Dogs are often used as a symbol for the people who are disparagingly termed 'dog-cookers' in Sanskrit texts—Dalits, formerly called Untouchables, and Adivasis, the so-called tribal peoples ([2], pp. 71–113).

A number of figurines of dogs wearing collars, which likely signifies domestication, have been found at Harappa and at other Indus sites [3]. In Indian mythology, Indra's divine bitch Sarama is the ancestor of all other dogs ([4], pp. 67–83), and the Vedic gods Indra, Yama and Rudra were associated with dogs. Nevertheless, in this corpus, the dog seems to be of little importance and in later literature too, the animal is rarely presented as a pet ([5], p. 296–97; [6], pp. 36, 196). The only major exception is a passage in the great epic *Mahabharata*, showing Yudhishtira as being more prepared to renounce celestial bliss than to abandon a dog that has devoutly followed him all the way to heaven's door. As it turns out, however, the animal is not a real dog but Dharma in the form of a dog. So, in the end "no dog gets into heaven" ([7], pp. 494–95).

Even in colonial India the status of dogs was very low. When the British left, dogs and Indians were not allowed in most clubs ([8], pp. 42, 135), a discriminatory practice that upper caste Indians applied to temples with regard to these animals and to Dalits. With the exception of a few royals

and scattered hunting tribes, Indians have not traditionally been a dog-loving people. However, the colonizers used to keep dogs as pets, and this practice spread among the colonized people, from a desire to emulate those in power. In any case, even today, in India ‘dog’ is a swearword, and people who tend animals, who touch human waste, or who are leather workers are often referred to as dogs.

Animals with linguistic abilities are often seen as a useful tool for the education of children and the illiterate [9]. Yet Walt Disney’s global success shows that even intelligent and educated adults succumb to the charm of tales whose main characters are animals, conveying—overt or covert—religious, philosophical, or scientific messages. In South Asia there has been a longstanding tradition of ‘human-animal ventriloquism’, and the setting of a collection of stories where it occurs, such as the *Panchatantra*, the *Jataka-s*, or the *Hitopadesha*, indicates that they were directed at children or simple folk. How humans write the thoughts and speech of animals in literature tells us a lot about how we represent and construct ourselves [10]. Literary representations of animal minds reveal a great deal about how humans think about animals, and what the consequences of that thinking is. Animal stories in Indian narrative tradition cannot be taken merely as fairy tales for the entertainment of children, for they often promote a particular ideology: wisdom and knowledge coming from unexpected and extraordinary sources can be a more effective tool of social control and instruction than learned discourses and sermons [11].

The bond between animals and humans, especially dogs, has been well explored by many filmmakers and a rich literature has investigated dog narrators that appear in several Hollywood or European films [12–18]. Yet, even if animals have been part of the cast of a few popular Hindi films, the academic investigation of this phenomenon is not well-developed. In the ‘golden age’ of Raj Kapoor, the underdog protagonist’s meeting with a dog in *Awaara* (1951) is a Chaplinesque sentimental representation of the ‘degradation’ shared by dogs and some humans. Raj Kapoor’s autobiographical drama *Mera Naam Joker* (1970) had a mongrel in the concluding chapter, acting as the medium through which the protagonist befriends a woman; they form a street circus team until the dog is rudely grabbed into a municipality van meant to capture the stray population.

Dogs in Hindi cinema have been associated with various forms of justice and often animals are shown uniting a family or identifying villains. For example, this happens in *Sachaa Jhutha* (1970), *Noorie* (1979) and *Teri Meherbaniyan* (1985); in both latter films, the pet dogs even take revenge for their masters’ death. In *Mard* (1985), there is an instance of a dog taking a political stance: the protagonist Raju (superstar Amitabh Bachchan) crashes into a “Windsor Club”—that exhibits the signboard “Dogs and Indians Are Not Allowed” at the entrance—together with his dog, who will make a definite literal statement by urinating on the face of a British colonial oppressor. If pets can see through the masked appearances of the villains in *Khoon Bhari Maang* (1988), the paranormal film *Maa* (1992) has a pet dog that can see ghosts. Pets in *Parivaar* (1987) can even drive a car, and Tuffy, the dog in *Hum Apke Hain Kaun* (1994), not only guards the groom’s sandals during the wedding, but also umpires cricket matches and can even receive divine messages from Lord Krishna. A poignant story about children’s love for their pets can be found in *Halo* (1996) or *Chillar Party* (2011). Dogs in Hindi films can be millionaire heirs, like the protagonist of *It’s Entertainment!* (2014), or the reincarnation of an ancestor, such as in *Bol Radha Bol* (1992).

None of the dogs mentioned in this—non-exhaustive—list is a talking animal. Hollywood films such as *Marmaduke* (2010) and *Love the Coopers* (2015) are family dramas which privilege a star voice-over to provide a dog’s perspective on family life. However, in the Hindi cinematic field we find only one animated film, *Roadside Romeo* (2008), showing a talking dog voiced by Saif Ali Khan; this is a human story transposed onto animated dog characters about an abandoned dog who is trying to rebuild his life on the streets. In 2015, the commercial Hindi comedy-drama *Dil Dhadakne Do* (DDD) [19]; directed by Zoya Akhtar and produced by Ritesh Sidhwani and Farhan Akhtar, story and screenplay by Zoya Akhtar and Reema Kagti, for the first time in Hindi cinema, introduced a dog not

only as a pet, but as a full-fledged family member, with the role of the *sutradhaar*¹ of a dysfunctional family's drama. Pluto Mehra is the fifth member of the Mehra family, knows the Mehra's foibles and follies, and is the only voice of reason among them.

In this article, I endorse the concept that popular culture, and commercial cinema with it, are serious objects of critical inquiry and they provide a space where the construction and reconstruction of meaning can take place. I am going to consider Bollywood's relationship with human's best friend and discuss the role that Pluto Mehra plays in the family drama, analyzing it within the context of a subtle development in the global economy, as a result of which India has the fastest growing dog population in the world and a thriving pet care industry. Dog ownership can be seen as an economic indicator: India is the world's second-most populous country, but since it is still largely rural and poor, it has one of the world's lowest rates of dog ownership. As incomes rise, some people can afford to have pets for the first time. The generational shift in the attitude towards pets is evident: from being perceived as animals that must serve some purpose to now being seen as equal members of the family. This trend manifests in the increased number of pets acquired, a higher awareness of the dietary needs of pets, the adoption of more professional grooming services, and more services offered for animal care in general. On a macro level, as countries develop, new industries (such as dog shows, puppy hotels, etc.) develop around dog care and pampering.

Introducing DDD, I will focus on the character of Pluto Mehra, the voice of the narrator that watches the events happening around him and presents to the audience the differences between a mute animal and a social (human) animal. The film begins by introducing us to the dysfunctional Mehra family. Kamal Mehra (Anil Kapoor) is a Punjabi, Delhi-based millionaire in plastic manufacturing, who never misses an opportunity to boast about his self-made business. His wife Neelam (Shefali Shah) is totally neglected by him, and spends her life socializing with her friends, hiding her dissatisfaction through overeating, and dropping wicked, sarcastic, tongue-in-cheek one-liners. Their lives are actually separate, as there are endless differences between them, but in the public sphere they pretend that they are the 'best couple', because their whole world revolves around their anxiety about other people's opinions. The Mehra's have a daughter, Ayesha (Priyanka Chopra), who is a successful entrepreneur and the owner of an extremely lucrative online travel portal, listed by Forbes magazine. She has inherited her father's acute business acumen, but because of patriarchal norms, this remains neglected, and leadership of the family business has been forced on her younger brother, 25-year-old, carefree Kabir Mehra (Ranveer Singh). Kabir loves flying and dreams of becoming a pilot, but his parents insist he must take over the management of AYKA industries.

It is at this point, 14 minutes into the film, that the audience discovers that the voice-over of the narrator is actually that of Pluto Mehra, who we had glimpsed briefly earlier ([19], 8:30), when he was introduced as, "Pluto is our doggie...brother" and "Pluto is our brother" by his human siblings Ayesha and Kabir ([19], 11:53). This Bullmastiff is the fifth member of the Mehra family. The loyal pet's autobiographical account clarifies the moral, emotional and social gap between the human protagonists and the animal, who states that "if anybody is normal in this family, it's me!" ([19], 14:15).

The plot takes place over a period of one week, when a group of friends, colleagues and family members get together to celebrate the Mehra's thirtieth wedding anniversary, in a journey that will forever change the balance of the family. The luxury cruise in Europe is, in fact, a screen to hide the imminent bankruptcy of the Mehra's company. When hardened opportunists Kamal and Neelam Mehra discover that their company AYKA is not just running at a loss, but is also losing its credibility and reputation for integrity in the market, they convert their anniversary celebration into an attempt at matchmaking between their son Kabir and young Noori Sood (Ridhima Sud), who has recently broken off her engagement to another man. Noori is the only daughter of wealthy Lalit Sood (Parmeet

¹ In classical Sanskrit theatre, the *sutradhaar* is the one who creates a coherent narrative by acting as producer, narrator, storyteller, director, and even manipulator of the performance.

Sethi), and the Mehra hope that her father will invest in their company despite a longstanding rivalry, to secure her a groom and restore the family honor. They do not reveal their plan to Kabir, but simply invite the Soods on their cruise, where they confront their bitter enemies, the Khannas. Once on board the ship, the Mehra's lives begin to change. Kamal's career is heading towards failure, and he and his wife can barely tolerate each other. Ayesha is fed up with her marriage and wants a divorce, as she realizes that she can no longer pretend to love her dominating, egotistical husband Manav (Rahul Bose) when she has found true love with her childhood friend, journalist Sunny Gill (Farhan Akhtar), the son of Kamal's loyal manager Amrish Gill (Ikhlauque Khan). Ayesha and Sunny meet on the cruise after a long separation that was caused by Ayesha's parents who did not appreciate the growing intimacy between both youngsters, as Sunny does not belong to their social milieu. Kabir falls madly in love with the London-based Muslim artiste Farah Ali (Anushka Sharma), and begins to rebel. Meanwhile, many more private matters and family secrets are being exposed. Will the Mehra family be able to deal with the situation? I am not going to spoil the ending. My main interest here is to discuss the role that Pluto Mehra plays in the family drama, which I will do in the next section.

2. A Cynical View of Life

Apparently, director Zoya Akhtar initially wanted to call the dog Plato, after the Greek philosopher. However, she felt that no one would understand the connection and settled for Pluto instead [20]. The reference to one of the six biggest stars of the Walt Disney cartoon is clear. Interestingly enough, unlike most Disney characters, Pluto the Pup is not anthropomorphic: he does not speak or walk upright, but acts like an ordinary dog. By contrast, despite being of the same species as Pluto, another dog, Goofy, is completely anthropomorphized and behaves like a human. This marks Pluto the Pup as a household pet among other non-human animals, who are dressed as humans ([21], pp. 10–11, 20). Pluto Mehra does not disrupt the recognizable narrative either, which remains as if it were reality. In the film, Pluto Mehra does not actually speak to other characters, but only vocalizes in barks. His comments are addressed to the audience, and within the plot he is firmly positioned as a pet, showing no magical or hyperreal element. This means that DDD is not an animal fable, even though his unexpected role as *sutradhaar* places Pluto Mehra within a more general narrative pattern, where wisdom and knowledge come from unpredictable and extraordinary sources, which can be traced back to the Upanishad corpus ([11], p. 19).

DDD is a commercial movie, and it is not advisable to seek the depth and complexity that can be found in tales of famous talking animals in literature [22–28]. Pluto's philosophizing should not be expected to be too profound, as the film is meant primarily to entertain. Nevertheless, Pluto Mehra is characterized as a philosopher who separates his identity from the other characters and has original opinions, different from those accepted in the society in which he lives. Zoya's father Javed Akhtar, one of the most renowned writers in Bollywood, penned the lines for Pluto-the-wise-dog, and superstar Aamir Khan provided the voice. Pluto is very interested in observing human nature and has his own take on everything. His comments are social satire dealing with problems like patriarchy, gender discrimination, individual freedom and social normativity. This is not new in Hindi movies. The novelty lies in the use of the talking-dog motif to illuminate philosophical thought regarding human differences, with an intensely real, intrinsically 'adult' animal character articulating many sharp observations about relationships and life.

As Erica Fudge has shown in her work, "dogs offer writers a way to think about human stability" ([29], p. 11). If one tries to define what kind of philosopher-dog Pluto is, Pluto's philosophical musings are cynical, insofar as they both express a dog-positioned philosophy and are in the spirit of ancient or classical cynicism. Of course, this requires a refusal of the binary 'West and the rest' as well as the Orientalist and nationalist discourse about the purity of ancient Indian civilization. Present-day culture in India can only be understood as a complex result of centuries of cultural exchange; the elite middle classes are often more acquainted with Euro-American educational models than with local ones [30]. In this view, Pluto contraposes what can be defined as classical cynicism to

the cynical (in the present acceptance of this word) lifestyle of contemporary, increasingly neocapitalist Indian society. If we consider the etymological meaning of the Greek term *κυνικός* ('doglike', the adjectival form of the ancient Greek word for dog, *κύων*), the fact that a talking canine, as an outside observer, makes "cynical observations on the foibles of human nature" is not surprising ([31], p. 114). Theodore Ziolkowski's masterful historical summary of the motif of the "philosophical dog" provides examples from classical antiquity, from the European literary tradition, and from modern fiction of Europe and the Americas. He concludes that the "philosophical dog is still being used for the purposes of cynical social comment," in forms that have transformed the original conventions through "inversions" and "deformations." ([31], p. 122).

In the present acceptance, 'cynic' often has a negative association with Machiavellianism, nihilism and pessimism. According to this kind of cynicism, self-interest is the only driving force in human relations: people crave only attention and power and, when they get these, use them to their own and their allies' advantage. In this view, humans are unscrupulous, greedy, materialistic, manipulative and hypocritical individuals; there is no public good or universal standard of morality, only personal good. For this kind of cynic, even if he claims to be otherwise and pretends to be acting out of any idealistic motive, a sense of right or of duty, or passions such as love, honor, piety, is simply a liar. This kind of person is merely hiding their egoism behind attractive phrases and is cheating others with the appearance of respectability and a cunning manipulation of ideals. Yet, as William Desmond shows, this conviction does not hold regarding ancient cynics. Pessimism about human motivation is a trait they share with contemporary cynics. However, ancient cynics believed that human beings are basically good and were optimistic regarding human nature: the superfluous artificialities of 'civilization' may have led humans to adopt bad habits and social behaviors, but this is similar to a temporary illness. The cure to regain natural goodness and happiness is a little satire, a good dose of frugality (*εὐτέλεια*), a shameless flouting of social conventions, simplification of one's lifestyle, and a renewed sense of living in the present moment ([32], pp. 2-3; [33], p. 16).

Pluto's observations on the human race sound like edifying clues that he presents to the audience, with the goal of showing the path to real happiness. By comparison, Farhan Akhtar's (Zoya's brother) dialogue for the rest of the characters is more witty and entertaining. DDD causes debate among the audience, insofar as it discusses gender and family issues that are very important in present day India, advocating that young people should be given more freedom in their choices regarding their career and partner. It addresses key factors that influence marriages and sexual relations, such as respect for family, reverence for the wisdom of elders, transmission of 'Indian values,' family honor, social and community standing, expectations of family, and gender roles. In this context, Pluto's commentary has a crucial role in upsetting commonly accepted norms.

Pluto's first musing comes at the very beginning of the film. He stresses the difference between humans and other animals regarding the notion of time, pointing out human inconsistency and strangeness. In fact, while "time just flows for the rest of the animals," "human beings divide it into years, months, days and make calendars" and celebrate birthdays and other special occasions so that they "take a U-turn and come back each year" ([19], 03:10–04:55) (all translations from Hindi are the author's). In subsequent 'dialogues,' Pluto confirms Alice Kuzniar's observation that "it is most often about language and communication that the canine philosopher broods" ([34], p. 57). A sequence shows Kabir having lunch with his parents, who start quarreling about Neelam's right to dispose of her share in the family company, with Kamal throwing in her face the fact that she has this money only because he earned it, totally overlooking her support to him when he was a young, penniless entrepreneur ([19], 16:08–19:20). While the visual shows them shouting and arguing, Pluto comments: "Human beings are blessed with language. It is a gift that enables them to clearly express their thoughts, ideas and emotions. But the irony is that, in spite of this power, the acute lack of understanding between them will not be found in mute animals. If there can be so much misunderstanding in one nuclear family, how can one even hope for world peace?" ([19], 18:40–19:19). Later, he comments on the human incapacity to communicate and to express feelings in a genuine way ([19], 2:28:02–2:28:30), leaving

the most important things unsaid: “the things they say to someone are often meant for someone else. And the conversation they shy away from most is that of the heart, of love. Yet that is the only thing that matters! Now, how can one explain to them that if you love someone, just show it!” ([19], 2:00:00–2:00:41).

The need to eschew social conventions in order to regain a more ‘natural’ way of living is reinforced in the comments where Pluto emphasizes the animality of human beings. Mating, for example, starts with rituals. Commenting on the first meeting of Kabir and Farah, in a deserted swimming pool at night, Pluto describes the invisible conversation they have: they don’t exchange a word, but “at the start of a new love story, one doesn’t really need speech.” “The eyes talk...the body communicates;” “you see someone, a chemical reaction is triggered in the brain, blood rushes faster through the veins, a tingling sensation passes through the body...So, your heartbeat increases.” Both humans are swimming as if performing a love dance: “When he comes here, she goes there.” And Pluto’s final comment is: “Even we play such games in the beginning” ([19], 36:30–39:13).

Yet in human society, and particularly in the Indian setting where the Mehras happen to live, “mating” has become a very complicated issue. Although the movie is set in the exclusive ambience of a millionaires’ cruise, when it comes to selection of a partner and family life, the problems of the élite seem to be quite middle class. The boys are not proving worthy enough, the girls are raring to break through the glass ceiling, and the previous generation is holding on to some obsolete and hypocritical notion of values and morality. In Pluto’s view, the root of this evil is in a wrong training system for human infants: “We animals also train our young. A lioness teaches her cubs to hunt. A pigeon teaches her squabs to fly. But once they’ve grown up, they are on their own. Indian parents somehow can’t accept that their offspring are capable enough to live life on their own terms. [. . .] They remain involved in their children’s lives way longer than required [. . .] But can a leopard change its spots? Do what you like, the kids [. . .] will follow their own instinct” ([19], 43:45–45:11). Throughout the film, Pluto’s comments as well as the plot development seem to imply that generational shift and cultural change are crucial to solving these problems.

In order to understand the impact that such statements could have on the Indian audience, one should keep in mind that marriage in India is generally not aimed at satisfying passion, but is rather considered a life-long economic security system which parents alone can arrange [35]. Marriage is treated as the joining of two families, a strategic alliance rather than a mere union of two individuals, and the couple’s preference has a lower priority than the family as a whole [36]. The custom of arranging marriages is commonly associated with South Asia, but it is difficult to find a definition for a constantly changing set of practices, although some customs are generally associated with the following: elder relatives and/or a matchmaker look for a spouse from a ‘good family’ and check caste and financial situation; horoscopes are matched; the man’s family comes to tea to ‘see the girl;’ the dowry is set, etc. [37]. Yet there is a whole range of arrangements, from those where the young people never meet before marriage and are merely informed about the family’s decision to have them marry, to the self-arranged marriage where the young people make sure that the potential partner fulfils all the criteria set by the family [38]. Free choice is recognized in modern law and legislation on marriages, but the burden of custom associated with the perpetuation of the caste system works firmly against it. Nevertheless, the condition of modernity, represented by the presence of law, rights, and state, changes in the political economy, and the emergence of urban cultures significantly different from rural cultures, are factors that have opened up a space for possible aspirations for change in private lives.

Social and family pressure to get married is extremely strong, and any newly wedded couple must face pressure for normative compulsory hetero-reproduction in the demand for an immediate pregnancy, as a child is “the emblem of futurity’s unquestioned value” ([39], p. 4). This intensifies gender discrimination, as women are expected to concentrate on domestic life and renounce any other ambition. Pluto reflects on this issue, and denounces the patriarchal norm according to which “the tradition of our nation is that after marriage the daughter belongs to another family. The son could have

umpteen marriages; he will always remain our own" ([19], 07:10–08:58). In DDD, Ayesha Mehra "was married and shipped off" to Mumbai at the age of 21, but she is resilient: contrary to all expectations, she did not immediately produce an heir for her husband's family and, while her husband pressures her to try in vitro fertilization, she is secretly on the pill. Refusing to accept her prescribed role as acquiescent wife and nurturing mother, she sells off her jewels and sets up her own business, an online travel portal that soon becomes the second biggest in the market. Pluto comments that "just like her father, she too is self-made. The difference is, she doesn't say it." Pluto contrasts Ayesha's understated and unrecognized achievements to her father's much-boasted-about, bullying and aggressive success: "Mr. Mehra is referred to as a self-made man. One wonders that if people can make themselves...then why don't they make themselves a little better? But what can one do? These days, 'better' is not defined by intelligence, honesty or courage but by something else. It has to do with something called money" ([19], 03:10–04:55).

Money is the key to obtaining respect and recognition in society. One of the attractive perks of becoming rich is the access to polite and refined society, but here is how Pluto describes social etiquette: "They say dogs have a strong sense of smell. But when it comes to sniffing out trouble, humans aren't far behind. Not only do they anticipate danger in advance, they even plan their response to it. Ironically, the biggest threat to a human being is another human being. To shield themselves, they change their color to suit their environment. And they become a bit like chameleons." When we see two rival businessmen shaking hands, we know that "in reality, it is a show of strength. Their wives are exchanging smiles but it is a baring of fangs. Their children have been instructed to keep a distance, but are actually sizing each other up. [. . .] Pretension is a purely human trait. When others do it, people call it hypocrisy. And when they do it themselves, they call it worldliness" ([19], 26:47–28:22).

DDD's plot shows the Mehra's progressively understanding and accepting Pluto's values and ideas, and concludes with a reunited Mehra family sailing away on a life raft with Pluto commenting: "My whole family has been rescued. I had never seen them this happy and headed in the same direction before. They say a leopard can't change its spots but man has the power to change. Now look at my own family. Today they've learnt that love, alone, is not enough. If you love someone, you have to set them free. Free to be, free to live differently. Every heart beats to its own rhythm. Let every heart beat! And it doesn't matter that for miles around us there is just water. Or that our boat is really small. We are together. We are for each other. What else does one want?" ([19], 2:44:00–2:45:00).

Apparently, this is an ode to individual freedom, but I would like to consider this interpretation a little more closely. DDD is definitely trying to say that, unlike love, marriage (which is more often than not a compromise or an imposition) is a dysfunctional institution. Most families only reflect that inherent flaw, and the demands of the family continue to eclipse the primary importance of the couple, as "the couple's intimacy can easily degenerate into a mutual ego boosting, a joint self-centredness" [26]. Excessive "familism" governing intimate relationships is wrong, and it can be countered only by finding the right balance between the demands of the extended family and those of the couple. Yet, if we consider the closing scene of the movie, we notice that the focus is not on an emancipation of the siblings from the family of origin in order to build up their own couples or new nuclear families, or even to live on their own as singles. Rather, the film reinforces the notion that the family of origin is a safe and reassuring harbor.

In actual fact, as director Zoya Akhtar herself stated, the movie is intended to emphasize the very special bond existing between siblings, a strong relationship that prevails over the multiple love affairs shown in the movie [40]. This is a strong criticism of a culture that makes marriage, childbearing, and economic responsibilities the domain of the extended family, leaving little or no room for self-exploration and self-determination. Ideal marriage is presented as a means of attaining personal happiness, or a means of sharing one's life with a person one loves. Nevertheless, family unity, family togetherness, and common family goals remain of primary importance, and personal considerations are only secondary. In DDD, for example, the daughter Ayesha postpones the fulfillment of her newly found love in favor of unity and cohesiveness in her family of origin, which are necessary

for family stability and survival. However, this reinforces a consolidated family model [41]. Even in the fairytale-like world of Bollywood, the dream of constituting a two-person universe remains something to be negotiated within the family framework, and the individual is not considered to be autonomous, but interconnected with, and also lower in hierarchy in comparison with the family network [42]. In the end, the only real innovation in the new family model is that pets too are considered to be siblings. In the next section I will present the changes that this new attitude to animals has brought to real life in contemporary India.

3. Barking at Heaven's Door . . . or Living in Hell?

As I have shown, in the context of the movie, Pluto Mehra's musings function as props to upset established family models, in order to make the notion acceptable that pets are family members. This reflects a generational shift in the outlook towards pets that has taken place in the Indian middle classes. In this section I will focus on this phenomenon within the context of a subtle development in the global economy, as a result of which India has the fastest growing dog population in the world with a thriving pet care industry.

In DDD, Pluto Mehra is humanized by the presence of his philosophizing voice. The dog barks only twice, in a hectic sequence involving many humans trying to rescue Kabir, who has jumped overboard ([19], 2:28:34), and in a subsequent scene when the whole family is reunited on a lifeboat ([19], 2:42:40). He is on a leash when boarding the cruise ship, with somebody commenting about ship rules, "Poor Pluto, sorry!" ([19], 24:10–24:18). He is also shown with other pets aboard ([19], 58:58–59:17) and having the run of the ship, suggesting an exceptionally pet-friendly cruise. In reality, most major cruise lines maintain a general 'no pets' rule and only welcome service animals on board. Some transatlantic ships allow dogs or cats, but they are confined to their onboard kennel, where dedicated crew members feed, walk and clean up after them, in addition to lavishing them with treats and toys, while their human guardians can visit them only at designated hours each day. On the contrary, Pluto, a thoughtful and observant individual and a member of the Mehra family, spends his time with his human relatives. One sequence shows Ayesha, Kabir and Pluto at leisure in Ayesha's cabin, both human siblings eating chocolate and confessing to each other their secret fears and expectations, while Pluto silently studies the scene. When Ayesha's husband Manav arrives, he is disgusted at the sight of dog hair on the blanket, and complains about Pluto's sitting on the bed, stating that they "are living in a kennel" ([19], 34:27–36:25). As I pointed out in the previous sections, in DDD, dog humanization introduces a new family paradigm, and Manav's inability to recognize Pluto as a family member marks him as adhering to an obsolete ideal, to be rejected. In fact, while going out with Pluto, Kabir gestures to his sister, "Talaq! Talaq! Talaq! (Divorce!)"

Changes in the social perceptions of dogs are marked by the progression of their habitat. Dogs' transition to family members has allowed them to move "from the wild to the barnyard to the front yard to the front porch, then from the front porch to the living room, from the living room to the bedroom, and from the bedroom to the bed" [43]. As Erica Fudge has shown, pets are pets before they are animals, and the progression from being perceived as animals that serve a purpose to being considered equal members of the family and an object of love, is also a journey to civilization [29]. Pluto Mehra's commentary on the negative effects of civilization reminds the audience that in the ancient cynic view 'economics' (οικονομία) is an un-natural sphere, characterized by unequal power relations, supremacy, and violence. This begins within the domesticity of the family, and it extends all the way to public relations. Pluto lives in an affluent world, amidst humans who have adopted a consumerist lifestyle. Yet, he praises as 'wealth' what cannot be bought and sold, and is inspired by the notion of frugality, the virtue that is the basis of the ancient cynic's lifestyle. In open contrast to this, in their promotion from pets to family members, animals have even become a style statement for pet guardians, which leads to their entrance into a consumers' paradise.

The media's positive portrayal of pets has had a huge impact on the public perception of them. As a rich literature has shown, the Hindi commercial film industry in the past three decades has had

a strong relationship with post-liberalisation capitalism and consumerism [44]. The opening-up of the Indian economy to transnational capital and consumer goods fostered elemental changes in the Indian media context that can be described as the globalization of culture and urban life in a third world situation. This can be seen in the new Indian media world of the 1990s and the concomitant universe of commercial Hindi film [45]. Bollywood has an immense influence on Indian lifestyle and aping what is shown in a film is the order of the day [46]. That even includes rashly purchasing a breed of dog that has been seen in a film: after DDD was released, Delhi recorded a 60 percent increase in the sale of bullmastiffs [47]. This is nothing new: in 1994, thanks to the performance of a fluffy Indian Spitz named Tuffy in *Hum Aapke Hai Koun*—the musical romantic comedy which broke many records and still remains one of the biggest blockbusters of Hindi cinema—the popularity of Indian Spitz and their close relatives Pomeranians shot up amongst pet owners in India. In 2014, Golden Retrievers became very popular because of *It's Entertainment*, a comedy drama starring Akshay Kumar. The actor was so impressed by his co-star Junior that he decided that the credit for the dog should appear before his. It is not only films which persuade people to rush to a pet shop for the pedigree breed featured. In 2003, an advertisement launched a pug craze after the Hutch campaign showed a cute pug following a little boy: puppy farms sold out, and the long waiting-time was frustrating for the aspiring pug-parents, with prices shooting up from Rs 10,000–12,000 to Rs 20,000–60,000 in a few weeks [48]. When Hutch telecom was re-branded into Vodafone, the pug made a comeback in 2007, 2012, and 2016 campaigns [49], and remains a very popular pet. What used to be an 'ugly' breed with a curly tail and a wrinkly, squashed-in muzzle, highly vulnerable to reverse sneezing, eye prolapse, hip socket problems and bacterial infections in its skin folds, has become a very popular mobile-phone wallpaper in India.

India is the world's second-most populous country, but since it is still largely rural and poor, it has one of the world's lowest rates of dog guardianship. The growth of pet guardianship is a largely urban phenomenon, and is a result of changes in lifestyle, such as the breakdown of the traditional joint family structure and the rise in smaller nuclear families. Per capita disposable income is another crucial factor: as incomes rise, some people can afford to have pets for the first time. The pet population in India has grown from 7 million in 2006 to 10 million in 2011. On average, 600,000 pets are adopted every year [50]. According to Goldman Sachs, India's GDP per capita in US\$ terms will quadruple from 2007 to 2020, and the Indian economy will overtake the US by 2043 [51]. Dog ownership can be seen as an economic indicator. Every year there is a rise in pet care registration of about 24 percent, and the Indian pet market is now an \$800-million-plus industry ([52], p. 16).

As pets are looked upon as companions, pet guardians have a higher awareness of their dietary needs and are increasingly willing to spend on what they perceive as being necessary or beneficial for their pets, be it pet food, treats, toys, medicines, resort stays or even cruises. India has been projected to be the fastest growing global pet market, and the rising pet ownership rates are driving demand for pet food, health products, and pet accessories. Thanks to globalized communications and information, new generation dog guardians in contemporary India see how dogs are being treated abroad, therefore they want that kind of affluence as well. Pets can enter the consumers' paradise that the neoliberal change in society has created for a very limited but affluent section of the Indian population, and, increasingly, pets are becoming serious consumers themselves. While a few years ago the concept of branded pet food was unheard of in India, and dogs were fed table scraps, the market is now flooded with dietary and health products for pets. As dogs have moved from 'pets' to 'family members,' the message from the pet food industry that feeding them table scraps is inappropriate has become commonly accepted. Also, the hectic, tiring lifestyles developed due to rapid modernization have made most urban dwellers time-poor, leading to an increased preference for commercial packaged pet foods [53]. Exploiting the strong canine-human bond of the early 21st century, a plethora of other products are being manufactured and distributed, promoting consumption connected to the non-human members of the new families. While a decade ago it was common for dogs to sleep outside the house or in the garage, now some owners keep their air-conditioner on 24 h a day just for their pets.

Elite humanized dogs like Pluto Mehra fulfill many different roles with regards to their humans. Young urban Indians are earning more and marrying later, with pets often becoming their replacement children; delayed parenthood is witnessed in most urban and newly married couples, and pet ownership often serves as an emotional stimulant. The issue of maternity versus women pursuing careers is addressed in DDD without directly posing Pluto as a surrogate child. Nevertheless, he is a transactional object of love: the audience comes to know from his own account that Pluto had been given to Ayesha by her childhood friend Sunny, to whom she was linked by mutual love. In order to break this bond, Ayesha's parents sponsored Sunny's studies in the USA, and subsequently Pluto was passed to Kabir after Ayesha's marriage because Manav's family did not want him ([19], 1:25:40–1:26:34). In the movie, the focus is on Pluto as a sibling more than as a surrogate child. In fact, parents Neelam and Kamal have no interest in him and the film stresses the sibling relationship between Kabir and Ayesha which extends to their brother Pluto. Pluto's character is pivotal in emphasizing the attitude change towards pets as a sign of awareness about equality. For example, Pluto's voice over during the scene in which Kabir and Farah meet in the pool is an example of a non-critical and non-ironic commentary, suggesting that the dog reserves most of his judgement the older, more hypocritical, and conservative generations ([19], 36:30–39:13); also generation shift is crucial, as even within the Mehta family some members of the family (Kabir, the son) are "more equal than others" (Ayesha, the daughter), and it is up to the siblings to change this power relation imposed upon them by the parents' choices. Moreover, a cultural shift is necessary: Ayesha's husband Manav is of the same generation as Ayesha and Kabir, but he still advocates the previous generational frame of mind, which reflects in Manav's attitude to both dogs and women. When Ayesha's parents become aware of the injustice and violence that obsolete conventions legitimize, they change their attitude and support their daughter's decision to divorce, asking Manav and his mother to leave for good ([19], 2:28:35–2:32:40).

This development of the plot suggests that generational and cultural change is promoting a relational model, based more on equality, equity and understanding. Yet, Pluto Mehra's philosophy seems to be reversed when it comes to humanized animals in the real world. Even the social life of humanized animals is being adapted to Indian culture. As I said in the previous section, marriage plays an important role in India, so dog parents are more and more concerned about finding suitable mates for their surrogate children or siblings. In doing so, however, they tend to reproduce established practices from human society, to the point that there is gender discrimination and a preference for male offspring even for non-human 'children'; sterilization is never considered, and matchmaking services are already available [54]. Even religious rules can be bent for the sake of the dogs' well-being; while some dogs living in vegetarian households, where non-vegetarian food is strictly prohibited, live on curd, rice, roti and lentils [55], other vegetarian households where meat cannot be cooked make exceptions for their dogs' food [56].

One of the dark sides of the new attitude to animals is that enthusiastic, elite dog lovers, eager to show off a pure-bred dog at the end of the leash as a symbol of new wealth and status, have generated a booming breeding industry, which is not inspired by love of animals, but only aims to maximize profits. The breeding, marketing and sale of dogs has become a high-level commercial venture in India, involving thousands of breeders and pet shops in a million-dollar business. A huge number of pups of specific (imported) breeds are requested by prospective pet guardians, most of who are ignorant about the basics of healthcare and management of dogs. Unethical and unscrupulous puppy mills carry out backyard breeding in the most unhygienic conditions. They keep dogs in crowded, filthy conditions without socialization or proper medical care. Females are forced into repeated pregnancies, with no recovery period in between. When they are no longer of any use, they are either killed (not euthanized) or abandoned. Puppies bred within a closed gene pool are often born with deformities or disease, resulting in high mortality, or are weak and unhealthy animals that are then ill-treated, and in many cases simply abandoned on the street. Puppies are drugged to prevent them from whining and are often sold before they are weaned. The mortality rate is very high, as estimates suggest that

40 percent of these animals die in captivity or during transportation [57]. In 2010, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) drafted a document regarding 'Dog Breeding, Marketing and Sale Rules' and sent it on to the Animal Welfare Division of the Ministry for the Environment, Forests and Climate Change for scrutiny, as per the power conferred by Section 38 of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (PCA) (1960), but it has been shelved for the past six years [58–60].

Pressured by animal rights associations, the Indian government has recently banned the importing of foreign dog breeds into India for commercial purposes [61], but the risk is that this thriving industry will simply go deeper underground. As elsewhere in the world, rich Indian city dwellers are willing to pay whatever is required to own an expensive breed. Another major problem is that fashionable imported breeds such as Alaskan Malamuts, Siberian Huskies, St Bernards or Tibetan Mastiffs cannot acclimatize to Indian weather and therefore develop severe health issues due to the Indian climate. Yet they are visible in alarming numbers in Indian megacities such as Delhi, Mumbai and Calcutta. Moreover, these dogs are hard to maintain. Once their fascination wears off, hobbyist guardians realize that keeping dogs is hard work, and as the dog gets older they see that caring for the dog requires much of their time and money. So, they often try to get rid of them by selling them off, giving them to friends or just abandoning them on the streets, where they join the packs of emaciated dogs roaming about in panic, as they lack survival skills.

Neither the breeders nor the buyers care about the millions of starving strays and abandoned dogs in India who suffer in shelters or on the streets. In fact, in the geography of human-animal relationships, if dogs are in human homes, they are cherished and protected as pets, but if they are identified as strays they are 'out of place' and they must be controlled as pests ([62], pp. 6–12). According to official records, there are 17 million stray dogs in the country [63], but other sources state that there are about 30 million free-roaming dogs in India, with an estimated urban density of 178 per square kilometer [64]. Certainly, the main reason why India has a street dog problem is neglect of municipal sanitation practices, as these animals survive by scavenging rubbish. However, unethical trade also has high zoonotic potential, which is a public health concern. Dogs play a crucial role in the transmission of rabies, and India accounts for 35 percent of human rabies deaths worldwide [65,66]. In the 12th five-year plan, the Government of India launched the National Rabies Control Programme, allocating 500 million rupees to fund surveys of dog populations, training for veterinary surgeons and para-veterinary surgeons, mass vaccination of dogs, and animal birth control [67], but it has not yet been fully implemented.

In 2001, the central government legislation known as Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules (ABC) abolished the colonial practice of state implemented stray dog extermination, where stray dogs were killed by electric shock or poison in largely unsystematic efforts by local authorities. PCA and ABC replaced killing with neutering and vaccination as the approved strategy for street dog control. But there are civil society groups such as "Stray Dogs Free Bangalore" and "People for the Elimination of Stray Troubles" that lobby for the complete violent elimination of street dogs from India, and culls continue in various regions of the country [68,69]. Animal activists are trying to educate people about the horrors of puppy mills and the need to adopt existing dogs—Indian and foreign,—instead of increasing the demand for expensive breeds.

Behind the blissful lifestyle of a few privileged individuals such as Pluto Mehra, who have access to a consumers' paradise, there exists the distressing reality of hellish life and dreadful death for the vast majority. This sounds alarmingly similar to the present state of humans in India, where the growing divisions in living conditions are such that for the majority of Indians standards of living are dramatically worsening, while the elite and some sections of the professional middle classes are enjoying the best of times [70–72]. As Christophe Jaffrelot and Peter Van der Veer suggest, what seems to establish this notoriously elusive social category in its singular designation is its largely homogeneous pattern of consumption [73], together with a civic cynicism (in present day acceptance). The post-1991 discourse has largely been urban-centric and pro-market. In a country whose social indicators are, in some cases, barely above those of sub-Saharan Africa, there is a total lack of urgency

regarding the need to make progress in the education and health sectors, immunization, hygiene and the judicial system. Yet, growth without improvement in the lives of all has split the country into two very unequal halves [74]. India has become a more unequal place in the last couple of decades and, more worrisome still, as Thomas Piketty suggests, it is likely to become more so, with disastrous consequences for social cohesion and economic growth [75]. Apparently, it is not only in Indian animal tales that animal society mirrors human society [11]; in real life, too, canine and human societies follow similar patterns.

In the cinematic reality constructed around the character of Pluto Mehra, the notions of justice and equality are discussed within the frame of the family, emphasizing the gap between ethics and emotions on one side, and consumption and self-interest on the other. The more general level of citizenship is not addressed. One could argue that in Bollywood movies there is often a process of disneyfication—the transformation, typically of something real or unsettling, into carefully controlled and safe entertainment or into an environment with similar qualities—insofar as reality tends to be decontextualized and repackaged in a family-friendly and simplified format, ideal for mass-consumerism. Pluto Mehra's positioning as a frugal, privileged individual belonging to the middle class elite projects hope that a sense of resilience could emerge to overcome modern cynicism in favor of the ancient form of this philosophy. But this does not imply change in real life.

4. Conclusions

In DDD, metaphors write themselves. Family is a cruise. You are stuck with the same people, sometimes there are clear skies, and sometimes the voyage is rough. You may find yourself adrift, but, at the end of the day/movie, your family is your lifeboat, saving you from drowning, and getting you safely to shore.

Pluto Mehra's astute observations about humans and silent exhortation to reject hypocrisy and adopt a free and frugal lifestyle, while valuing emotions and relationships more than wealth and success, seem to be accepted within the film framework. The film's main characters cannot hear his thoughts, but his role as a *sutradhaar* makes him a pivotal figure in the drama. Pluto's 'cynical' commentaries teach the viewer that the key to happiness is a 'natural' lifestyle inspired by simplicity and by stripping away unnecessary desires and customs. This philosophy aims for frugality and a convivial space made of nonviolent relations among equals. This guarantees the natural and legitimate desire to enjoy what is pleasurable and beautiful, combined with the love for comfort, luxury, even dissipation. Frugality is not synonymous with a monastic or ascetic lifestyle: it is just necessary to remind ourselves about the usefulness of uselessness, the pleasure of wasting time, the beauty of anything that cannot be bought or sold.

Pluto's unspoken thoughts and his *Weltanschauung* eventually make an impact on the choices of the Mehra family and his humanization leads to a better human-nonhuman relationship, prompting an amelioration of family life. Nevertheless, as I have shown, the ideology supported in the movie is not as different from the mainstream concept as a superficial analysis might suggest. In the end, all the lead characters remain as privileged as before, and the only innovative change is access to consumerism for the nonhuman member of the family.

The humanization of pets within a middle class consumerist ideology has two sides. On one hand, this leads to an animal rights position that promotes dog welfare. According to Indian legal terminology, dogs do not necessarily have to be owned: while the 1890 Act and the PCA 1960 used the term 'stray' dog (connoted as illegitimate), the ABC Rules classified dogs into 'pet dogs' and 'street dogs,' thus recognizing the independent status of ownerless dogs. They might be welcomed by some humans and hated by others, but their existence is acknowledged and accepted in the very language of Indian law. Street dogs are owned in a rather loose way, as they are often cared for by local communities, with someone providing them with food, and, in some cases, even veterinary care. On the other hand, dogs are often bred to satisfy human aesthetic ideals and economic interests, and dogs are euthanized or neutered in order to guarantee human health and safety. Even if the film

representation of canine humanization in DDD suggests that it fosters animal welfare, one should be aware of the biopolitical implications of human intervention in animal welfare [76]. Human interests such as public health or aesthetics generate practices and norms that come to be perceived as necessary for the animals themselves, both at individual and collective levels.

DDD's social commentary is out of the ordinary for a mainstream Bollywood film, particularly the insight that the movie provides into the gender roles of the Indian upper class family, through the character of the talking dog Pluto, who narrates the film and comments on the hypocrisy of Indian families. The figure of a dog narrator fits into a long tradition of talking animals in Indian folk tales which have an educational purpose: the interaction between animals, functions as a mirror of human society. However, Pluto's teaching is likely to remain unheeded in real life. The philosophical dog's commentary in DDD revolves around the theme of human irrationality. He admonishes the audience that in order to live a happy life it is necessary to avoid wasteful habits in favor of a—materially and emotionally—sustainable lifestyle. But Pluto Mehra's fans probably pay attention only to the more immediate and superficial message: "Live your life, do what you like, don't give so much attention to other people's advice, just be with your family, support them, and . . . let the heart beat!"

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