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## Exploring the Animal Turn: Human-animal relations in Science, Society and Culture

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# EXPLORING THE ANIMAL TURN

Human-Animal Relations in Science, Society and Culture



Erika Andersson Cederholm  
Amelie Björck, Kristina Jennbert  
Ann-Sofie Lönngren (eds.)

Lund University



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Human-Animal Relations in  
Science, Society and Culture

*Erika Andersson Cederholm*

*Amelie Björck*

*Kristina Jennbert*

*Ann-Sofie Lönnngren (eds.)*

Pufendorfinstitutet, Lund 2014

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# INTRODUCTION

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In October 2013, a group of 12 researchers set out to investigate that which in the humanities and social sciences has been called the “animal turn,” denoting a new nexus of interdisciplinary scholarly interest in the human-animal relationship, manifesting itself in conferences, courses, book series and academic journal themes. In general, this turn entails recognition of the fact that human and animal lives have always been entangled and that animals are omnipresent in human society on both metaphorical and practical, material levels. Animals play a crucial role in cultural metaphors, myths, and identity-making, in which they function as objects of both fear and desire. But they are also physically present in human homes and workplaces, and in local as well as global economies (often via forced labor). They are even inside our bodies in the form of friendly and unfriendly micro-organisms or, for many, as processed and consumed meat.

In a complex web of relationships, both of these levels (the representational and the material) structure society, in the spheres of education, law, science, economy, media, art, entertainment, and more. However, the ways in which human society deals with its co-existence with animals, and the ways it interacts with, uses, and handles them are complex and embedded in paradoxes. Indeed, tensions and connections emerge in systemic patterns of extinction and production as well as in socio-cultural and intersubjective relations, highlighting the fact that animals and the human-animal relationship are deeply affected by the structures of power. Thus, the human-animal relationship is not an innocent one. On the contrary, it consistently evokes ethical and sustainability-oriented questions, and requests more and better integrated knowledge.

The forming of our research group was a response to this need, which apparently is more urgent than ever in an era of social, scientific, and environmental change. With the complexity of the field in mind, we aimed towards dealing with “the question of the animal” in a multidisciplinary space, in which different perspectives might intersect in productive ways. Such scholarly exchange is difficult to make happen within the traditional, disciplinary frames of the academic setting. Luckily, we were given the chance to develop such a space at the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies in Lund, Sweden.

For a period of eight months in 2013–2014, the work and inquiry of the Animal Turn group revolved around fundamental themes such as 1) The role of the natural sciences vis-à-vis social, ethical and other discourses in human-animal re-

lated knowledge-making; 2) The idea of a human-animal divide and challenges to this divide in social, cultural, and scientific practices; 3) The representation of the interests of animals in institutional, commercial, and policy-related activities and processes. First and foremost, the work took place in the form of a rich and partially public seminar series, inviting many national and international scholars to contribute with their perspectives and to think with us.

Representing seven disciplines (literary studies, media studies, education studies, history of science and ideas, archaeology, sociology, and biology), there were naturally significant differences within the group, both in terms of research interests and approaches. But there was also common ground, such as a shared critique of the traditional investments in “the human,” especially in the humanities and social sciences, and a joint curiosity of how these investments can be disrupted by the “animal turn.” After all, there are many ways of relating to the world, and the human ways constitute only a small subset. Taking this into account has potentially unsettling implications for any academic discipline. The “animal turn,” thus, brings along an alternative outlook on knowledge production that does not only include animals, but places them centre stage as key actors in the innumerable modes of *being in*, and *making sense of*, the world.

In this volume, the Animal Turn group has extended its family in order to offer the reader an even more diverse and inspiring idea of what the “animal turn” is about. Most of the contributions emanate from papers or events presented at the symposium “Exploring the Animal Turn: Changing perspectives on human-animal relations in science, society and culture,” which concluded our sojourn at the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies in May, 2014. This event brought together some of the most influential human-animal scholars from different disciplines and parts of the world to share their knowledge of the complexity of human-animal relations and how they might be analysed in the collective formation of an ethically and environmentally sustainable nature-culture. The symposium also included artistic forms of knowledge and interventions, traces of which are present in this anthology, in the form of poetic texts and human-animal photography.

\*

This volume opens with a position paper by Helena Pedersen, coordinator of the Animal Turn theme group with Tobias Linné, Amelie Björck, and Elsa Coimbra. Pedersen addresses two questions in particular. Firstly, she argues that the recognition of the fact that animals have their own cultures, biology, and lifeworlds must affect the knowledge production of our fields. Secondly, Pedersen discusses the ways in which the two branches within the field of human-animal relations, generally named ‘critical animal studies’ and ‘animal studies,’ although with partly



different backgrounds, perspectives, and aims might co-operate in enlightening “the question of the animal” in the scholarly production of knowledge.

In the work of developing this young field, academic institutionalization plays a vital role and the pioneering centres of human animal studies around the globe are important precursors. During our theme period at the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, the Animal Turn group had the great privilege to invite Cultural Studies scholar Annie Potts as our guest researcher at the Pufendorf Institute. In 2007, Potts co-founded the Centre for Human-Animal Studies in Christchurch, New Zealand (NZCHAS), which today, she co-directs with Philip Armstrong. Potts has contributed with great generosity and substance to our formal and informal discussions concerning both research questions and organization – and collaborations will surely continue.

In this volume, Potts participates with an article on *The Vegansexual Challenge to Macho Meat Culture*, written in collaboration with the artist and doctoral student in Science and Technology Studies, Jovian Parry. Potts and Parry explore the relation between ethical consumption and sexual relationships. In focus is the concept of “vegansexuality,” which has been phrased over the past five years and is sometimes compared to, for example, homosexuality or bisexuality. A vegansexual is a vegan who either might experience an increased likelihood of sexual attraction towards those who do not consume animals or animal products, or an actual physical aversion to the bodies of those who do. In this article, Potts and Parry argue for the possibility that vegansexuals are expressing an intimate bodily resistance to the oppression of dominant, meat-eating culture.

Human eating habits are a delicate matter involving cultural norms, passions, ritual, taste, and ethics. In order to unsettle our thoughts and emotions around the subject at the symposium (which was vegan), the Animal Turn group invited the interaction design studio Unsworn Industries to the scene. In collaboration with artist Terje Östling, the studio arranged an “E.T. barbecue” in the garden outside the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, inviting the symposium participants to partake. Documentation of the event is presented in this volume, including reactions and reflections of seeing the beloved extraterrestrial on a spit and tasting his gluten “flesh.” A range of questions resulted. What are the rights of an extraterrestrial? What is going on in the grey zone between real and artificial/fiction? Do we need mock meat? And if so, why?

A meat, egg, and dairy free diet is a given for most scholars in the critical animal studies branch of the “animal turn.” In his article, sociologist Tobias Linné discusses the ethical issues of animal industrialization and analyses one of the many diverse channels via which the Swedish dairy industry sustains the imagination that Swedish cows live great and healthy lives and are happy to ‘give’ their milk to humans. Through accounts on Instagram and Facebook, cows are personalized

and given (fictional) voice and agency. Linné shows that what seems to be an expression of closeness between humans and animals, and an increasing transparency regarding the lives of farmed cows, rather reinforces the human-animal boundary and legitimizes the industrialization of animals.

Animal welfare can indeed be a treacherous thing. Law and philosophy scholar Gary Francione's essay offers a philosophical critique of the 'animal welfare position,' and what he defines as its underlying premise: that it is acceptable for humans to use animals "because their lives have lesser moral value than human lives." Francione traces the welfarist theory from its emergence in nineteenth century philosophy to its expressions in the work of animal rights theorists Tom Regan and Peter Singer. He meticulously points out the arbitrariness and inconsistencies of any set of arguments which aims to defend the exploitation of sentient beings.

As a response to parts of Gary Francione's essay from a criminologist point of view, Ragnhild Sollund argues, with examples from a selection of wildlife crimes in Columbia and Norway, that the failure to attribute them with rights means the infliction of severe suffering to nonhuman animals. In relating some of Francione's arguments to these wildlife crimes, Sollund accentuates the relevance of his discussion and concludes with a suggestion of steps to be taken to improve the legislative situation of nonhuman animals.

If the ongoing mass death of honey bees, known as the "colony collapse disorder," should be labelled as a human crime against wildlife remains an open question since a multitude of factors seem to be involved. In her article, environmental sociologist Elsa Coimbra discusses how the natural sciences and nature conservation has dealt with, and failed to deal with, solutions to this issue. Coimbra argues for a paradigmatic leap that should recognize its complexity, and take into account the fact that all human understanding of nature is mediated by social and cultural practices, assumptions, and belief systems. By calling into question the division between subjective and objective knowledge often taken for granted in the natural sciences, Coimbra proposes a model of knowledge that may deal with matters of sustainability in new ways, based on the notions of objective, inter-subjective, and experiential knowledge.

Interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary thinking is crucial when reconsidering human-animal relations. Beginning her essay with an illustration of the historical figure Joseph Merrick, also known as "The Elephant Man" due to his bodily deformations, Manuela Rossini discusses how the division between humans and animals has been reinforced in the humanities. While analysing the similarities between animal studies and gender studies and their focus on the process of othering, Rossini argues for a posthumanist perspective that moves beyond both biological determinism and cultural constructionism, since, she argues, both perspectives reinforce the logic of speciesism. Rossini proposes the perspective of a

new materialism or the so-called developmental-systems framework enabling an analysis beyond the nature/culture divide, arguing that human and nonhuman bodies are in constant exchange; they constitute each other through relationality and dynamic interactions.

In literary scholar Elisabeth Friis's article, the relationality between a woman and a dog takes centre stage. Virginia Woolf's short novel *Flush. A Biography* (1933) is 'based on a true story' and relates the liberation of a golden-brown spaniel called Flush. Via an elaborated row of mirrorings, mutual becomings, and shared desires, it is, however, also a story of the dog's human, Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861). Giving a close reading, Friis exposes the entanglements between two minority reports: both the woman and the dog liberate themselves from "all the oppressors in their several ranks," as Woolf writes and their gained freedoms are interdependent.

Friis's take suggests a move beyond the typical form of critique of Woolf's narrative from an animal studies perspective: the critique of *anthropomorphism*. This phenomenon which entails assigning things and nonhuman creatures human mental states, feelings, and responses is common in most human cultures. In her contribution, Monica Libell revisits the concept and functions of anthropomorphism in pre- and post-Darwinist epochs and in different disciplines, relating it to the core questions of perception, subjectivity/objectivity and epistemology. The question whether anthropomorphism could be used as a scientific method for the interpretation of nonhuman life continues to evoke vivid scientific debate.

If anthropomorphism is a common human tool when trying to understanding other animals, 'wonderment' is yet another recurring – and maybe even more primal – reaction towards the other, worth inquiry. Philip Armstrong takes the reader on an odyssey revisiting the writings and wordings of explorer Pigafetta, evolutionist Charles Darwin, naturalist and broadcaster David Attenborough, among others, and reflects on the diverse roles that wonderment might play in the process of gaining knowledge of other creatures. Wonderment, he finds, is not a self-contained expression, but may function either as a driving force for further inquiry, or, in other cases, as an enticing cover over unrecognized knowledge gaps.

Wonderment can surely strike you in front of remnants and traces from long past events and relationalities that you will never fully grasp. Archeologist Kristina Jennbert stresses the importance of having a sense of the past and of different cultural norms and values when working in the human-animal research field. For one thing, the classification of species in a pre-Christian setting seems to have been different from that in modern, urban, Western societies, and this raises questions in regard to attitudes towards animals and humans in the long term.

Time and history are also important dimensions in Amelie Björck's study of the roles of the farm animals in proletarian author Ivar Lo-Johansson's short stories in

the collection *Statarna* from 1936–37. In Lo-Johansson's stories about modernization, Björck observes and critiques a recurrent cultural paradox: on the one hand, the author is sensitive to the farm animals as being, in historian Jason Hribal's words, "part of the working class" and notes their bodily counter talk against exploitation. On the other hand, his stories fall into the formal and thematic pattern of promoting an anthropocentrically defined, progression-oriented modernization, which entails increasing temporal pressure on the bodies of farm animals.

Erika Andersson Cederholm's perspective is contemporary and directed towards the interactions between humans and animals in horse-related small enterprises in the recreation and tourism industry. By analysing the emotional work performed by the horse farmers and, in particular, the role of the horse in the triadic relationship between the horse farmers, their clients, and the horses, she demonstrates how the horse is ascribed various and often contradictory roles. Andersson Cederholm argues that the role of the third part is often neglected in studies of service interactions and may be particularly relevant in studies of interactions involving humans and animals. Since the triadic relationship evokes tensions and ambiguous roles, it may shed light on how we categorize and ascribe meaning to various actors, relationships, and social spheres.

In order to broaden the academic mindframe, the anthology includes several interventions of a more artistic and creative configuration. Beside the mentioned E.T. grilling by Unsworn Industries, artist EvaMarie Lindahl conveys a letter from the carrier pigeon Cher Ami to his/her general in WWI, and artist Lisa Nyberg presents the manuscript of a becoming-bear group meditation, held in the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies garden during the pre-conference day in May. The image on the cover of this volume was created by Julia Lindemalm, who also contributes with a series of photographs showing the lives and boredom of the elephant, the waterbuck, the giant panda, the crocodile, the harbour seal, the brown bear, the spidermonkey, the grey seals, the anatees, the tiger and the chimpanzee, and the human-animal relation or, more often, lack of relation in artificial zoo environments around Europe. The book ends with a poetic text by Professor Susan McHugh, investigating space, power, and the human-animal relationship, accompanied by three photographs by the artist Mik Morrissey.

Ultimately, as the multitude of perspectives and disciplines in this volume show the project of developing new knowledge of the significance and the effects of the human-animal relationship is a challenging one. Still, this is clearly something that needs to be done in order to create possibilities for an ethically and environmentally sustainable future. To our joy, the field of human-animal studies continues to grow rapidly, developing theory, posing new questions, and rewriting our joint, multi-species history, present, and future.

This volume could not have come about without the support of the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies in Lund, Sweden. To director Sune Sunesson, senior scientific adviser Sture Forsén, and manager Bengt Pettersson we express our warm and heartfelt gratitude, and in particular to administrative director Eva Persson, who tirelessly worked with us on all the small and time-consuming details in the creation of this book.

The Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, Lund, Sweden, in October 2014

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# KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION IN THE “ANIMAL TURN”: MULTIPLYING THE IMAGE OF THOUGHT, EMPATHY, AND JUSTICE

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Helena Pedersen

In their book *Knowing Animals* (2007), Philip Armstrong and Laurence Simmons trace the phrase “animal turn” back to 2003, when Sarah Franklin brought it up during the Cultural Studies Association of Australasia conference. In 2007, Harriet Ritvo notes in the journal *Daedalus* that the “animal turn” suggests new relationships between scholars and their subjects. To continue on the same theme, a recent Call For Papers by the *Journal of Literary Theory* suggests that the “animal turn” should not only be conceived as a focus on a particular study object (“the animal”, however we define this impossible word), but it also establishes a *new research paradigm* with its own distinct set of methods and theories. So, the idea is that animal studies is not only constituted by the different theories and methods that various disciplines contribute to it, but actually develops its *own* theories and methods. Wendy Wheeler and Linda Williams further remark in their Editorial of *New Formations* from 2012 that “studies in human-animal relations open up new, and perhaps urgent, avenues and modes of signification, thinking, doing, being and becoming.” (p. 6) A similar thought has been voiced by Cary Wolfe: In an issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Howard, 2009), Wolfe asks: “How does the nature of thought itself have to change /.../ in the face of this new object of study?”

To draw on philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2004), it seems like the “animal turn” potentially does something *very specific* to our collective scholarship: It multiplies the image of thought. This is indeed a remarkable and revolutionary project, but still, it is not enough. What we need is a turn also to the actual life situation of animals in a changing world.

In much of our scholarship, animals are overloaded with discourse, which sometimes directs our attention away from the fact that they are, above all, living, feeling beings whose life situation matters to them. Hence, the animals we study are never reducible to research objects: We simply don't have access to all aspects

of knowledge about animals and their lives anyway, although this is what science sometimes will have us believe.

One of the students in the Critical Animal Studies course I co-teach at Lund University recently raised the following question in the conclusion of his final essay: “Til today, we have a culture enslaving animals to do what we want them to do. What gives us as humans the entitlement of having access to every creature on earth?” (Chye, 2014)

This question addressed animals in zoos, which was the topic of this student’s course paper, but is equally relevant to academic knowledge production about animals in general.

For instance, the question in this student essay resonates with what Kari Weil writes on the “animal turn” in *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* (2010): “/.../ animals resist our tools of analysis even as they succumb to our invasive and dominating need to know.” (p. 19) Our desire for knowledge about animals is thus not innocent but violent, and Weil suggests that animal studies has a kinship with trauma studies, both because of the violence done to animals in academia as well as in multiple other sectors in society, and because of the great challenges involved in understanding how animals themselves experience this violence we inflict on them. For millions of animals, their relationship with humans mean forced labour, forced mating and breeding, disruption of family relations or other relations with members of their own species, severely restricted possibilities for movement, physical harm, stress, suffering, and premature death. As animal studies scholars, we should ask ourselves, *what kind of knowledge can be produced under such conditions?*

As a social scientist, I acknowledge my ignorance and my own disciplinary limitations in the area of animal sentience and behaviour, and greatly appreciate the expert knowledge that ethologists and other scientists bring to these dimensions of the “animal turn”. In my view, one of the most gripping and eye-opening accounts on animal suffering in the contemporary animal production system has been written by Francoise Wemelsfelder. In “Lives of Quiet Desperation”, Wemelsfelder (2003) describes her impression of a young female pig who had been housed alone in a barren pen. The alert responsiveness normal to a pig had given way to withdrawal, indicating serious suffering:

In the highly restrictive and monotonous agricultural environments in which we keep pigs, their alert responsiveness may disappear and give way to drowsy lethargy. I gained a clear impression of this in a young female pig that had been housed alone for many months in a small barren pen. She was sitting on the floor, her hind legs stretched underneath her, her back hunched, her head and ears drooping, and her tongue occasionally hanging



out of her mouth. She had been sitting this way for quite some time, and my entrance into the pen had little effect. When I sat down next to her and carefully touched her, she glanced at me but didn't move. As the moments passed, I was struck by the soft, gentle, helpless quality of her passivity, the total absence of hostility, fear, or any other active response. She was present only vaguely, her apathy such a stark contrast to what pigs normally are like.

What I realized that day is that the expression of suffering, in pigs and perhaps in other animals as well, is not necessarily dramatic or assertive. It can take the form of withdrawal, of absence rather than presence, and it can appear in an expression so subtle that we could easily fail to notice it or, having noticed it, ignore its significance. Yet the soft quality of a pig's helplessness signals a suffering that is serious rather than slight. It speaks of a loss of communication, of a lost ability to cope. I found the quiet emptiness emanating from the pig poignant and very sad.

It seems to me that animal suffering is invisible only when we avert our eyes. With prolonged and careful observation, the nature of that suffering is bound to become clear. (Wemelsfelder, 2003, pp. 199-200)

To me, this passage speaks to the urgency of animal studies scholarship to address and respect animals not only as knowledge producers, tropes, text, or metaphor, but as experiencing subjects with their own lives, separate from any form of human intervention. In an interview with the Animals and Society Institute (2014), Timothy Pachirat, author of a recent slaughterhouse ethnography entitled *Every Twelve Seconds: Industrialized Slaughter and the Politics of Sight* (2011), speaks about the future of human-animal studies. In this interview, he says the following:

I would like to see human-animal studies take the embodied phenomenal and self-worlds of animals more seriously, rather than focusing so exclusively on how humans understand and interact with those animal others and on how those animal others are represented, categorized, defined, contested, symbolized, mythologized, valorized, controlled, domesticated, commodified, and otherwise invested with, and subject to, the disciplining power of human meaning making projects. (Animals & Society Institute, 2014)

Philosopher Ralph Acampora puts it somewhat more concise, but equally to the point, when addressing animal advocacy as a crucial part of the "animal turn" in an interview in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* a few years earlier (Howard, 2009). Referring to the humanities and social sciences, he says simply, "Scholarship is not just concept chess."

So, animal studies is not only about playing around with concepts, but must be something more.

With these statements, both Pachirat and Acampora remind us to keep asking ourselves, *in whose interest are we doing research?* We should not forget that human-animal relations are *inherently* political, having profound material consequences for real individuals and real lives. In this light, perhaps the most important question is not what kind of knowledge we can produce in the “animal turn”, but what we *do* with this knowledge – that is; how we put it to work, and for whose benefit.

In the recent volume *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies*, the biologist, feminist and animal studies scholar Lynda Birke (2014) emphasizes that we must learn how to be accountable to our research subjects, whether human or animal. Do they wish to be involved as research subjects at all, and what’s in it for them? Also in the same volume, feminist-vegan scholar Sarah Salih (2014) points out that knowledge production in critical animal studies enacts critical intervention into our existing knowledge structures, breaking-down and breaking-with rather than “producing” knowledge; a form of knowing in *unknowing*. Salih describes knowing in unknowing as “an interlude of break-down in self-certainty and ease with one’s universe which can occur at any moment” (p. 62); a moment when everyone else seems to be entirely comfortable with what you regard as horrifying, even criminal. Drawing on psychoanalyst Jonathan Lear, she refers to those moments when the self-disrupting mind breaks down and opens itself to new possibilities – “a rip in the world itself” (p. 63) which makes room for a different kind of analytic moment. It’s about suspending what you think you know in order to see and know otherwise. Sarah Salih gives a personal example from her own experience a decade ago when she went into her local cheese shop and asked for vegetarian free-range organic cheese:

[T]he owner of the cheese shop himself threw up his hands and bluntly informed me that I shouldn’t bother with cheese if I cared that much, because the dairy industry and the meat industry were hand-in-glove. What they do to cows is appalling, he said: You must change your life and give up dairy products altogether. At the time, I loved milk, cheese, and yoghurt, yet in that moment I knew, not just at an abstract level, but somewhere in my body, that I couldn’t eat them any more /.../. I knew [the cheese shop owner] was right, and as a consequence, from that moment onwards, I could no longer see or taste the world as I had before. (Salih, 2014,p. 65)

To me, this personal account by Sarah Salih is not only personal; it also connects to the knowledge production about animals in a wider context. When we claim to de-center the human and let the animal emerge as subject in scientific research,

we must also ask ourselves to what extent animals, their bodies and lifeworlds are, and should be, *accessible* to us. We might better take an epistemological step to the side, and consider a more respectful approach to animals and animal life in which we will not interfere.<sup>1</sup> This is a question of research ethics, and I get back to Lynda Birke's concerns about forced participation in research studies across disciplines that leave the actual benefits for the research subjects themselves quite unclear.

As these two dimensions of the "animal turn" become articulated and also begin to converge – the boundary-shifting character of knowledge production, and the engaged critical inquiry into actual life situations of animals – I want to emphasize that both these dimensions are important. This means that our scholarly interest must not *only* address the so-called "animal question," that is, the study of the animal or "animality" as text, sign, trope, metaphor, or representation. We should also be concerned with what might be called *the "animal condition"* (Pedersen & Stănescu, 2012): The instrumental position of animals, their commodification, the institutions and technologies working on them, and the continuous violence they are exposed to in a society imbued by capitalist accumulation and growth, ecocide, and systemic exploitation of all life forms. In the "animal turn" we are indeed "doing theory", but we are not doing theory in complete isolation from the actual life situation of animals; we also want to develop a knowledge base for theoretically informed action and politics for animals that *intervenes* in processes of escalating oppression. One of the driving forces behind the formation of the "animal turn" research theme at Lund University was the question of how we can create a space in academia where an animal perspective is present: A space which allows us to speak about, and also work to change, the experiences of animals in human society.

In the beginning of this text, I mentioned the philosopher Gilles Deleuze. To sum up, let me return to Deleuze for a brief moment. If the task of the philosopher is to multiply the image of thought, then one of our most important collective tasks as animal studies and critical animal studies scholars might be to *multiply the image of empathy and justice*, and to *multiply our joint efforts to fundamentally transform human-animal relations towards a society free from oppression where we have learnt how to keep a respectful distance*.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> For an excellent philosophical elaboration on the non-interference (abolitionist) approach to animals in the context of education, see MacCormack (2013).

# GRAZING THE GREEN FIELDS OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Tobias Linné

## *Cows with Instagram and Facebook accounts*

On Instagram and Facebook, accounts created by the Swedish dairy industry are made to look as if there are cows behind them. With these accounts, the dairy companies communicate through the cows, addressing the visitors in the way a person would. This chapter is about these accounts which have become a highly successful part of the dairy industry's marketing strategy.<sup>1</sup> It deals with how the relations between humans and other animals are configured in these online spaces, how specific images and narratives of these relations are produced and legitimized, and what these images and narratives suggest in terms of the power relations between humans and other animals. Questions are also asked about what social positions are available for the cows in the marketing spaces of the dairy industry and with what consequences for real cows?

Two social media accounts of the Swedish dairy industry are analysed. One is from Instagram and is called *Bregottfabriken@Instagram*<sup>2</sup>. It is an account promoting *Bregott*, a bestselling brand of butter produced by Sweden's largest dairy corporation, *Arla*. The other is a Facebook account of the Swedish dairy company *Hjordnära*,<sup>3</sup> which is a branch of the second largest Swedish dairy corporation, *Skånemejerier*.<sup>4</sup>

Popular media images and narratives are crucial parts of the processes in which the norms that govern the relations between humans and other animals are established and sustained (Molloy, 2011; Malamud, 2012). Several animal studies and critical animal studies researchers have been looking at how other animals figure in different fields of media and popular culture (Squire, 2012; Packwood Freeman 2009; Herzog and Galvin, 1992; Arluke and Bogdan, 2010; Lerner and Kalof, 1999; Phillips, 1996; Spears et al., 1996; Glenn, 2004). Farmed animals rarely figure in the news or in TV shows, but rather frequently in advertisements for food products (Phillips, 1996; Molloy, 2011). Hence, where farmed animals are concerned, advertising is a particularly important media setting to analyse, as

it could be argued that it is this marketing imagery that shapes a good deal of the public's understanding of farmed animals.

### *The new visibility of farmed animals*

Especially since the so-called horse meat scandal in 2013, transparency and visibility have become key trends in food production and consumption. Food industries have begun using DNA-testing to see which animals the meat in burgers and pre-cooked meals have come from, and books about the secret additives hidden in regular food have become bestsellers. This can be seen as a development opposite to what has long been the dominant tendency in modern western society; the concealment of the animal origin of meat (Elias, 1994). Modern society meant the establishment of slaughterhouses, in which animals could be killed away from the observation of most people (Potts, Armstrong and Brown, 2013). Meat has, during the twentieth century, increasingly been disguised at the dinner table as cuisine (Nath and Prideaux, 2011; Fiddes, 1991). Adams (2010) writes that the dead animal is the absent referent of meat, and describes how the meat eater becomes separated from the animal and the animal from the end product.

During the last decade, many researchers (Gillespie, 2011; Cole 2011; Stanescu, 2014; Tiengo and Caffo, 2012) have noticed a shift in the cultural invisibility of animals that are used for food, a shift that calls for a revision of the ideas about the concealment of meat. Jovian Parry (2009, 2010) describes a new trend in gastronomic discourse – “new carnivorousness” – that can be seen in books, articles, documentaries, popular gastronomy TV shows and restaurants serving animals “from nose to tail.” Here, the animal is reintegrated into the discourse surrounding meat, and the role of animal slaughter in meat production is acknowledged. There seems to be a new group of consumers interested in witnessing all parts of the process of transforming the animal to food (Parry, 2009, 2010; Potts, Armstrong and Brown, 2013). Other authors such as Cole (2011) and Stanescu (2014) have used the concept of “happy meat” to describe how some meat producers have started to market themselves as in touch with the “natural” life and death of animals. By this, they can distinguish their meat from the more industrially produced cheaper meat which makes up by far the largest proportion of meat consumed in society.

While cows often have been used as symbols in dairy marketing, the real lives of the cows have mostly been invisible and cut out from the advertising and marketing campaigns for dairy (Molloy, 2011, p. 110). However, just as with animals farmed for meat, there seems to be a new trend of making at least some parts of the lives of some of the animals in dairy production more visible than before. Dairy industry marketing campaigns in social media can be seen as part of this trend,

presenting the subject, the cow, no longer as separate from the object, the milk, as before (c.f. Ståhlberg, 2014).<sup>5</sup> This “happy milk” imagery presents the production of dairy as natural and ethical, an image in which the cows play a central role.

### *A caring exploitation*

Cows are typically framed as “food animals” in human society (Stewart and Cole, 2009). As such, they are often strongly objectified when represented in various media and popular cultural contexts. Packwood Freeman (2009) explains how farmed animals in the news media are described as commodities and how the media fails to critique the ethics of animal agriculture from the animals’ perspective, ignoring emotional issues that farmed animals face and denying farmed animals’ individual identities. In a survey of TV commercials during the late 1990s, Lerner and Kalof (1999) note similar findings. Animals used or consumed by humans tend to be portrayed in a distanced way, and the commercials typically avoid humanizing other animals.

Even though food animals are often instrumentalized, they are also personalized under certain circumstances. Farmers for example often give names to their dairy cows and recognize their different personalities. The personalization of cows also takes place in the advertising context. Here, cows often figure in personalized narratives and are awarded individual identities as part of corporate discursive strategies to sell the animals as food (Glenn, 2004).

A common delusion around dairy production is that it is not doing any harm to the animals (Wicks, 2011). In reality, the dairy industry has many connections to and similarities with the meat industry, not only in that the offspring of cows that are not selected as dairy replacements are often sold for meat production, but also in that the animals in the dairy industry are caught in similar relations of human dominion and exploitation. However, with little actual access to farmed animal spaces, the majority of people in the industrialized western world have little experience of farming practices other than the idyllic and nostalgic representations of green pastures with free-range, happy, and content cows that they get from food advertising (Molloy, 2011).

On the Facebook page of Hjordnära, images and narratives of happy cows who are well taken care of are central. The tone is loving and caring, as in the caption of an image from September 9, 2013, showing a heifer on a lush meadow, which reads “Hjordnära and the adorable little heifer Lilla Mu wish you all a lovely week.”<sup>6</sup> The scenes from the cows’ everyday life typically show animals who are well cared for. One example is an image from Hjordnära’s Facebook page November 29, 2013, taken from inside one of the barns showing a cow lying down

on plenty of straw and sawdust. The company Hjordnära never have to explicitly claim that they are taking good care of the cows. Instead they post pictures that show well cared for cows, and let the commentators draw their own conclusions about the cow's wellbeing. In the commentary fields, many of the commentators notice that the cow in the image above has plenty of bedding material to lie on:

It is so wonderful to see that the cows have such nice mattresses to lie on, it isn't always like that I would say. Have a good weekend all cows and "carers" (Hjordnära, November 29, 2013)

For every posted image of a happy cow, Hjordnära receives praise by the commentators: "This is what a happy cow looks like" (November 29, 2013), "Your cows live a good life" (July 23, 2013). Presenting the company as caring for the cows' wellbeing and honoring transparency, also means juxtapositioning oneself against the modern, non-natural, industrialized, large-scale dairy producers which have not made these "humane" improvements in their treatment of animals. On the Hjordnära Facebook page, these discourses also sum up the image of the other, the non-animal friendly farmer, the non-Swedish farmer. One comment provides an example:

Thank you all Swedish farmers, animal caretakers and COWS!!! You are the best! We have the world's strongest animal protection laws that protect the welfare of the cows and their right to express their natural behaviour. We are a role model for the rest of the world with our low usage of antibiotics. Good care for the animals means healthier animals. That is common sense - happy and healthy cows give plenty of milk! Cows are wonderful animals! I think we should quit celebrating Mothers Day! From this year on, we should celebrate Cows Day instead! (Hjordnära, May 25, 2013)

As Stanescu (2014) shows, in the happy meat/milk discourses, speciesism blends well with nationalist and racist sentiments. In the comments on the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the dairy industry, nationalist ideas echo in recurrent calls to buy only Swedish-produced milk, because of the Swedish farmers' more ethical approach to the treatment of their animals. In this way, ethical dilemmas concerning the exploitation and killing of animals are cast aside in favour of a focus on localism, sustainability, and tradition (Tiengo and Caffo, 2012).

### *Transcending the human-cow divide*

On the Facebook and Instagram pages of the dairy industry, the cows are discursively framed as having an emotional life of pleasure and pain, a memory, and a

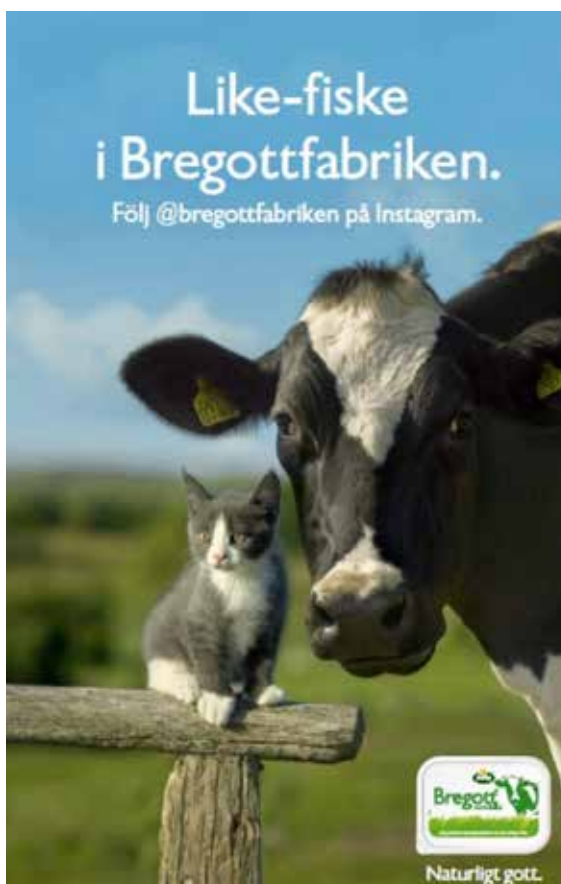


sense of the future, a psychosocial identity over time and individual welfare in the sense that their life can fare well or ill for them (c.f. Regan, 2004). At the Hjordnära Facebook page, cows are often addressed with their names and with descriptions like "Beautiful little Helene" (August 1, 2013). The cows are made into quasi-subjects, awarded a certain degree of personhood, and occupy social positions that are usually reserved for pets (Stewart and Cole, 2009). The Bregottfabriken@Instagram account has an ironic tone, playing with the notion of the cows as quasi-subjects with wishes and desires. One example is a post on June 8, 2014, labeled "Time on my own in the Bregottfabriken" with these hashtags:

#mindfulness #instamood #calmandnice #livinginthepresent #nostress #takingitslow #meditation #bregottfactory #breathe #timetorest #reflecting #insight #bregott #philosophizing #enlightment #backtowork

The Instagram and Facebook accounts play with tearing down the boundary between humans and animals by personalization and by making the cows into almost-humans behaving in ways humans would. Another example is the cow in the picture to the right from Bregottfabriken@Instagram (December 20, 2013) "Trying to get more likes" posing for a selfie with a cute kitten.

Other examples from the Bregottfabriken@Instagram account include cows that according to the tag lines are going to Marbella on Holiday (February 18, 2014), waiting for Santa Claus (December 24, 2013) coming back from work after the Christmas holiday (January 8, 2014) getting



a sun tan (July 22, 2014), getting grass stains on their pants (December 16, 2013) and having long-distance relationships (January 21, 2014).

Another aspect of the cows' presence in social media relating to them being positioned as quasi-subjects is that they seem to fulfill social and affective functions for the commentators. When Hjordnära post images of cows on their Facebook page, they often do it with greetings and salutations from the cows, wishing the visitors a nice weekend (September 6, 2013) or even throwing them a kiss (July 28, 2013) (this also occurs on the Bregott instagram page, where the cows wish the visitors a Merry Christmas, for example). Many of the visitors reply, as shown in the conversation below from the Hjordnära Facebook page on November 29, 2013:

Hjordnära: Just woke up. Have a nice weekend everyone!

Karin: Same to you sweetie!:-)

Betty: The same to you! Kiss on the muzzle.

Majvor: Thanks, and the same to you little cow.

The social connections between humans and cows on the Facebook and Instagram accounts go deeper than just exchanges of salutations. The cows awaken memories from the past, of relations to other cows and humans as the example below from Hjordnära's Facebook page from July 28, 2013 shows:

Ingegärd: Beautiful images....They bring many happy childhood memories to life.

It is good to be alive.

Eva: I remember my heifers Rosa and Stjärna, from when I was a child, it was so cozy! It was back in the 50's.

While this can be interpreted as an interest in the cows as individuals, it is also important to note that the real cows get nothing out from these quasi-social interactions. The cows are instruments put to use by an industry that wants to connect to its customers. Furthermore, they are affectively useful for the visitors, in a manner that resembles the affective functions that pets fulfill in human-dominated households. Many comment on how good the cows make them feel, how seeing the cows and learning about their lives make them happy and calm (Hjordnära, 13 August, 2013; Bregottfabriken@Instagram, 4 February, 2014) and how much they think that people have to learn from cows:

Cows have a curiosity and a joy for living that we humans could use more of. Cows are enjoying the present! We should live more like the cows and

enjoy this wonderful summer! We should be happy for the grazing heifers and cows in the meadows. (Hjordnära, May 25, 2013)

The social engagement with the cows online is a complex phenomenon that can fulfill many social functions for humans and may be explained in different ways. The cows from the Facebook and Instagram accounts primarily seem to function as symbols or metaphors for something else, objects for humans to think with as Lerner and Kalof (1999) describe it, and it seems they are primarily acknowledged as subjects as they transcend their species and attain human-like qualities or quasi-human subjectivity (c.f. Stewart and Cole, 2009).

Bregottfabriken's personalization of the cows is imbued with contradictions, ambivalence, and irony. It comes across as funny because the readers know that the real cows are not actually getting sun tans or trying to get more likes by posing with cute kittens. Ultimately, this personalization furthers the end goal of the dairy industry, to objectify the cows and sell their bodily fluids as commodities. But it does so by first ascribing the cows with personalities, by promising an unproblematic interspecies relationship between humans and cows that, in reality, is an illusion. This anthropomorphism is paradoxical. As Pedersen (2010) notes, the projection of human-like qualities on to animals often serves to emphasize human-animal discontinuities. In the end, the tearing down of the human-cow boundary by awarding the cows with subjectivity on the Facebook and Instagram accounts actually works to reinforce the very same boundary. The animal subjects which are produced are almost, but not quite, human. The underlying implication is that humans are not morally obligated to consider the farmed animals' interests. Although the animals may be like humans, they are in fact only animals, and a definite boundary exists between us and them.

As opposed to true subjectivity, quasi-subjectivity is precarious (Stewart and Cole, 2009). The recognition of the cows as quasi-subjects is only temporary, and it only applies to the cows when they figure in the Instagram and Facebook accounts. Outside of this context, they are objectified and made ripe for human consumption. The humour of the Bregottfabriken@Instagram account also functions as a way to trivialize the cows' lives and questions about their welfare. When the cows become funny characters, it is harder to take any concerns for how they are actually treated seriously.

What makes it even more ironic is that the ascribed subjectivity of the cows have little to do with the ways in which the cows are actually treated in the dairy industry. The cows are ascribed subject positions of being in control of their own destiny (that they would be able to go off on holiday whenever they wanted or be able to have relations with their families) when they are actually nowhere near of being in control of these things.

## *Disfigured cows*

Animals are often seen as effective advertising tools. They can be used to transfer desirable cultural meanings to the products with which they are associated and function as a symbolic and allegorical shorthand to quickly conjure up simple marketing constructs that render the animals objectified (Lerner and Kalof, 1999; Phillips, 1996; South, 2012). For the dairy industry, the cows from the Facebook and Instagram accounts are tools for economic purposes. The awarding of cows with emotions and a social life is a commodification of the cows' symbolic value, built on the promises of an interspecies encounter and a life in harmony with animals and nature.

On the Facebook and Instagram pages, there is a recurring discussion concerning whether or not the images posted are "real". Commentators on Bregottfabriken@Instagram ask where the pictures are taken, if they are photoshopped, if they are really Swedish cows, and the dairy industry representatives assert the accuracy of the accounts. Animals' existence in media and popular culture is, however, by necessity diminutive compared to natural contexts (Malamud, 2012) and since this is advertising, the dairy industry is in no way obliged to present a "real" image of the cows' lives. One example is the cultural image of the calm and happy cow, an image connected to ideas of natural landscapes and rural tranquility. This says very little about actual cows. It is more of a human fantasy, an inscription on the animals' character that reconfigures the attention that might be directed toward actual characters, natures and situations.

Much like how feminists have discussed how women are two-dimensionally characterized and objectified under the male gaze, so are nonhuman animals cast in this mode under the human gaze. Under the human gaze, animals are not just figuratively, but literally, seen as raw material. The image on the front page of the Hjordnära Facebook account provides an example. The image shows a cow standing in a green meadow, with a yoghurt carton pasted into the image next to the cow. The tag line runs "Tender and sweet. Without any lumps". The text and the image create a strange effect. Who/what is the product? Who/what is it that is "Tender and sweet. Without any lumps"? The comments on the Facebook and Instagram accounts on many occasions also reinforce the identity of the animals as commodities. The cows are, for example, often referred to in ways that completely trivializes their death, for example, by being called "hamburgers" (Bregottfabriken@Instagram June 20, 2014).

By artificial insemination, genetic manipulation (to produce more meat, milk, or eggs) and other measures, farmed animals are incorporated into production technologies. In mass production, animals are modified and designed to suit the production system and optimize productivity, they are de-animalized, alienated

from their own bodies and from their bodily functions (Noske, 1997). One expression of this from the Facebook and Instagram accounts of the dairy industry is the commonly invoked metaphor of the cow as a machine producing milk. This metaphor is in the very name "Bregottfabriken" but it also occurs frequently on the Bregottfabriken@Instagram account, with commentators referring to the cows as "good-looking milk machines" (January 31, 2014). On one occasion, one of the people behind the Hjordnära Facebook account writes:

You have to agree that cows are fantastic animals. Quite simply a living biologic and organic factory where the grass goes in in one end and the byproducts come out in the other end, and to us, they deliver a good, cheap and nutritious life elixir in the shape of milk. I bow in respect to the cows and the farmers that care for them. (Hjordnära, July 19, 2010)

The idea of the milk machine emphasizes the relation between cows and humans as clean and morally unproblematic, hiding the exploitative relation at work when people take the milk from the cows (Molloy, 2011). Referring to cows as milk machines can be understood as an expression of what Davis (2011) calls a procrustean relationship. Writing about food industries and how animals are physically altered to fit in with the goal of the industries, Davis uses the image of Procrustes from Greek mythology. Procrustes was a bandit who physically attacked people by stretching them or cutting off their legs, so as to force them to fit the size of an iron bed. The food industries are procrustean, Davis writes, because: "Animals are physically altered, rhetorically disfigured, and ontologically obliterated to mirror and model the goals of their exploiters" (Davis, 2011, p. 35). The advertising of dairy products and the presence of dairy cows on the Instagram and Facebook pages of the dairy industry are apparent examples of such a rhetorical disfiguring. Cows are visually represented so as to further the exploitation of their bodies. On the Facebook and Instagram accounts, cows are seemingly given a voice to speak for themselves, but they are only allowed to express how happy they are to be exploited. A prime function of these anthropomorphised animals is to tell consumers that they can access their bodies without ethical dilemmas and that whatever is done to them is justified by the wishes of the animals themselves (Pedersen, 2010; Davis, 2011; Glenn, 2004).

Anthropomorphism is a complex phenomenon, blurring the human-animal boundary, often with promises of a greater understanding of animals as thinking and feeling subjects of a life. The creation of rational, emotional, and self-conscious animal subjects with the ability to speak (as in this case), renders the distinction between other animals and humans hypothetically contestable and opens up possibilities for less exploitative relations. However, the behaviour consequently

encouraged by these advertisements of dairy cows in social media (buying and eating other animals) serves to tacitly reinforce the boundaries between human and nonhuman animals whose only real value in the end lies in their body parts and bodily fluids (Glenn, 2004). The dairy industry does not dismiss the facts that cows are sentient beings, but uses this knowledge for their own purposes, inventing suitable thoughts and feelings for the cows that help downplay any ethical conflicts related to dairy production (c.f. Squire, 2102; c.f. Williams, 2004).

### *Concluding discussion*

The dairy industry accounts on Facebook and Instagram are made to look like windows into the everyday life of the cows supposedly behind the accounts, but much like humans presenting their everyday life in social media, some things are exaggerated and others left out. The cows' everyday life in green pastures is the centre of attention in the marketing efforts, despite that for the vast majority of animals whose milk becomes dairy on the supermarkets shelves, this idyllic rural setting is fiction.

The posts and the comments of the Instagram and Facebook accounts construct a narrative, not only of the naturalness of the life of the dairy cows, but also of the naturalness of dairy production. Absent from the dairy industry advertising is the industrialized side of animal agriculture, the subjugation of nature in factories, the killing of animals, the forced insemination of cows, and the separation of the calves from their mothers. The social media accounts confuse visibility with transparency and hide the part of the cows' lives when they are not grazing the green fields, but are confined and tied up in barns. There is little connection to the real embodied animals behind this represented reality as the cows have their real life and nature concealed through their exposure (Glenn, 2004). As Davis (2011) writes, the human use of the cows becomes their ontology, what they are, and their teleology, what they were made for.

The social media accounts of the dairy industry promotes a certain type of relationship between humans and other animals, in which what is defined as the ethical problems of dairy production/consumption is that modern consumers are disconnected and unaware of the realities of modern rationalized and industrialized food production (which typically is represented as non-Swedish). In contrast to this, stands the organic, environmentally and ethically aware dairy industry seemingly providing consumers with transparency and visibility. In this discourse, the exploiters – the dairy industry and the consumers that are aware of the realities of animal agriculture and buy "ethical" products – come across as activists for animals. At the same time, the moral question of animal exploitation is dismissed as

sentimentalism that has no place in real life (Parry, 2009, 2010; Potts, Armstrong and Brown, 2013).

There are, however, other voices on the webpages, voices that bring up ethical questions about animal exploitation and contest the images being pushed by the dairy industry and many of the commentators. To some extent, the webpages seems to provide an opportunity for activists to questions the realities of dairy production as can be seen in comments on both the Hjordnära Facebook page (November 29, 2013; September 27, 2013; September 11, 2013) and the Bregottfabriken@Instagram page (March 8, 2014; May 25, 2014). There are also accounts set up by activists to resemble the dairy industry accounts (one is called Therealbregottfabriken@Instagram) providing counterimages to the idyllic happy cow scenery. This phenomenon is deserving of further academic attention and investigation.

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Hjordnära

<https://www.facebook.com/Hjordnara> (Accessed 15 August 2014).

### *Endnotes*

- <sup>1</sup> Skånemejerier, the dairy industry corporation of which Hjordnära is part has been described as a social media success story, reaching over 100,000 followers of their account within a year.
- <sup>2</sup> <http://instagram.com/bregottfabriken>
- <sup>3</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/Hjordnara>
- <sup>4</sup> The accounts have been analysed using an open-ended textual analysis method, focusing on how the accounts communicate with the visitors, as well as on the comments that the visitors make to the posts and on the interaction in the commentary fields.
- <sup>5</sup> Other examples of this new transparency and visibility of dairy production include a traceability system that, via a mobile phone application, makes it possible to use a code on the milk carton to see which farm the milk in the carton is from and then read more about that farm. Another example is the so-called open farms events, where the public is invited to come out to a farm and see how their production of dairy is carried out.
- <sup>6</sup> All captions, tag lines, slogans and other texts from the dairy industry webpages translated by the author. The original wordings in Swedish can be found at <http://instagram.com/bregottfabriken> and <https://www.facebook.com/Hjordnara>



# THE 'VEGANSEXUAL' CHALLENGE TO MACHO MEAT CULTURE

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Annie Potts and Jovian Parry

## *The Vegan Sexuality Phenomenon*

In late 2006, the New Zealand Centre for Human–Animal Studies (NZCHAS) administered a nationwide open-ended survey exploring the perspectives and experiences of cruelty-free consumers in this country. Volunteers were invited to express in writing their viewpoints on a list of topics relating to the exploitation of non-human animals for food and clothing, and in recreation, sports and entertainment. While this project attracted a few omnivore informants (specifically those concerned about intensive farming practices and vivisection in New Zealand), the overwhelming majority of respondents were vegetarian or vegan (141 veg\*ns<sup>1</sup> versus 16 omnivores). When a report on this research was released (Potts & White, 2007), one relatively minor aspect of the overall study generated significant media interest, both nationally and internationally. This related to the statements of several women that they preferred sexual intimacy, or primary relationships, *only* with others who did not consume meat or other animal products. These women explained their preference in these ways (see Potts & White, 2007, p. 98):

I could not be in an intimate relationship with anyone who was eating animals. Our worlds would just be too far apart and the likelihood of the relationship succeeding would be very low. I couldn't think of kissing lips that allow dead animal pieces to pass between them.

(49-year-old vegan woman)

I believe we are what we consume so I really struggle with bodily fluids, especially sexually.

(34-year-old vegan woman)

I would not want to be intimate with someone whose body is literally made up from the bodies of others who have died for their sustenance. Non-vegetarian bodies smell different to me. Even though I might find someone really attractive, I wouldn't want to get close to them in a physical sense if

their body was derived from meat. For me, this constitutes my very personal form of ethical sexuality.  
(41-year-old vegan woman)

This preference for physical intimacy with non-meat-eaters only was referred to as vegan sexuality by the first author of the study. Specifically, vegan sexuality pertained to those who refused primarily on ethical grounds to have intimate relations with non-vegans. Potts (2008) argued that a spectrum existed in relation to ethical consumption and sexual relationships: at one end of the spectrum, veg\*ns might experience an increased likelihood of sexual attraction towards those who do not consume animals or other animal products. At the other end, vegan sexuality may manifest as an actual physical aversion to the bodies of those who consume animals and animal products. For the people in this latter group, avoidance of sexual intimacy with omnivorous (and even some herbivorous) bodies would be felt at a much more visceral or embodied level. Importantly, vegan sexuality was not proposed as an innate or predetermined form of sexuality or desire; instead it was suggested that vegan sexuality was discernible as a disposition (or an inclination or preference) towards those who also practice an ethical (as in cruelty-free) lifestyle.<sup>2</sup> It was also suggested that vegan sexuality be understood as an *embodied ethical form of sexuality* (Potts, 2008; Potts and Parry, 2013; see also Scott-Dixon, 2009).

Following an initial story by *The Christchurch Press* (Todd, 2007), the global media coverage of 'vegansexuality' (the two words were joined in subsequent reporting) was, predictably, highly sensationalized. *The Press's* website generated over 110,000 hits (and Google over 21,000 new references to 'vegansexuals') within two days of the original news release (King, 2007). Print and internet based publications around the globe seized upon the idea and disseminated it through their websites and news blogs. Articles about 'vegansexuality' became the top stories on Australasian news sites [www.yahoo.com.au](http://www.yahoo.com.au) and [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz), while British and North American publications quickly picked up on the excitement, publishing their own versions of Todd's article.

The number of people in the NZCHAS study who strongly associated their sexualities, and their choices in relationships, with their dedication to cruelty-free lifestyles was embellished ('a few' – actually six – quickly morphed into 'many'), and for the most part 'vegansexuality' was presented by the media as a fixed, easily compartmentalized category of sexual identity, with the UK newspaper *The Independent* even stating 'there are heterosexuals, homosexuals, bisexuals and metrosexuals. And now there are vegansexuals' (Marks, 2007). The publicity elicited vigorous and heated debate on internet discussion boards and comments pages, and by the end of 2007 the buzz had been substantial enough that *The Sydney Morning Herald* listed vegansexuality as one of 'the year's biggest health stories' (Reuters, ci-

ted in *Sydney Morning Herald*, 2007), and *The New York Times* magazine included vegansexuality in its '7th Annual Year in Ideas' edition as one of the top 70 ideas of 2007 (*New York Times Magazine*, 2007).

The vegansexuality phenomenon lends itself quite well to a Foucauldian analysis of the invention of new sexualities (and/or sexual identities) through various machinations of power and resistance, discourse and confession (Foucault, 1978). For example, not only was a staunch backlash immediately noticeable globally against the idea of vegans controlling their own sexual choices, but self-identified 'vegansexuals' began 'coming out', declaring themselves on the internet, radio and television. A series of 'Vegansexual' t-shirts was launched for purchase online via an American site [www.cowpiecreek.com](http://www.cowpiecreek.com), 'vegansexuals' posted videos about themselves on YouTube, and users of the popular friendship and networking site Facebook created a 'Vegansexuals' group, consisting of 287 'out' vegansexuals (this site was used primarily as a way to find nearby vegans for potential romantic liaisons). The terms 'vegansexuality' and 'vegansexual' also rapidly entered online urban and popular culture dictionaries, as well as *Wikipedia* (here, vegansexuality appears as a variation of 'eco-sexuality').

### *Veganism as 'sexy'*

As vegans, the two authors of this text consider it understandable that some veg\*ns might experience sexuality on a (more or less) 'ethical-embodied' level; someone dedicated to cruelty-free living may well extend this ethical commitment beyond the consumption of food into other aspects of his or her life, and especially into such an important arena as intimate relationships (see also Fox and Ward, 2008; McDonald, 2000; Middleton, 2007; Rozin et al, 1997). Moreover, historically, unorthodox sexualities have often arisen in response to mainstream culture that is perceived as restrictive or repressive (Foucault, 1978); we argue it is therefore possible that 'vegansexuals' are expressing an intimate bodily resistance to the oppression of dominant meat-eating culture. We are of the view that such a form of sexual preference is not surprising, nor is it extreme (as has been suggested) when considered according to such a rationale. Indeed, the propensity towards vegan sexual exclusivity was already documented by Canadian transgendered rights, sex workers' rights, and animal rights activist Mirha Soleil-Ross fully seven years before 'vegansexuality' hit the headlines. *G-SPrOuT*, a Toronto Gay and Lesbian film festival favourite produced by Ross and her partner, featured interviews with sexually diverse vegans talking about their preferences for vegans as romantic and sexual partners (Karbusicky and Ross, 2000). And 2003 saw the launch of a pornographic site populated by and dedicated solely to veg\*ns: although [| 35](http://www.Veg-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

Porn.com features only veg\*n volunteers as models, the site embraces an ethos of inclusivity when it comes to gender, sexual orientation, and physical appearance (Furry Girl, 2006; Tortorici, 2008).

Over recent years, moreover, the portrayal of veganism has shifted substantially in popular culture: from its previous stereotypical representation as hippyish and boring, veganism has been revamped (in fact, remarketed and rewritten) as an appealing and chic 'lifestyle choice'. A flurry of new-look vegan cookery books published over the past ten of so years depict vegan food as colourful, hip, healthy, compassionate and ethical: in a word, 'sexy' (Inness, 2006, p. 157). Vegan celebrities and vegan characters on television and in film – such as *Glee* actor Michelle Lea, *Big Bang Theory* actor Mayim Bialik, and fictional detective Stephen Holder in AMC's version of *The Killing* – have also helped to popularize. The new image of veganism (and vegetarianism) is also attracting more and more young people, who are 'becoming vegans in growing numbers' (Inness, 2006, p. 157).

Popular media's contemporary flirtation with veg\*nism owes much to the widespread cultural anxiety surrounding meat in recent years, as well-publicized contamination threats, an increasing awareness of the health risks of red meat consumption, and the growing cultural authority of activist discourses stressing the cruel and environmentally hazardous excesses of modern factory farming all combined to take their toll on the traditional prestige that meat has been afforded in western society (Fiddes, 1991). Building upon popular discourses emphasizing the 'nature'-alienated condition of the modern urbanite (Parry, 2010) and perhaps fostered by a postmodern tendency to experience consumption as a means of identity construction (Ashley et al, 2004, p. 68), 'conscious eating' has become a fashionable topic of popular discussion, and the higher cultural profile of veg\*nism is but one facet of this trend (see Parry, 2010). However, while veganism has made some ground towards increased mainstream acceptance (less thorough forms of vegetarianism having accomplished this same leverage earlier in the 1970s [Inness, 2006]), it still has a long way to go – media engagement with veganism remains ambivalent and frequently hostile. This is evident from the way in which conventional and some alternative media across the world picked up on the identification of vegan sexuality; and also from the ferociousness of the public backlash against those vegans who stated they preferred intimate relationships with non-meat eaters (this backlash was both produced and reinforced by the extensive media coverage).

### *Public responses to 'vegansexuality'*

The majority of responses (and there were thousands) posted overnight on news and other media sites, blogs and elsewhere, were immensely negative and/or de-

rogatory towards 'vegansexuals'. The overwhelming bulk of this verbalized contempt for vegansexuality came from omnivorous heterosexual men. In this chapter, we describe and analyse the negative online comments posted by individuals self-identifying as meat-eating men which appeared on eight cyberspace sources receiving the heaviest traffic pertaining to vegansexuality from August 2007 to date. These sources are: *The Sydney Morning Herald's* 'The Daily Truth' blogsite, *Washington Post's* *OFF/beat* blogsite, independent global journalism site [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com), New Zealand news site [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz), internet community site [www.plime.com](http://www.plime.com), American radio personalities Ron and Fez's fan-site [www.RonFez.com](http://www.RonFez.com), celebrity chef Michael Ruhlman's *Notes from the Food World* blog (<http://blog.ruhlman.com>), and personal blogsite <http://tetherballs.blogspot.com> (linked to a website called *The Triumvirate of Bland*).

When organizing and analysing the negative comments posted on the internet by self-identifying men who eat meat we were particularly interested in locating and examining which aspects of veganism or vegansexuality were producing such profound anxiety, disapproval and aggression.<sup>3</sup> Our analytic practice was informed by cultural studies approaches to textual examination (Barker and Galasinski, 2003), and also influenced by Braun and Clarke's (2007) views on thematic analysis.

### *(The consequences of) rejecting meaty sex*

An entrenched connection exists between meat-eating and masculinity in western culture. The consumption of meat is central to the enactment of normative masculinities, and meat is widely considered to be essential sustenance for healthy male bodies. So powerful is the union of meat-eating and masculinity that the cultural 'meanings' of meat are routinely conflated with ideas about power, strength and virility (Adams, 1990, 2003; Armstrong and Potts, 2004; Sobal, 2005). Red meat is particularly constructed as important for men. Consisting of muscle (and understood as energy) from herbivorous animals, red meat may be prepared for food in a more or less raw state, still displaying signs of blood from the body of the animal (blood itself being symbolic of vitality and strength in many human cultures) (Levi-Strauss, 1970). This enables the relationship between the slaughtered animal and the consumption of his or her body to be more visible and pronounced. Acknowledging this connection (between the killing of animals and the consumption of their flesh) assists to render more 'natural' the link between meat eating and masculine power, especially masculine domination over nature (Fiddes, 1991).

A refusal to consume meat thereby signals the opposite of red-blooded masculinity:

Not eating meat is considered feminine, offering a culinary counterpoint between genders . . . Vegetarianism, the ultimate representation of not eating meat, provides an important negative case in support of the masculinity of meat consumption. Vegetarians do not eat various animal products and tend to be women with only a minority (about 30%) being men (Sobal, 2005, p. 140).

Not surprisingly, given this construction, the ‘real’ manliness (and sexuality) of vegetarian and vegan men typically comes under scrutiny by men who eat meat. However, interestingly, it appears vegansexuality may have been viewed as such a transgressive concept in *itself*, particularly since it stood to impact negatively on the sexual possibilities for omnivorous heterosexual men, that their quarrel with this notion side-stepped the more predictable target of vegan men (and their questionable masculinity and sexuality) in order to assail those who posed a challenge to their ideas about, and their potential practice of, heterosexuality: that is, vegan women. For although male vegans were interviewed for many media articles, vegansexuality was represented in the main – in both news stories and online discussions – as a phenomenon instigated and enacted by (heterosexual) women (and hence a bizarre new skirmish in the familiar battle of the sexes). As one academic linguistics blog noted, news coverage paints a picture of a mass of vegan and vegetarian women who are ‘fighting the dark side of their sexuality’ in resisting their attraction to men who eat meat. The assumption underlying this assertion, and indeed underpinning much social research on the subject of veg\*nism (see Cole, 2008), is that veg\*nns are in some way abstaining from something natural and carnal in rejecting meat. For many omnivorous internet posters, meat and meat-eaters were assumed to forever prove a temptation to veg\*n women.

The idea that veg\*n women might reject sex with meat-eaters seemed to engender considerable anxiety among omnivorous heterosexual men. Here, meat’s loose association with sex in the minds of many male internet users became especially apparent, and the distinctions between veganism (the rejection of meat and animal products), vegansexuality (the rejection of sexual partners who eat meat) and celibacy (the rejection of sex altogether) were thoroughly blurred. The language of abstinence was invoked to describe a vegan or vegetarian’s decision to avoid animal flesh, echoing the news coverage’s portrayal of vegansexual women as ‘abstaining’ from sex with men who eat meat. Some respondents drew on essentialist assumptions about humans’ biological need to eat meat (and to have sex) in their disparagement of ‘vegansexuals’:



Vegans are like Catholic priests. Everyone KNOWS priests get horny . . . it is biology. Everyone KNOWS vegans find themselves salivating despite themselves at the distant smell of hamburgers on the grill . . . it is once again . . . BIOLOGY.<sup>4</sup>

Other posts highlighting a connection between meat and sexuality drew attention to how vegans and vegansexuals were ‘missing out’ on vital carnal pleasures. An anonymous user on independent journalism site [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) posted a list of common meaty colloquialisms for male genitalia (including ‘tube steak’, ‘sausage’, ‘roast beef’, and ‘baloney’) and the act of sexual penetration (‘makin’ bacon’, ‘slipping someone the hot beef injection’), ending this inventory with the exclamation: ‘Think of all the delicacies [vegansexuals] are missing out on!’<sup>5</sup>

Meat consumption seemed so closely linked to sexual appetite that on many (omnivore) message boards, serious discussions were aired as to whether sex (especially oral sex) was even permissible to vegans.<sup>6</sup> One respondent on author chef Michael Ruhlman’s ‘Notes from the Food World’ blog asked: ‘Is it okay for a vegan to have sex with a human at all? After all, humans are animals and sex involves the consumption of bodily fluids.’<sup>7</sup> In a similar vein, a poster on the blog of Ron and Fez ([www.ronfez.net](http://www.ronfez.net)), two popular American radio personalities, proclaimed: ‘I can’t date a girl who won’t put sausage in her mouth’.<sup>8</sup> Another poster on the independent news site [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) went further, contending vegans were ‘bitter, unhappy and morbid people [who] possess a paralyzing inability to give or receive love’.<sup>9</sup>

In the above-mentioned responses, the rejection of or abstinence from meat (understood as ‘real food’) comes to be equated with the rejection of or abstinence from sex (that is, ‘real sex’, meaning heterosexual with a meat-eating man). Vegans and vegansexuals alike are portrayed as joyless pleasure-deniers, many of whom secretly long to satiate their carnal appetites by indulging in both meat-eating and sex with meat-eaters. In this way, the vegan’s rejection of meat and the vegansexual’s rejection of a sexual partner who eats meat are simultaneously undermined: they are only a superficial cultural veneer of misguided abstinence, beneath which powerful, ‘natural’ carnal urges roil unabated. The fact that vegans and vegansexuals vocally denied they were in fact ‘abstaining’ from anything worth having only fuelled the flames of many omnivores’ ire: as one post on [www.plime.com](http://www.plime.com) put it: ‘Denying yourself temptation is fine, even noble . . . so long as you don’t go around saying you aren’t tempted.’<sup>10</sup> Thus, the refusal of ‘vegansexual’ women to engage sexually with men who eat meat is framed in less threatening terms: instead of rejection (of these men), it becomes a form of self-inflicted sexual sobriety on the part of vegan women.

### *Cannibalizing vegans: punishing dietary/sexual 'deviance'*

Further intermingling the concepts of meat-eating and sex, some internet users even indulged in violent fantasies of cannibalizing vegan sexual partners. Building upon a recurring theme of animalizing vegans into herbivorous 'livestock', one blogger on [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz) stated:

I hope [vegans] keep up [vegansexuality]. In a few generations we'll have a new species of herbivore. Little pegged teeth, eyes on the sides of the head and a muzzle for grazing. Maybe they can be domesticated and some use found for them then.<sup>11</sup>

The regular writer of *The Sydney Morning Herald's* 'The Daily Truth' blog (Jack Marx) went so far as to describe himself seducing a vegan lover and consuming her both sexually and gastronomically:

All this talk of veganism, meat eating and sex is making my mouth water. Like those corn-fed pigs that you can order at some fancy restaurants, vegans are sort of primed with the luscious fruits and vegetables on which they've stuffed themselves. Picking up a vegan, then, is the perfect recipe for a hot and tasty evening for two, and a delicious memory for one . . . a table set only for one; a 'bed' of roast vegetables in which a space has been cleared just for my 'guest'; a reach around to gently plant an apple in the mouth.<sup>12</sup>

Here, the vegan is animalized into an herbivorous 'food' animal, seduced onto the plate and consumed as a meal, in a passage laden with sexual overtones and allusions. The violence towards non-human animals inherent in the production of meat transfers to the vegan victim who is to be dispatched and consumed much like a farmed animal. The cannibalism fantasy is continued in other responses posted to this blog: 'I reckon they'd taste like a mix of moth balls and body odour. Maybe a strong marinade might help.' Men even suggested ways to kill vegans: 'I recommend the Halal method to slaughter your vegan'; 'They should all be lined up and shot and then put through a vegan sluicing machine.'<sup>13</sup>

Carol Adams, leading scholar of feminist vegetarian studies, asserts there is a connection between meat consumption and the oppression of women in western cultures. Adams's (1990, 2003) work foregrounds the ways in which the marketing of meat relies on images of domination over and violence towards animals and women. Historically an image of an animal (or a cut of animal meat) is superimposed over an image of a (highly feminized or sexualized) woman. Adams (2003) argues that such representations in advertising campaigns for meat incite consumers to objectify and commodify both animals and women (see also Fiteni, 2003).

Although the above comment by Jack Marx ('The Daily Truth') does not overtly disclose the gender of the vegan, a similar narrative prevails: the consumption of an herbivorous being is sexualized. Moreover, given that veganism is generally feminized within western culture, and the majority of herbivorous animals eaten by humans are female (Cudworth, 2008), it is reasonably safe to assume the vegan on this journalist's menu is a woman.

While Marx employed the rhetoric of seduction in his derogation of vegans, other omnivorous men's responses to the threat of rejection by vegan lovers were considerably blunter (such as the following one appearing on a personal blog called [www.tetherballs.blogspot.com](http://www.tetherballs.blogspot.com)):

That just gives me more of a reason to donkey punch them once I've got them in the doghouse. This includes every young, nubile PETA skank who decides that getting naked is an effective means of protesting anything.<sup>14</sup>

Here Carol Adams's contention that there is a connection between violence towards non-human animals and violence towards women is clearly demonstrated in the use of the slang term 'donkey punch'. This saying (derived from the boxing term 'rabbit punch', after a method of killing rabbits) refers to the thumping by a man of the back of his sexual partner's head during anal penetration. This violent action is said to produce contraction of the partner's anal sphincter and, ostensibly, a 'superior' orgasm for the man (see *Urban Dictionary* n.d.). Such expressions of brutality against vegan women were abundant on blogs catering for 'red-blooded' heterosexual men. One respondent on the Ron and Fez radio talk-show fan-site, for example, urged the moderators of the discussion board to 'stop showing stories that make me want to go into wild punching sprees', while another confessed that accounts of vegansexuality made him 'want to do her on a bed of rare steaks' (precisely who 'she' is remains unclear).<sup>15</sup>

What stands out in these hostile responses is a sense of outrage that vegans and vegetarians might actually prefer to pursue sexual relationships with one another than with the 'normal' omnivorous population, accompanied by a deep-seated desire to forcibly discipline such deviants back into line. Vegansexuality therefore challenges more than the cultural link between meat-eating and heteronormative masculinity, it endangers 'the male sex drive discourse' that assumes heterosexual men have the need – and the right – to have sex with any woman they want, and all women must be available to meet this desire (Hollway, 1984; Potts, 2002). Non-compliant women are warned of the consequences of vegansexuality: at the very least, they will be submitted to verbal abuse for their unconventionality, including threats of exploitation, domination and violence. In short, they can expect to be treated like the very animals they personally refuse to harm.

## *Meat culture – macho culture*

Our analysis of responses posted on news site and personal blogs demonstrates how vegansexuality is constructed by self-identified men who eat meat as a form of sexual control or abstinence exercised by women who ultimately prefer meat-eaters (and meat) but deny their ‘true’ desires. The negative reactions of these men to the existence of an exclusive sexual preference for herbivores are entirely consistent with the role meat plays in constructions of heteronormative masculinity in western culture. The consumption of meat, along with the domination of nonhuman animals implicit in this practice) is central to the enactment of normative masculinities (Luke, 2007), and meat is widely considered to be essential sustenance for healthy and vigorous male bodies (Fiddes, 1991). So powerful is the union of meat-eating and masculinity that the cultural meanings of meat are routinely conflated with ideas about potency, strength and authority (Adams, 2003; Cudworth, 2008; Potts and White, 2008).

The particularly brutal remarks directed at women ‘vegansexuals’ may also be understood as an effect of masculinist meat-eating culture’s relationship to certain forms of male violence perpetrated against both nonhuman animals (e.g. hunting and rodeo) and other humans (e.g. via misogyny, homophobia and racism). This connection between violence towards humans and violence towards animals (referred to as ‘the link’ by scholars in this field) is becoming clearer all the time (Ascione, 2005; Taylor & Signal, 2004, 2005). Some forms of violence towards animals, including specific farming practices and the act of slaughter itself, remain more or less sanctioned within mainstream culture (assumed to be ‘how things are done’ to get meat on the table). However, even these common and seemingly intractable traditions are now also being assessed by specialists on ‘the link’ in terms of how they influence notions of ‘power’, ‘violence’, ‘cruelty’ and ‘empathy’ (as these connect to abuse of both humans and animals), beliefs about animals and human–animal relations, and assumptions about dominance over other humans and/or animals (Taylor and Signal, 2008). One way of understanding the violence of the reaction against ‘vegansexuality’ would be to see it as a particular manifestation of this link.

Importantly, vegansexuality’s brief but widespread exposure in the mainstream media spotlight also needs to be analysed in the context of a society in which food, and eating, are increasingly becoming a site of anxiety, and the topic of popular discussion (Gaard, 2002; Kheel, 2008; Kjaernes et al, 2007). The mainstream media’s brief fling with vegansexuality owed much to the term’s seemingly irresistible conflation of food (the hot topic *du jour*) and sex (a perennial favourite). *The Sydney Morning Herald’s* ‘top eight’ health stories of 2007 included no less than five food-related issues; the comment accompanying the newspaper’s listing of ‘ve-

gansexuality' highlighted 'how much attention we pay to what we're eating – and what everyone else is eating – and how that obsession affects other aspects of our lives'. The vegansexuality phenomenon strongly suggests that the politics of sexuality, gender, ethical consumption and human–animal relations will continue to be increasingly intimately related in the future.

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The term veg\*n is used in vegetarian studies, and popularly, to connote either vegetarian or vegan.
- <sup>2</sup> As a scholar of gender, sexuality and vegetarianism, personally critical of sexual and other ‘imperatives’, Potts had no intention to suggest that the existence of this ethical form of sexuality should be viewed as, or become, a new demand on vegans. Highlighting the existence of ethical intimacy of this nature involved allowing those participants in the New Zealand study who felt strongly about their own relationships to express their preferences for practicing cruelty-free sex *as well* as cruelty-free consumption.
- <sup>3</sup> Although the words vegan and sexuality were not conjoined in the original formulation of this idea, we now take up the term ‘vegansexuality’ as this is the version that has become popular with both those endorsing and opposing this concept.

- <sup>4</sup> Posted on [www.plime.com](http://www.plime.com) (online wiki community) August 2007. Retrieved 10 January 2009 from <http://www.plime.com/1/29668/1/>; capitals in original.
- <sup>5</sup> Posted on [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) (independent journalism website), August 2007. Retrieved on 15 April 2009 from <http://letters.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2007/07/31/vegansexual/permalink/fa1c66e-04f59828a93637383cb85de49.html>.
- <sup>6</sup> Comments posted on [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) (independent journalism website), August 2007. Retrieved 15 April 2009 from <http://letters.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2007/07/31/vegansexual/permalink/39f06c652b87733ab81f3f42341aa690.html>, <http://www.chow.com/stories/10852>; also comments posted on *Washington Post* (newspaper) website, August 2007. Retrieved 16 August 2007 from [http://blog.washingtonpost.com/offbeat/2007/08/no\\_sex\\_please\\_we're\\_vegans.htm](http://blog.washingtonpost.com/offbeat/2007/08/no_sex_please_we're_vegans.htm).
- <sup>7</sup> Posted on [www.ruhlman.com](http://www.ruhlman.com) (Michael Ruhlman's 'Notes from the Food World'(website), July 2007. Retrieved 15 April 2009 from <http://blog.ruhlman.com/ruhlmancom/2007/08/vegansexual.html>.
- <sup>8</sup> Posted on [www.RonFez.net](http://www.RonFez.net) (American radio personalities Ron and Fez's website), August 2007. Retrieved 15 April 2009 from <http://www.ronfez.net/forums/archive/index.php/t-62204.html>.
- <sup>9</sup> Posted on [www.salon.com](http://www.salon.com) (independent journalism website), August 2007. Retrieved 10 April 2009 from <http://letters.salon.com/mwt/broadsheet/2007/07/31/vegansexual/permalink/a18d12cafa-4b7ec2ce091059ece1d73d.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> Posted on [www.plime.com](http://www.plime.com) (online wiki community), August 2007. Retrieved 1 April 2009 from [www.plime.com/science/sex/1/29668/1/](http://www.plime.com/science/sex/1/29668/1/).
- <sup>11</sup> Posted on [www.stuff.co.nz](http://www.stuff.co.nz) (New Zealand local news site), July 2007. Retrieved 11 April 2009 from <http://www.stuff.co.nz/print/4148907a4261.html>.
- <sup>12</sup> Posted on <http://blogs.smh.com.au/thedailytruth> (*Sydney Morning Herald daily blog*), August 2007. Retrieved 1 April 2009 from <http://blogs.smh.com.au/thedailytruth/archives/2007/08/pork.html>.
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- <sup>14</sup> Posted on <http://tetherballs.blogspot.com/> (personal blog), August 2007. Retrieved on 12 April 2009 from [http://tetherballs.blogspot.com/2007\\_08\\_01\\_archive.html](http://tetherballs.blogspot.com/2007_08_01_archive.html). Note: The American animal rights organization PETA (People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals), referred to in this blog, is known for its anti-fur campaigns in which celebrities often pose naked accompanied by the slogan: 'I would rather go naked than wear fur.'
- <sup>15</sup> Posted on [www.RonFez.net](http://www.RonFez.net) (American radio personalities Ron and Fez's website), August 2007. Retrieved 15 April 2009 from <http://www.ronfez.net/forums/archive/index.php/t-62204.html>.



# EATING E.T.

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Erik Sandelin

In eating we are most inside the differential relationalities that make us who and what we are. There is no way to eat and not to kill, no way to eat and not to become with other mortal beings to whom we are accountable, no way to pretend innocence and transcendence or a final peace. [...] Multispecies human and nonhuman ways of living and dying are at stake in practices of eating.

(Donna Haraway 2008, p. 295 )



*Eating E.T. – Mock Alien BBQ* is an ongoing, hands-on exploration of our intimate relations to other species, real and fictional. A life-size, gluten replica of E.T. The Extraterrestrial – known from Steven Spielberg’s 1982 blockbuster – is roasted whole on a spit and eaten at festive social events. The mock alien provokes discussions and questions regarding what is at stake in our practices of eating.

Eating E.T. is a project made by Helga Steppan, Nicklas Marelius, Livia Sunesson, Erik Sandelin, Magnus Torstensson, Sveta Suvorina and Julia Zajac from interaction design and innovation studio Unsworn Industries in collaboration with artist Terje Östling.<sup>1</sup>

The first public barbecue took place in May 2014 at the Exploring the Animal Turn symposium at the Pufendorf Institute in Lund, Sweden. A second barbecue was held in September the same year at the Foodycle festival in Helsinki. The participants were invited to cut a piece of E.T., try it out, and then they were asked for comments and thoughts.

This text starts from—and keeps coming back to – the experience of eating E.T. through quotes from barbecue participants.<sup>2</sup> Through these starts and restarts, the text meanders through cultural imaginaries and disciplines such as law, astrobotany, cryptozoology and design. The goal is to present some of the threads and questions that linger with me now that the smoke around the barbecue has



*Photo: Helga Steppan*

“I cannot really see the point of mock meat. Either you’re eating meat or you’re not eating meat.”

faded; issues such as the social function of mock meat, the legal and moral status of extraterrestrials, fictional atrocities and victimless crimes, and mock meats as potential surrogates for some of the complicated pleasures of meat eating have all been addressed.

For more than two thousand years, the craft of emulating meat dishes has been perfected in Buddhist monasteries and restaurants in China. In a religion which prohibits the taking of a life, vegetarian cuisine is a must. At the same time, Chinese hospitality required that hosts defer to the tastes and wishes of their guests (Neilson, 2006). Today, the design and production of mock meat is a booming, multi-billion dollar industry, with fake hot dogs, chicken nuggets, and mock burgers readily available at most grocery stores.

In an Australian study called “The Civilized Burger” (Nath & Prideaux, 2007), mock meat is defined as “plant-based products that approximate the aesthetic qualities and/or nutritional value of certain types of meat.” The authors identify two primary functions of these meat alternatives:

Firstly, they are viewed as a valuable aid for converts to a meat-free diet. It helps former meat eaters cope with their transition to vegetarianism or veganism by allowing them to enjoy familiar tastes and textures without forsaking their new ideal as well as handle the social challenges that the transition process may present.

Secondly, meat alternatives are effective social instruments for vegetarians and vegans. They closely resemble familiar meat and animal products and facilitate participation at social gatherings that revolve around the consumption of meat, such as barbecues and Christmas festivities. Products such as vegan sausages and bacon help vegans and vegetarians take part in and enjoy potentially uncomfortable situations.

The craft and business of meat-mimicry is evolving rapidly, with new protein extrusion techniques promising increasingly meaty textures. Bill Gates-backed US manufacturer Beyond Meat recently launched Beast Burger – a plant-based burger that “sizzles, sweats, & satiates like a beef patty with more protein & iron than beef” (A Message to Burger Joints, 2014). “We’re not going to quit until you put a raw chicken breast next to our product and can’t tell the difference”, says Beyond Meat CEO Ethan Brown (Beyond Meat’s New Beast Burger, 2014). Are we approaching a mock-meat singularity, where it will be impossible to tell the difference between plant-based and animal-based meats?

Journalist Fredrik Edin (2014) speculates on seitan (wheat gluten) through the discourse of file-sharing and open source software and hardware. You could claim that an mp3 file is not the same as a real record, and that a cam (where you can see and hear the people in the theatre walking around, smoking, and snoring) is not a proper film. They are copies in another format, of varying quality. Edin proposes that the difference between the original and the copy simply comes down to how

skillfully, carefully, and lovingly crafted the copy is. Also, now that we have this versatile, protein-rich foodstuff that can take on any form or taste, how long before we have kitchen-top 3D-printers that, when fed with gluten flour, water, and spices will be able to print seitan in any form and taste?



*Photo: Helga Steppan*

“What if aliens came here and they were more intelligent than us. Would they have the right to eat us, as we eat animals?”

People have talked about Storsjöodjuret (the Lake Storsjön Monster in Sweden) for centuries. Since the 19th century, hundreds of documented observations of Storsjöodjuret have flooded the archives, and there are even more unofficial testimonies. Eyewitnesses describe a giant snake, a strange body with a dog’s head, a big reptile, something dark that moves against the wind, and something that looks like a boat turned upside-down. They have seen humps, fins, slithering movements, and large, inexplicable waves. Some think Storsjöodjuret may be a prehistoric animal that has managed to survive for millions of years in this lake in Jämtland in Northern Sweden. Some say it is an unusually large catfish or a mutated grey seal. Others are certain we are facing an up to now unknown, perhaps even extraterrestrial, species.

In 1986, the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency granted Storsjöodjuret the status of Protected by Law, prohibiting killing, injuring, or capturing living specimens of the species Storsjöodjuret, including removing or damaging its eggs, spawn or nests. After criticism from the Parliamentary Ombudsmen (JO), the protection was revoked on the grounds that Storsjöodjuret’s existence is “not scientifically verified” (Berggren, 2004).

Protecting Storsjöodjuret is an unusual example of proactive action from the authorities in the event of an unknown species appearing. The question of how

we conduct ourselves ethically in relation to extraterrestrial life is not a high priority in contemporary politics. When an alien lands on the White House lawn, it is still unclear who should greet him/her/it: someone from the Immigration and Naturalization Service, or someone from the Fish and Wildlife Commission (Freitas, 1977)? Academic discourse is “centuries behind the science fiction literature” (Persson, 2012) when it comes to approaching these issues.

The very possibility of contact with extraterrestrial life is a scenario that mentally plunges us into a post-anthropocentric condition or at least places *Homo sapiens* in a cosmic context, just as Darwin placed us in a terrestrial context. Eating E.T. manifests and makes intensely concrete a spectacular scenario which urges us to reconsider our relationship to other species, terran as well as extraterrestrial.

It is currently perfectly legal to capture and slaughter a member of the Storsjödjuret species.

Recipe for 1 Mock Alien  
(50-60 people):

30 l wheat gluten  
4 l soy flour  
15 l water  
1-2 dl broth powder  
4 dl colorit (colouring soy)  
6 l nutritional yeast  
4 dl liquid smoke  
4 l oil  
Salt and spices to taste

Instructions:

1. Make moulds out of plaster and coat them with food-grade silicone
2. Mix all dry ingredients in a jar
3. Boil water with broth
4. Add spices and oil
5. Mix and work the dough
6. Oil the mould
7. Fill it with dough
8. Bake



*Photo: Antti Ahonen*

“It’s a bit leathery”





*Photo: Bengt Pettersson*

“It’s awkward [seeing E.T. roasting on the spit], but no one is hurt. There was no one there in the first place. Mock meat never was someone.”

In 2010, a Swedish translator and comics expert was sentenced for possessing several manga (Japanese comics) images depicting, what the court considered, underaged children in sexually evocative situations. In the heated debate that followed, one side argued that “it is wrong to expose children in a pornographic context, no matter if they are depicted or real” and that these images are “unnecessary” (Olsson, 2011). Many were critical of the court’s ruling, arguing that this is a victimless crime and that we are entering a dangerous path more concerned with upholding adult morals rather than protecting actual children (Lindgren, 2011). The translator was finally freed in 2012 by the Supreme Court.

At the Lund barbecue, many were initially discomforted in the presence of the gluten alien. “It is jarring to see his charred body on the spit,” commented one participant. The fleshy corporeality of handling E.T. during the preparations for the barbecue affected the production team as well. We found ourselves taking special care in arranging the bound arms in what we deemed a respectful position, preserving at least some dignity for the dead creature.

In a world where fiction (virtual space) and “reality” (meat space) is increasingly intermixed and interdependent, the mock alien brings both ethical and legal issues to the fore. Immersed in violent computer games, our characters commit horri-

ble atrocities. What are the moral boundaries in our relation to fictional entities? What can we learn from the emotions raised from apparent atrocities against a fictional character? How should we understand the strong emotional responses towards the barbecued E.T.? And what happens when we contrast these responses with the overwhelmingly quiet acceptance of the daily, industrialized slaughter of nonhumans in the food industry?

And is it really so that “mock meat never was someone” and “no one is hurt”? The mock alien is crafted from mainly wheat gluten. Industrial monocultures, such as wheat, are also part of the ongoing living and dying of humans and nonhumans. As Anna Tsing writes in the journal *Environmental Humanities* “Cereals domesticated humans” (Tsing 2012, p. 145). With this strong sentence, she starts to unravel the historical transfer of affection from multi-species landscapes to focusing on one or two particular crops. Tsing shows connections between grain cultivation and the emergence of social hierarchies—as well as the rise of the state. Intensive cereal agriculture can do one thing better than other forms of subsistence – support elites.

There are no victimless meals. There is no innocent practice of eating.



*Photo: Nicklas Marelius*

“It was painful to see E.T. there on the spit. But as soon as I added some salsa, walked a few metres away, I quickly lost the connection that this is a living creature. For me as a vegetarian, this was like a real-life experience of eating meat. [...] You shed a tear, and then...hungry!”

In Astrid Lindgren’s 1973 family film *Emil och Griseknoen*, the mischievous eight-year-old protagonist rescues a piglet (Griseknoen) from its savaging mother. Emil and Griseknoen seem to enjoy each other’s company, and their antics delight the

rest of the family. Emil is therefore horrified to hear his father mention, in an unconcerned and matter-of-fact tone, that Griseknoen should not have “too much fun” because in a few months he will end up on the Christmas table anyway.

Countless stories recollect the emotional ties and ambivalent relations between domestic animals and their owners who are their soon-to-be slaughterers and eaters. Although contemporary carnivores rarely experience a sense of loss or attachment when grabbing a hot dog from the local burger joint, there is undoubtedly a sacrificial aspect to meat eating.

As previously mentioned, mock meats have socially integrative properties, but might there be other, less obvious, traits of meat-eating that vegans and vegetarians miss out on? What about domination, power, sacrifice, and other “complicated pleasures” (Dunne, 1999)? E.T. holds a special, dear place in the hearts of many of us. By literally putting a cherished childhood friend on the grill, the Eating E.T. experience could be regarded as an exploratory placebo for some of these complicated aspects of meat eating.

A casual look around reveals other contemporary phenomena that are re-appropriating meat-culture attributes. At De Vegetarische Slager (The Vegetarian Butcher) in Amsterdam, you are greeted by men with white aprons working diligently behind a clean, stainless steel counter to carve you a chunk of seitan. Leather-clad, corpse-painted, and spike-ornamented, the popular YouTube persona, Vegan Black Metal Chef, growls forth recipes for “Sesame Tofu from the Abyss” and “Hail Seitan” accompanied by blast-beats and ghoulish ambience.



*Photo: Nicklas Marelius*

“My first reaction was: No I can’t eat this! Then I thought, let’s be rational.”



How can mock meat food designers cater to the unexpected and idiosyncratic needs of vegans and vegetarians beyond the obvious social functions? What could be the mock meat equivalent of the nicotine patch or the e-cigarette?

It is no longer highly controversial to claim that it is possible to lead a healthy life without consuming animal proteins. A casual discussion on the justifications for eating animals often boils down to “because they taste good”. According to Gary Francione (2014) this argument is symptomatic of how eating animals is an unnecessary, “frivolous” practice. Must “because they taste good” mark the end of the discussion? How can the conversation continue beyond rational reasoning?

The gluten E.T. is also frivolous. We could have made a bread-shaped lump of seitan and put it on the grill, but it would lack the essential flavour of artificial cruelty. Despite (or perhaps, because of) the mock alien’s apparent distance from lived experience – a double fiction, a man-made copy of a fictional character from outer space – Eating E.T. engages emotionally and experientially. It troubles rationality and urges its consumers to question the certainty with which they normally meet the world and the contents of their plate.



*Photo: Antti Ahonen*

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Follow the project at <http://www.alienbbq.org>.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, all anonymous quotes are from recorded audio interviews with participants at the events at the Pufendorf Institute and at Foodycle.

# ANIMAL WELFARE AND THE MORAL VALUE OF NONHUMAN ANIMALS

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Gary L. Francione

There is virtually no one who would defend the notion that animals are *things* that have no moral value and exist completely outside the moral and legal community. Rather, just about everyone, including those directly involved in the institutionalized use of nonhuman animals, subscribes to what is called the 'animal welfare' position. This position maintains that animal life has a lesser value than human life and, therefore, it is morally acceptable to use animals as human resources as long as we treat them 'humanely' and do not inflict 'unnecessary' suffering on them.

The animal welfare position is so ubiquitously accepted that it is embodied in laws that impose criminal sanctions for the 'cruel' treatment of nonhuman animals. For the most part, only those moral norms that are widely accepted and uncontroversial are considered as meriting the imposition of a criminal sanction in the event of a violation. I have argued that because animals are chattel property, the notion of what constitutes 'necessary' suffering and 'humane' or 'cruel' treatment is invariably linked to what will facilitate the economically efficient exploitation of animals and, as a result, animal welfare laws provide an insignificant level of protection to nonhuman animals.

In the present essay, I explore the underlying premise of animal welfare that it is acceptable to use animals because their lives have lesser moral value than human lives. This notion is accepted even by prominent animal ethicists who are otherwise critical of the status quo concerning the use or treatment of nonhumans. In the first part of this essay, I discuss the view, present in welfarist theory since its emergence in the nineteenth century, that the life of nonhumans has lesser moral value than the life of humans. I then discuss why this view is arbitrary and unjustifiable and will present a brief defense of the moral equality of human and nonhuman life in the context of discussing the theory of animal rights that I have developed in earlier work.

I conclude with some remarks about the practical problems of animal welfare.

## I

Before the nineteenth century, animals were regarded as things. Neither our use nor our treatment of animals mattered morally or legally. There were some who, like French philosopher René Descartes, claimed that animals were literally nothing more than machines created by God. Descartes denied that animals were sentient; that is, he did not believe as a factual matter that animals were perceptually aware and able to have conscious experiences, including the experience of pain. For the most part, however, it was accepted that animals were sentient and had an interest in avoiding pain and suffering but that we could ignore animal interests and treat animals as if they were machines because they were different from humans in that they were supposedly not rational or self-aware, not able to think in terms of abstract concepts or use symbolic communication, incapable of engaging in reciprocal moral relationships with humans, or not in possession of a soul. However, regardless of whether humans regarded nonhumans as machines that were not sentient and had no interests, or as sentient and with interests that could be ignored because of supposed cognitive or spiritual defects, the bottom line remained the same: we could not have moral or legal obligations that we owed directly to animals. We could have obligations that concerned animals, such as an obligation not to damage our neighbor's cow, but that obligation was owed to the neighbor as the owner of the cow, not to the cow. The cow simply did not matter morally or legally.

In the nineteenth century, an ostensible paradigm shift occurred, and the animal welfare theory was born. The primary architects of this theory were utilitarian philosophers Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill. Utilitarianism is the moral theory that what is right or wrong depends on consequences; the right act or policy is that which will result in the most pleasure or happiness of all affected. In assessing consequences, we must be impartial and give equal consideration to everyone's happiness or pleasure without regard to race, sex, sexual orientation, intellectual or physical abilities, and so on. Utilitarians reject the notion of moral rights because, as we see as this discussion continues, rights protect the right holder even if the balance of consequences does not favor that protection. Bentham and Mill maintained that the requirement of impartial consideration entailed ignoring the species of a being as a determinant of moral significance just as it required ignoring race. They argued that even if animals were not rational or self-aware or otherwise did not have minds that were similar to those of humans, these cognitive differences were irrelevant to the moral significance of animal suffering. For example, Bentham argued that although a full-grown horse or dog is more rational and more able to communicate than a human infant, "the question is not, Can they *reason*? nor, Can they *talk*? but, Can they *suffer*?" (Bentham, 1948,

pp. 310-311, n.1). Humans and nonhumans may be different in many respects, but they are relevantly similar in that they are both sentient; they are perceptually aware and able to experience pain and pleasure.

Both Bentham and Mill were opposed to the race-based slavery that existed at the time on the ground that it violated the principle of impartiality or equal consideration by according greater weight to the pleasure or happiness of the white slave owners than to that of the black slaves. They were staunch advocates of the abolition of human slavery. They saw a similarity between slavery and animal exploitation in that both slaves and animals were treated as things; that is, they were excluded completely from the moral community and were “abandoned without redress to the caprice” (Ibid.) of their respective tormentors. Just as race did not justify our ignoring the principle of impartiality and according greater weight to the happiness of whites than to that of blacks, species did not justify our ignoring the suffering of animals.

Did this mean that Bentham and Mill advocated the abolition of animal use just as they advocated the abolition of human slavery? No, they did not. The fact that animals were supposedly not rational and otherwise had minds that were dissimilar to those of humans did not give humans a license to do whatever they wanted with animals, but it did mean that it was morally acceptable to use and kill them for human purposes as long as we treated them well. According to Bentham, animals live in the present and are not aware of what they lose when we take their lives. If we kill and eat them, “we are the better for it, and they are never the worse. They have none of those long-protracted anticipations of future misery which we have.” (Ibid.). Bentham also maintained that we actually do animals a favor by killing them, as long as we do so in a relatively painless manner: “The death they suffer in our hands commonly is, and always may be, a speedier, and by that means a less painful one, than that which would await them in the inevitable course of nature. . . . [W]e should be the worse for their living, and they are never the worse for being dead.” (Ibid.). If, as Bentham apparently maintained, animals do not as a factual matter have an interest in continuing to live, and death is not a harm for them, then our killing of animals would not per se raise a moral problem as long as we treated and killed animals “humanely.”

Moreover, Bentham and Mill opposed human slavery not only because it abrogated the liberty of humans who, unlike animals, had an interest in their lives, but also because the pain and suffering caused to the slaves outweighed any pleasure or happiness that slave owners derived from the practice. The same analysis did not hold for animals. It was, according to the welfarists, possible to minimize animal pain and suffering so that our pleasure would outweigh their pain. Mill argued that in balancing human and animal interests, it was important to keep in mind that humans had supposedly superior mental faculties so that they had a higher

quality of pleasure and happiness; human interests had a greater weight in any balancing. For example, he maintained that in calculating pleasure and pain as part of any weighing process, we must take into account that humans “have faculties more elevated than the animal appetites,” and he expressed agreement with those ethical views that assign “to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation.” (Mill, 1987, p. 279). According to Mill, “[a] being of higher faculties requires more to make him happy, is capable probably of more acute suffering, and is certainly accessible to it at more points, than one of an inferior type . . . he can never really wish to sink into what he feels to be a lower grade of existence.” (Mill, 1987, p. 280). Animals lack a “sense of dignity, which all human beings possess in one form or other.” (Ibid.). Moreover, humans have “a more developed intelligence, which gives a wider range to the whole of their sentiments, whether self-regarding or sympathetic.” (Mill, 1987, p. 324). As a result, “[i]t is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.” (Mill, 1987, p. 281).

So although the early utilitarians responsible for the emergence of the animal welfare approach maintained that the principle of impartiality required that we give serious consideration to animal interests when assessing the consequences of actions, they believed that animals did not have an interest in continuing to live and that their interests in not suffering had lesser value than competing human interests. Because animals did not have an interest in continuing to exist, and because they supposedly had inferior sentient experiences, it was acceptable for humans to treat animals as property and to use and kill them for human purposes as long as humans treated animals “humanely” and did not impose “unnecessary” suffering on them. Bentham and Mill favored legislation aimed at preventing the “cruel” treatment of animals, and the anticruelty laws and other animal welfare laws that presently exist in Britain, the United States, and most other Western countries can be traced directly to the utilitarian philosophers of nineteenth-century Britain. But it is clear that the historical basis of the animal welfare approach is that animals have a lesser moral value than humans.

This notion about the supposed moral inferiority of nonhumans is also represented in contemporary animal welfare theory, the leading figure of which is Peter Singer. Singer is also a utilitarian and maintains that the morally correct action is that which will maximize the satisfaction of preferences (as distinguished from happiness or pleasure) of those affected, including nonhuman animals. But like Bentham and Mill, Singer very clearly regards animal life as having less value than human life. For instance, like Bentham, he maintains the following position:

While self-awareness, the capacity to think ahead and have hopes and aspirations for the future, the capacity for meaningful relations with others and so on

are not relevant to the question of inflicting pain . . . these capacities are relevant to the question of taking life. It is not arbitrary to hold that the life of a self-aware being, capable of abstract thought, of planning for the future, of complex acts of communication, and so on, is more valuable than the life of a being without these capacities (Singer, 1990, p. 20).

Singer also states:

An animal may struggle against a threat to its life, even if it cannot grasp that it has “a life” in the sense that requires an understanding of what it is to exist over a period of time. But in the absence of some form of mental continuity it is not easy to explain why the loss to the animal killed is not, from an impartial point of view, made good by the creation of a new animal who will lead an equally pleasant life. (Singer 1990, pp. 228-229)

That is, Singer, like Bentham, argues that because animals do not know what it is they lose when we kill them, they do not have any interest in continuing to live and, therefore, death is not a harm to them. They do not care that we use and kill them for our purposes. They care only about not suffering as a result of our using and killing them. Singer describes himself as a “flexible vegan” who will eat animal products when he travels, visits the home of others, or is in the company of people who would find his insistence on not eating animal products to be annoying or disconcerting (Gilson, 2006; *Sataya*, 2006) and he argues that as long as we take seriously the interests of animals in not suffering, our use of them may be ethically defensible:

If it is the infliction of suffering that we are concerned about, rather than killing, then I can also imagine a world in which people mostly eat plant foods, but occasionally treat themselves to the luxury of free range eggs, or possibly even meat from animals who live good lives under conditions natural for their species, and are then humanely killed on the farm. (Raha, 2006, p. 19).

Singer maintains that similar human and nonhuman interests in not suffering ought to be treated in a similar fashion, as required by the principle of impartiality, or, as Singer refers to it, the principle of equal consideration. He claims that because humans have “superior mental powers” (Singer, 1990, p. 16), they will in some cases suffer more than animals and in some cases suffer less, but he acknowledges that making interspecies comparisons is difficult at best and perhaps even impossible. That is, although Singer does not adopt Mill’s more categorical position that the pleasures of the human intellect are almost always to be given greater

weight, Singer's view about the relationship between "superior" human cognition and assessments of suffering comes very close and undercuts the ability to make impartial assessments of competing interests, virtually guaranteeing that human interests will always prevail.

Moreover, as a utilitarian, Singer is committed to permitting animal use at least in some circumstances. For example, if humans derive great satisfaction from eating animal flesh and animal products, and we were able to produce these with a minimal amount of pain and suffering, then he would be committed to the position that the institution of animal use would be morally acceptable, particularly if death is not a harm for animals. Indeed, given that utilitarians regard happiness, pleasure, the satisfaction of interests, and so on as good, and given that humans obviously enjoy animal use, it would seem that if we could provide a reasonably pleasant life and a relatively painless death for animals, we would be morally obligated to bring into existence as many animals as we could, kill them as quickly as we could, bring more into existence and kill them, and so forth, so that we could maximize the total amount of happiness, pleasure, or preference satisfaction in the world. In any event, like Bentham and Mill, Singer does not reject the use per se of animals, he does not advocate the abolition of the property status of animals, and he is a strong supporter of reforming and improving animal welfare through laws and voluntary modifications of industry practices.

Singer's view that nonhuman animals do not have an interest in their lives because they are not self-aware leads him to distinguish among species of nonhumans and to treat as special or privileged those animals who are closer to humans because they are at least arguably self-aware in a way relevantly similar to humans. Singer coedited *The Great Ape Project: Equality Beyond Humanity*, which proposed that the nonhuman great apes "have mental capacities and an emotional life sufficient to justify inclusion within the community of equals." (Singer and Cavalieri, 1993, p. 5). Because these nonhuman animals are genetically and cognitively similar to human animals, Singer argues that they deserve greater legal protection than other nonhumans, who he, along with Bentham and others, believes live in "a kind of eternal present." (Raha, 2006, p. 19).

Singer has recently acknowledged that empirical evidence indicates that at least some other animals may have mental continuity but he has thus far failed to accord this evidence dispositive weight and recognize that these other animals have the same kind of morally significant interest in continued existence that he accords to humans, nonhuman great apes, marine mammals and elephants, and he has failed to accord them the default presumption against use as replaceable resources that he accords to 'normal' humans and nonhumans who have humanlike self-awareness that would make veganism a moral imperative (Singer, 2011). Singer continues to promote welfarist campaigns and has not distanced himself from what I refer to as



the “happy exploitation” movement that he very deliberately inaugurated in 2005 when he spearheaded an effort, joined by most large animal organizations, including The Humane Society of the United States, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, Farm Sanctuary, Mercy For Animals, Vegan Outreach, and Compassion Over Killing, to publicly praise a U.S. based supermarket chain, Whole Foods Market, for adopting what was purported to be a higher-welfare meat production program (See Singer, 2013). Singer might well be described as the primary figure of the “happy exploitation” movement that promotes the ‘compassionate’ consumption of ‘higher welfare’ meat and other animal products as normatively desirable and, along with welfare reforms generally, as the proper subjects of animal advocacy. This “happy exploitation” movement is now the dominant faction of the modern animal movement in North and South America, Western Europe, Australia, and New Zealand.

Finally, the position that animal life is of lesser value than human life is one that permeates the welfare position as it has been developed by utilitarian philosophers, such as Bentham, Mill, and Singer. But this position also surfaces in the work of rights theorist Tom Regan. Regan rejects both utilitarian moral theory and the theory of animal welfare. He maintains that we have no moral justification for treating at least adult mammals exclusively as means to the ends of humans, so he does not rely on the lesser moral value of nonhumans to justify animal use as did Bentham and Mill and as does Singer. Regan does, however, argue that in a situation in which there is a conflict, such as a situation in which we are in a lifeboat and must choose whether to save a dog or a human, we should choose to save the life of the human over the dog because death is a greater harm for the former than for the latter. According to Regan, “the harm that death is, is a function of the opportunities for satisfaction it forecloses,” and death for an animal, “though a harm, is not comparable to the harm that death would be” for humans (Regan, 1983, p. 324; see discussion in Francione, 2008, pp. 210-229).

In sum, although the welfarists, who are utilitarians, maintain that what is right or wrong is dependent on consequences and that in assessing consequences we should equally favor the equivalent interests of nonhuman animals, they believe it is permissible to use animals as resources for humans either because animals do not have an interest in their lives or because their interests generally are of lesser weight relative to those of cognitively superior humans. In other words, nonhuman animals, unlike at least normal adult humans, do not have an interest in not being used as resources; as long as they have a reasonably pleasant life and a relatively painless death, we may continue to own and use them. We should, however, endeavor to do so in the most “humane” way possible.

The welfarists are committed to the position that animal life is of lesser moral value than human life. The welfarists talk about the “luxury” of eating meat and animal

products and about “flexible” use of nonhuman animals in situations in which we would never use humans. Given that welfarists do not talk about the “luxury” of killing humans or about being “flexible” when it comes to practices that involve the intentional killing of humans, they *must* maintain that there are morally relevant differences between humans and nonhumans that make the use of animals by humans morally justified. If they deny that there is a moral difference between human and animal life, then their support for animal use, however “humane,” is nothing more than outright discrimination based only on species.

## II

The welfarist position rests on the notion that there is a qualitative distinction between the minds of humans and nonhumans and that this qualitative distinction means both that nonhumans do not have an interest in their lives and that there is a morally relevant distinction between the sentient experiences of humans and other animals. As a preliminary matter, this notion ostensibly conflicts with the theory of evolution, which, at least according to Darwin, maintains that the differences between humans and other animals is a matter of degree and not of kind. On an almost daily basis, an article shows up, sometimes in a popular magazine or newspaper and sometimes in a respected scientific journal, about how animal minds are really like human minds. We can, however, concede for purposes of argument that given that humans are, at least as far as we know, the only animals who use symbolic communication and whose conceptual structures are inextricably linked to language, it is most probably the case that there are significant differences between the minds of humans and the minds of nonhumans (see Steiner, 2005, pp. 1–55; Steiner, 2005, pp. 18–37). But the rights/abolitionist response to any such observation is, “So what?”

The rights/abolitionist position rejects the notion that any differences that may exist between human and animal minds mean that animals have no interest in continuing to exist or that the sentient experiences of nonhumans have a lesser weight than those of humans. It applies the notion of equal consideration to animal *use* and not merely to animal *treatment* and maintains that we cannot justify using nonhumans as human resources, irrespective of whether we treat animals “humanely” in the process. It is not necessary to come to any conclusion about the precise nature of animal minds to be able to assess the welfarist view that death itself does not harm nonhuman animals because, unlike humans, they live in what Singer describes as an “eternal present.” The only cognitive characteristic that is required is that nonhumans be *sentient* – that is, that they be perceptually aware in a subjective way (see discussion in Francione, 2008, pp. 129–147). Sentience is necessary to have interests at all. If a being is not sentient, then the being may be

alive, but there is nothing that the being prefers, wants, or desires. There may, of course, be uncertainty as to whether sentience exists in a particular case, or with respect to classes of beings, such as insects or mollusks. But the animals we most routinely exploit – the cows, chickens, pigs, ducks, lambs, fish, rats, and so on – are all, without question, sentient.

To say that a sentient being – any sentient being – is not harmed by death is decidedly odd. After all, sentience is not a characteristic that has evolved to serve as an end in itself. Rather, it is a trait that allows the beings who have it to identify situations that are harmful and that threaten survival. *Sentience is a means to the end of continued existence*. Sentient beings, by virtue of their being sentient, have an interest in remaining alive; that is, they prefer, want, or desire to remain alive. Therefore, to say that a sentient being is not harmed by death denies that the being has the very interest that sentience serves to perpetuate. It would be analogous to saying that a being with eyes does not have an interest in continuing to see or is not harmed by being made blind. The Jains of India expressed it well long ago: “All beings are fond of life, like pleasure, hate pain, shun destruction, like life, long to live. To all life is dear.” *Acaranga Sutra*, 1989, p. 19, footnotes omitted.

Singer recognizes that “[a]n animal may struggle against a threat to its life,” but he concludes that this does not mean that the animal has the mental continuity required for a sense of self. This position begs the question, however, in that it assumes that the only way that an animal can be self-aware is to have the sort of autobiographical sense of self that we associate with normal adult humans. That is certainly one way of being self-aware, but it is not the only way. As biologist Donald Griffin, one of the most important cognitive ethologists of the twentieth century, notes, if animals are conscious of anything, “the animal’s own body and its own actions must fall within the scope of its perceptual consciousness.” (Griffin, 2001, p. 274). We nevertheless deny animals self-awareness because we maintain that they cannot “think such thoughts as ‘It is *I* who am running, or climbing this tree, or chasing that moth.’” (Ibid.). Griffin maintains that “when an animal consciously perceives the running, climbing, or moth-chasing of another animal, it must also be aware of who is doing these things. And if the animal is perceptually conscious of its own body, it is difficult to rule out similar recognition that it, itself, is doing the running, climbing, or chasing.” (Ibid.). He concludes that “[i]f animals are capable of perceptual awareness, denying them some level of self-awareness would seem to be an arbitrary and unjustified restriction.” (Ibid.). It would seem that any sentient being must be self-aware in that to be sentient means to be the sort of being who recognizes that it is that being, and not some other, who is experiencing pain or distress. When a sentient being is in pain, that being necessarily recognizes that it is she who is in pain; there is *someone* who is conscious of being in pain and who has a preference, desire, or want not to have that experience.

We can see the arbitrary nature of the welfarist assumption if we consider humans who have a condition known as transient global amnesia, which occurs as a result of a stroke, a seizure, or brain damage. Those with transient global amnesia often have no memory of the past and no ability to project themselves into the future. These humans have “a sense of self about one moment – now – and about one place – here.” (Damasio, 1999, p. 16). Their sense of self-awareness may be different from that of a normal adult, but it would not be accurate to say that they are not self-aware or that they are indifferent to death. We may not want to appoint such a person as a teacher or allow her to perform surgery on others, but at least most of us would be horrified at the suggestion that it is acceptable to use such people as forced organ donors or as non-consenting subjects in biomedical experiments, even if we did so “humanely.” Even if animals live in a similar “eternal present,” that does not mean that they are not self-aware, that they have no interest in continued existence, or that death is not a harm for them. A similar analysis holds for what Singer identifies as “any other capacity that could reasonably be said to give value to life.” (Singer, 1990, p. 18). Some humans will not have the capacity at all, some will have it less than other humans, and some will have it less than other nonhumans. This deficiency or difference may be relevant for some purposes, but it does not allow us to conclude that a human lacking the capacities that Singer identifies as giving value to life does not have an interest in continuing to live or that death is not a harm for her.

Moreover, to the extent that we, like Regan, regard death as a harm for animals, but as a lesser harm because animals have fewer “opportunities for satisfaction,” we also beg the question in favor of our own species. There is much about life that I enjoy, and I derive many satisfactions from life. But I cannot with any confidence say that I have more opportunities for satisfaction than does one of the rescued dogs who share our home, any more than I could say with any confidence that I derive more satisfaction from life than does another human.

Also arbitrary is the welfarist notion that humans have “superior mental powers” and that in assessing animal pain, or in trying to determine whether human pleasure or the avoidance of human pain justifies imposing pain and suffering on animals, we should keep in mind Mill’s notion that “[i]t is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied.” What, apart from self-interested proclamation, makes human characteristics “superior” or allows us to conclude that we experience more intense pleasure when we are happy than a pig does when she is happily rooting in the mud or playing with other pigs? Just as in the case about the harm of death, such an analysis works only if we assume what we are setting out to prove. The analysis works only if we commit the logical fallacy of begging the question.

The problem with the welfarist approach becomes clear if we restrict our analysis to human beings. Assume we have two humans: a philosophy professor and a factory worker who has no higher education and has no interest in having any discussions that would be regarded by the philosopher as intellectually stimulating. If we were to say that it is better to be a philosophy professor dissatisfied than a factory worker satisfied, such an assertion would, quite rightly, be viewed as arbitrary and elitist. Although there is certainly a tradition in Western thought that assigns a higher value to intellectual pursuits than to other sorts of activities, that tradition was shaped almost exclusively by academics and others who valued intellectual pursuits and was not the result of any democratic or impartial assessment of competing pleasures. The notion that nonhuman animals have pains and pleasures that are different from and lesser than those of humans is no different from asserting that the pleasures and pains of a less intelligent or less educated human are inferior to those of a more intelligent or better-educated one.

To the extent that humans and nonhumans have different sorts of minds, those differences may be relevant for some purposes, just as differences between and among humans may be relevant for some purposes. Mary's greater ability at math may justify our giving her a scholarship over Joe, who lacks ability at math. The rescued dogs who live with my partner and me very much like to sit with us when we watch movies, but we do not consider their likes and dislikes in movies when we go to the video store because, at least as far as we can tell, they do not have any. So there are relevant differences between the minds of humans and the minds of nonhumans. Any differences, however, are not logically relevant to, for instance, whether we use dogs in painful experiments or kill them for other purposes, just as Joe's inability to do math is not relevant to whether we should take his kidney to save Mary or use him in an experiment to obtain data that may benefit Mary. We cannot claim that humans are superior based on their having more interests, or more intense interests, than nonhumans without begging the question and engaging in reasoning that, if applied in the human context, would quite rightly be seen as blatantly arbitrary and elitist.

The rights position, as I have developed it, rejects the notion that some nonhumans, such as the nonhuman great apes, are more deserving of moral status or legal protection than other animals because they are more like humans. The fact that an animal is more like us may be relevant to determining what other sorts of interests the animal has, but with respect to the animal's interest in her life and the harm that death constitutes to her, or her interest in not being made to experience pain and suffering, her being similar to humans is not relevant at all.

To be clear: if a being is sentient – that is, if she is perceptually aware – she has an interest in continuing to live, and death is a harm to her. It is not necessary to have the autobiographical sense of self that we associate with normal adult

humans. Moreover, we cannot say that her interests in her life or the quality of her pain or pleasure are of lesser moral value because her cognitions are not the same as those of normal adult humans. The fact that the minds of humans differ from nonhumans does not mean that the life of a human has greater moral value any more than it means that the life of a human who has normal mental capacities has greater moral value than the life of a mentally disabled person or that the life of an intelligent person has greater moral value than the life of a less intelligent one. Although the differences between humans and animals may be important for some purposes, they are completely irrelevant to the morality of using and killing animals, even if we do so “humanely.”

As we saw earlier, the welfarist tradition does not challenge the property status of animals. Welfarists propose regulation that they maintain will raise the price of animal products and thereby reduce consumption (a matter that is addressed in the following section) but, for the most part, they do not propose the abolition of the institution of animal property. The rights position advocates that animals should have the right not to be treated as the resources of humans.

We should be clear here about the meaning of “right.” A right is merely a way of protecting an interest; the interest is protected even if the general welfare would be increased or improved if we ignored that interest. To explain what a right is in these terms should make clear why utilitarians reject rights. As we saw previously, utilitarians are consequentialists; what is right or wrong depends on consequences. To say that an interest is protected by a right means that we must protect that interest even if the consequences would weigh against that protection. For example, to say that I have a right to my life is to say that my interest in continuing to live is protected even if using me in a painful biomedical experiment that would result in my death might lead to a cure for cancer. Many utilitarians would have no problem with using humans in biomedical experiments if it were reasonably certain that good consequences would ensue. Most rights theorists would have a problem with such use.

To say that a right protects an interest from being sacrificed for consequential reasons is not to say that the interest is protected absolutely. For example, to say that I have a right to liberty does not mean that I cannot forfeit my interest in liberty by being found guilty of committing a crime. It means only that my interest in liberty will be protected even if others would benefit from my imprisonment.

There is a great deal of controversy about what human interests ought to be protected by rights, particularly legal rights, which involve an interest being protected by the power of the state. But there is general agreement that humans have an interest in not being treated exclusively as the resources of another and that this interest ought to be protected by a basic, pre-legal right not to be treated as a slave. We certainly do not treat everyone equally – for instance, we often pay

more money to people who are considered more conventionally intelligent or who are better baseball players. But for purposes of treating humans exclusively as the resources of others, as far as human slavery is concerned, we regard all humans, irrespective of their individual characteristics, as having equal inherent value. That is, we regard all humans as having a moral value that, though not necessarily requiring that we treat them all equally for all purposes, does require that we treat them equally with respect to their interest in not being treated exclusively as the resource of others. We protect this interest with a right in that we do not regard it as morally justifiable to enslave humans or use them as forced organ donors even if to do so would increase overall social welfare. Slavery involves letting another, the slave owner, decide the value of the fundamental interests of the slave, including her interests in life, liberty, and in not suffering various forms of pain and deprivation. Not being a chattel slave is a prerequisite to having other rights. The laws of every nation, as well as the norms of customary international law, prohibit slavery. This is not to say that chattel slavery does not still exist – it most certainly does – but no one defends it, and it is universally condemned. If animals matter morally, then we must apply the principle of equal consideration – the moral rule that we treat similar cases similarly – and ask whether there is a good reason not to accord the right not to be treated as property to nonhumans as well. Is there a justification for using animals in ways that we would consider inappropriate ever to use any humans?

The answer is clear. There is no rational justification for our continuing to deny this one right to sentient nonhumans, however “humanely” we treat them. As long as animals are property, they can never be members of the moral community. The interests of animal property will always count for less than the interests of animal owners. We can fall back on religious superstition and claim that animal use is justified because animals do not have souls, are not created in God’s image, or are otherwise inferior spiritually. Alternatively, we can claim that our use of animals is acceptable because we are human and they are not, which is nothing more than speciesism and is no different from saying that it is acceptable for whites to discriminate against blacks because of differences in skin color or for men to exploit women because of differences in gender.

The animal rights position does not mean releasing domesticated nonhumans to run wild in the street. If we took animals seriously and recognized our obligation not to treat them as things, we would stop producing and facilitating the production of domestic animals altogether. We would care for the ones whom we have here now, but we would stop breeding more for human consumption, and we would leave non-domesticated animals alone. We would stop eating, wearing, or using animal products, and we would regard veganism as a clear and unequivocal moral baseline.

If we stopped producing domesticated animals, we would avoid the overwhelming number of conflicts that so trouble those who advance the animal welfare position. To put the matter simply, if we did not keep bringing domesticated animals into existence for our use, we would not have to worry about how we treat them and whether our standards are “humane.” There is no real conflict between a human who wants to eat a steak or drink a glass of milk and the cow who must be exploited to produce these products. There is a conflict only because we assume that the cow is there to be used as a resource. The cow is property, and there is a conflict between the property owner and the property sought to be exploited. Once we see that we cannot morally justify using animals – however “humanely” – then these conflicts disappear. Even if the use of animals in biomedical research benefits humans – and this is highly questionable at best – there is no more a conflict between humans who would receive the benefit and the animals whose use would provide any benefit than there is a conflict between humans who would benefit from the use of other humans as non-consenting subjects in experiments or as forced organ donors and those humans who would be used. The existence of the conflict between the humans and nonhumans in this context begs the question about the moral justification of animal use in the first place.

But what about the situation in which there is a genuine conflict? What do we do in the unlikely situation in which we are passing by the burning house that contains a human and a nonhuman, and there is time to save only one? If we would save the human over the nonhuman, does that not mean that we think that animals have less moral value? It would depend on the reason for the choice. If we thought that death was a lesser harm to the animal because humans are “superior,” then that decision would certainly reflect a judgment about relative moral value. If, however, we chose to save the human not because we thought that death was a lesser harm to the animal but because, as humans, we have a greater understanding of the meaning and consequences of death for our own species than we do for other species in terms of disruption of other relationships and so on, this would reflect our own limitations of knowledge and not reflect any judgment about the moral value of the animal.

There are all sorts of situations in which we prefer the interest of one human over another, and this does not necessarily mean that we are making a negative judgment about the moral value of humans whose interests are not favored in these situations. Assume I pass by the burning house and see two humans therein – a very young person and a very old person – and I have time to save only one. I decide to save the young person because she has not yet lived her life, and the old person appears to be very near the end of hers. Does that mean that I regard older people to be of less moral value or that I can use them for experiments or as forced organ donors? Of course not. In any event, these hypotheticals are of little



use because they invariably involve situations in which we will feel that we have failed morally no matter what we do; they are poor places in which to formulate moral principles that go beyond the actual situation.

### *III*

In closing, it is important to understand that the animal welfare theory does not only rest on a foundation that is theoretically flawed, but that, as a practical matter, animal welfare fails to protect animal interests in any meaningful way. Animals are property; they are treated as economic commodities with only extrinsic or conditional value. To the extent that we protect animal interests, we generally do so only when it provides a benefit – usually an economic benefit – for humans. As a result, the protection of animal interests is, for the most part, very limited. Regulation does not decrease animal suffering in any significant way, and it does not decrease demand by making animal exploitation more expensive. On the contrary, welfare reform more often increases production efficiency so that it actually becomes cheaper to produce animal products. For example, giving veal calves more space can reduce the costs of veterinary care that are caused by more intensive and solitary confinement. To the extent that a welfare regulation imposes any cost on animal production, that added cost is not significant.

Moreover, welfare reform makes the public feel more comfortable about using animal products and makes curious bedfellows out of institutional exploiters and animal advocates. When an industry agrees to the reform, which is generally in its economic interest anyway, animal advocates praise the industry, allowing it to represent to the public that it cares about animal interests. Animal advocates can then use the “victory” against industry for fundraising purposes. And there is absolutely no evidence – none whatsoever – that animal welfare reform will lead to abolition or to significantly decreased animal use in the future.

Welfarists maintain that animal advocates should support welfare reforms because it is better to inflict less suffering on animals than more suffering. Putting aside the factual matter of whether welfarist reform actually does reduce animal suffering or may actually increase overall suffering and death by making the public more comfortable about supposed “humane” animal treatment, this argument is flawed. It is, for instance, better in one sense to torture someone for one hour rather than two hours; it is better not to beat a victim in addition to raping her or him. But that does not mean that we should campaign for more “humane” torture or more “humane” rape or give awards to perpetrators who inflict unjustified harm in more “humane” ways. We certainly do not do so where issues of human rights are involved. So even if welfare reforms were effective – and I argue that they are

not – the promotion of welfarist campaigns necessarily assumes the notion discussed in the preceding section: that nonhuman animals have a lesser moral value than human animals.

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# A COMMENT TO GARY FRANCIONE: ANIMAL RIGHTS VERSUS ANIMALS AS PROPERTY AND NATURE

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Ragnhild Sollund

This paper was prepared as a comment to Gary Francione's talk "Animal Welfare and the Moral Value of Nonhuman Animal" at the "Exploring the Animal Turn" symposium in Lund. It consists of four parts. Firstly, I briefly sum up Francione's major argument. Secondly, I give my own perspective on Francione's paper from the point of view of my research as a criminologist. Thirdly, I show how the failure in attributing rights to animals is reflected in cases of wildlife crimes in Columbia and Norway. Fourthly, I discuss how Francione's paper relates to these crimes and verdicts, and finally, I conclude with a discussion in which I acknowledge Francione's point and suggest measures to be taken to improve the situation for nonhuman animals.<sup>1</sup>

## *A brief summary of Francione's paper*

In the paper presented by Francione (and elsewhere, e.g. Francione, 2008), he clearly points out the weaknesses of the animal welfare movement and its consequences in terms of prolonged animal exploitation. He shows the failures, inconsistencies and real-life consequences of a welfarism based on utilitarianism. Not only do animal welfare laws fail to protect animals, but instead, they serve to encourage, increase, and prolong the use of animals by legitimizing it. The production of meat is regarded as a common good; it is doxic and deeply ingrained in most cultures (Adams, 1990; Gålmark, 2008; Sollund, 2012), and in consumerist societies, the more and cheaper, the better. Those who do reflect upon their practices and have possible concern for the animals they consume may be lured by the animal welfarists into thinking this consumption is perfectly fine. Furthermore, the fact that animal welfarism as an ideology (Svärd, 2008) is established in animal welfare acts in most countries further serves to legitimate these practices because of the normative effect of the law (Aubert, 1954).

### *My perspective on Francione's talk*

This part is based on my research of the trafficking and killing of so-called wildlife,<sup>2</sup> in which one point in particular concerns animals as property. Freely born animals are considered property of the state and killing and trafficking them is usually regulated, as per the CITES convention (Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna). This is sometimes criminalized, usually under wildlife and biodiversity laws, but not with the animal victims as benefactors. Perspectives such as ecological justice and species justice (see e.g. White, 2013) are important within my own field of study, green criminology, and therefore form the basis for my analysis.

Francione shows the failed logic in utilitarianism through the hypothetical positioning of categories of humans against each other in regard to self-awareness; for example, Alzheimer's patients will likely be less self-aware than a healthy adult, but that does not mean killing or experimenting on Alzheimer's patients is acceptable. Francione states that most people disagree that a human lacking the capacities which Singer identifies as giving value to life does not have an interest in continuing to live or that death does not harm her. One way to answer whether an act is moral or immoral is to pose the question: does this comparison hold or would this treatment be acceptable if the person in question was nonhuman (Francione, 2008) rather than human?

This brings me to the yardstick problem, through which the human is the being by which every other being is compared (Noske, 1989; Sollund, 2012). As Francione observes, humans are consistently used as the yardstick when establishing what rights nonhuman animals should have. What is regarded as human capacities have more value than the fundamental capacities humans share with other species. Self-awareness is one such capacity which is constantly ascribed to humans, despite research documenting the self-awareness of many different species, such as parrots (Pepperberg et. al., 1995), magpies (Prior et. al., 2008), primates (Emery and Clayton, 2004), bottlenose dolphins (Reiss and Marino, 2001) and Asian elephants (Plotnik et. al., 2006). In Francione's argument, the important point regarding rights is whether or not an animal is *sentient*; beings who are sentient do not only have an interest in being unharmed, they also have an interest in *life*. As he states, "Sentience is a means to the end of continued existence" (Francione, 2014). So if one is to agree that sentience is an argument for protection against abuse, than it must also be protection against being killed, counter to the argument of the welfarists. The conclusion which follows must be that animal exploitation is wrong, no matter how well animals are treated in the process of them becoming a commodity for humans.

One problem with the argument which is grounded on the difference between humans and nonhumans and the ways in which humans ascribe value to what is regarded as typically human features is, of course, the anthropocentrism and speciesism on which such an argument rests. Anthropocentrism prevents us from seeing what other species truly are, what their capabilities are, and how we are as inferior to them for not possessing these as we regard them to be for not possessing capacities we (wrongly) think of as typically human. We continue to compare them to us and because we posit ourselves on top, they are doomed to fail; we regard them as inferior in all relevant respects. The fact that most nonhuman animals have capabilities which are different from those defined as typically “human”, which are appraised and valued by humans for that reason, does not justify humans’ exploitation of nonhuman animals or the regard of their capabilities as *inferior* (Sollund, 2012).

As Francione states, “What apart from self-interested proclamation, makes human characteristics ‘superior’ or allows us to conclude that we experience more pleasure when we are happy than a pig does when she is happily rooting in the mud or playing with other pigs?” (Francione, 2014) And further, “The rights position [...] rejects the notion that some nonhumans, such as the nonhuman great apes, are more deserving of moral status or legal protection than other animals because they are more like humans” (Francione, 2014). In consistently looking for ourselves in other species, we fail to see *them* and what they could teach *us*. We only see a minuscule part of the total picture based on what we look for and, consequently, we determine they are not entitled to rights as a result of what we see through this lens.

Francione further claims in relation to the discussion of rights, “(i)t is not necessary to have the autobiographical sense of self that we associate with normal adult humans.” (Francione, 2014) I agree with this, but still wonder if not most animals have some sort of autobiographical sense. This capacity is essential for learning, and learning from experiences is crucial if one is to survive danger. Humans, as well as individuals of many other animal species, learn in this way. Nevertheless, a hierarchical degree of moral value among sentient beings should not exist. This hierarchy places humans at the top followed by the species which are most similar to humans and with those most different from us at the bottom. There is difference in kind between species, but difference in kind should not serve to deprive nonhuman species and individuals of rights and should not justify abuse and exploitation (Sollund, 2008, 2012).

The failure of animal welfare legislation and logic is further compounded by the definition of animal welfare always being based on positivist, Cartesian ideas and human interests; for example, Norwegian veterinarians typically state in relation to the fur industry and other farming that an animal does not suffer in a

cage or a bin unless she/he has open injuries (Sollund et. al., 2013). They choose this stance rather than acknowledge that any animal who is encaged, deprived of daylight, etc. will suffer from lack of freedom of movement and will be unable to fulfil physical and psychological needs just as a humans would suffer under such conditions. Nevertheless, based on antiquated epistemological ideas, veterinarians regard this suffering as not proven, and they will continue to give their seal of approval for abuse.

In relation to humans, similar treatment is characterized as torture. Norway is repeatedly criticized by the UN Committee Against Torture (CAT) for keeping prisoners in solitary confinement for more than 48 hours in bare cells. When humans are subjected to such treatment, it is called “torture”; however, in regard to animals, it is called “welfare”.

The animal’s welfare will always be weighed against human interests in exploiting her, and in this, she will lose. Therefore, the more interest humans have in exploiting an animal, the more the boundaries for what is considered “welfare” will be expanded, keeping pace with the treadmill of production and also of the extent of human creativity in expanding areas for animal exploitation (Stretesky et. al., 2013).

I will now turn to a few specific cases from my own research to show how the failure in attributing rights to animals is reflected in wildlife crimes.

### *Effects of the failing animal welfare movement: Colombia and Norway*

I have gathered data from a variety of sources to illustrate the failing animal welfare movement worldwide. In my research, fifteen interviews from Colombia and Brazil have been conducted by David Rodríguez Goyes, as well as statistical data from those countries. Further, in my research on the trafficking of freely born animals which I have conducted over the past few years, I collected data from Norway in the form of qualitative interviews with control agencies, experts and offenders, and also with reptile smugglers (as reptiles are illegal in Norway). I have studied several hundred penal cases and approximately 65 confiscation reports from Customs regarding the trafficking attempts of live animals and products made from CITES-listed animals. In addition, I have analyzed around 25 verdicts relating to the illegal killing of large predators in Norway. To illustrate how Francione’s arguments regarding animals as property contribute to abuse, I will use examples from my own research, starting with the Patarraoyo case from Colombia.

### *Case 1: Colombia*

This case from Colombia involves the legal and illegal trafficking and experimentation of more than 20,000 nocturnal primates. Manuel Elkin Patarroyo is a 'renowned' researcher in the malaria field in Colombia. He has been conducting research and experimentation on primates for over 30 years, but no result has ever been achieved despite all the individuals (ab)used in the research. In 1987, Patarroyo developed a synthetic vaccine against the disease, but it had been rejected as useless by the World Health Organization. In short, the reason why the case was brought to court was due to a campaign initiated by primate veterinarian and anthropologist, Ángela María Maldonado Rodríguez, director of the Entropika Foundation, which works toward the conservation of fauna in collaboration with the indigenous communities of Colombia and the Colombian-Peruvian border. She observed the trafficking and tried to stop it, and succeeded with the court's decision to withdraw the permission Patarroyo had to abduct and use the primates. For three years, between 2008–2011, Rodríguez collected documentation and revealed some shocking findings.

After the animals had been experimented on and thus tortured in the laboratories – the death rate started with 70%, was first reduced to 50 % and then to 40 % – they all, including the Peruvian ones were released in Colombia. Another problem was that they released groups as big as 278, within a 500 meter distance. This led to an overpopulation of a species which did not belong there. Further: to release them is both illegal and unethical. Many of those who were released from the laboratory died from pneumonia and septicemia which is a serious, life-threatening infection. So when they were released, the whole population could have been infected, including the indigenous [human] communities. (Interview, 2014)

Furthermore, in the attempt to catch the primates, the hunters would cut down the trees surrounding the one in which the animals were and, as a consequence, primate hunting also leads to the deforestation and destruction of ecosystems. Despite this, Patarroyo's research methods were not regarded as illegal, and no one has been convicted for this crime which is a breach of the CITES convention to which Colombia is party. The only consequence was that the permission to continue the trafficking and further exploit the primates was revoked.

It is interesting that although the verdict does not explicitly state that one reason for permission being revoked was concern for animal rights, the situation of the primates is mentioned from the *obiter dicta* of the ruling:

[...] It is the opinion of the Court, (and as stated in paragraph c) of Article 4 of Act 472 of 1998), that there is expressed recognition by the legislature to attribute autonomous rights for animals and plants at national territory. This intent is unquestionable in the new rules contained in the law 1638

of 2013, which prohibits the use of wild animals in circuses and shows; the legislature assigned rights to other living beings which differs from human rights, but include the rights to not be abused and not [be forced to] live under precarious conditions. (author's translation)

In the *ratio decidendi*, it is stated that the omission in public administration breached both collective human rights and the rights of the animals used in the research. Nevertheless, as I previously pointed out, the Colombian court makes it clear that it is not possible to acknowledge full *dignity* to animals *and* plants (thus equalizing sentient beings with plants), because that would prevent human beings from using animals for their own survival, for example, in the search for medicines that could cure fatal diseases which threaten public health. Furthermore, it states that acknowledging full dignity to animals would prevent the possibility of domesticating animals, which entails living with them in a way that deprives them full freedom but which is necessary for the *human* good, in both work and recreation. However, it is stated that this does not constitute or reflect the negation of an animal's existence with a minimum of rights which protects them from indiscriminate acts by humans.

It is possible that this ruling may be introducing a new, less anthropocentric perspective into Colombian law, although the case is not yet concluded; Patarroyo recently filed a lawsuit against the ruling that revoked his permits. It is interesting to note that this ruling took place in South America, where Ecuador and then Bolivia accorded rights to *Pachamama*, 'Mother Nature' in their constitutions (Zafaroni, 2013).

#### *Case 2: Norway. Two examples*

The Norwegian state is the agent behind most of the killing of large predators, or *theriocides*, to use Piers Beirne's (2014) term for killing animals. So far this year (as of May 2014), nine wolves and five bears have been authorized to be killed by the state, primarily as a measure to prevent them from committing *future* damage to sheep and reindeer owned by farmers. The entire wolf population in Norway is estimated at between 30 and 35 wolves and around 130 bears, and both species are endangered in Norway. The wolf is critically endangered, which is also the case for wolverine, with a population of about 350 individuals. Despite being listed as critically endangered, during the last year 100 wolverines were deliberately killed and in the spring, the state authorized wolverines to be killed by taking mothers and pups from their dens. Lynx are vulnerable with a population of around 350 individuals, yet licensed hunts are still permitted and 70 were killed this year from hunting. These four species are protected under the Bern Convention and the Norwegian Wildlife Law.



The following cases involve the verdicts I have studied to determine how far the Norwegian Animal Welfare Act stretches in regard to illegal predator theriocide and abuse.

### *Example one*

In the first case [TNOST 2010–57617],<sup>3</sup> the offender was convicted with a 36-day suspended prison sentence, as well as a fine of 7000 NOK, the confiscation of the offender's rifle, and the withdrawal of the offender's hunting rights for two years for the crime of, under aggravating circumstances, having chased, caught, killed, or injured protected wildlife. This conviction was made as a breach of the Wildlife law, but the offender was also convicted for a breach of the Animal Welfare Act. He committed these crimes on two occasions.

#### *A. Bear theriocide*

On 20 June, 2009, at 11.10 p.m., the offender chased a bear with his dog and then shot the bear. The offender was informed that a bear was seen near his sheep. He went to the described location and let his dog out (which was trained to pursue bears) and followed the dog. The bear, he claimed, was 140 meters from the enclosure with six or seven of his sheep. The offender had a rifle in his car because, in the two preceding days, he had been hunting a wolf on a licensed hunt. He brought the same rifle when he went looking for the bear. When he located the bear, he went down on his knee and shot and injured the bear. The dog pursued and chased the bear down towards a lake. They could hear the bear growl and then saw the bear in the lake. The offender returned to his car and drove down to the lake and fired two more shots at the swimming bear. After the first shot, the bear turned and swam towards the shore and towards his dog, but after the second shot, apparently through his head, the bear went under the surface and died. The bear, it is stated in the verdict, was a young wandering male and not one of the “most protectable individuals. This is the kind of animal it is easiest to get permission to kill” (p. 6 of the verdict, where it is also stated that the bear was approaching the offender's sheep and the man claimed self-defence—an argument that was *not* accepted by the court).

By the same token, the offender's misjudgement of the situation was not regarded as severe negligence [*grov uaktsomhet*]. As such, the court determined that there were no aggravating circumstances. The court found it likely that the bear was scared by the dog and the car and would have withdrawn to the forest rather than attacking the sheep. Furthermore, the court stated in its verdict that the offender,

as a member of the predator hunting team of the local community and as member of the wildlife committee [*Kommunal viltnevd*], had an interest in and experience with hunting and therefore special understanding of the rules. Therefore, he was found to be punishable for negligence (although, as noted above, not for severe negligence). The verdict states that the offender, who previously had documented on video how easy it is to scare bears by making noise, should have known that the bear would run away if he had fired into the air or if he had shouted or clapped his hands, yet he tried none of these alternatives.

### *B. Chasing a pack of wolves with a car*

During January or February 2009, the offender pursued a pack of four wolves with his car along a road in Rendalen. At times, he drove so close to them that the wolves could not be seen from the front seat from where he was filming the wolves while pursuing them. The wolves escaped by running off the road. The offender stopped the car and one of the wolves who was not able to keep up with the rest of the pack returned to the road upon which the offender continued the chase it with the car, so close to the wolf, in fact, that he nearly drove over him/her. The court found this constituted “injuring” wolves and possibly “life threatening animal abuse” and thus found the offender guilty of grossly negligent animal abuse and a breach of the Animal welfare act § 3: “Animals have intrinsic value independent of the use value they may have for humans. Animals shall be treated well and not subjected to unnecessary strain and stress.” An expert witness experienced in sedating predators stated in court that when it comes to pursuing wolves with a helicopter, a wolf can suffer lasting injury if he/she is chased for more than three minutes.

### *Example two*

The second case [LE-2004–1152, HR-2005–162-A- Rt-2005–76] concerns wolverine theriocide: in the first court instance, the offenders were acquitted. In the second instance, all four offenders received a thirty-day suspended prison sentence, were deprived of hunting rights for two years, and had their rifles and snow scooters confiscated. The verdict at the Supreme Court: all received a twenty-one day prison sentence and were deprived of hunting rights for two years.

The four men killed a wolverine in his den. They saw his tracks in the snow, followed them with a snow scooter and found the den. They dug him out and shot him when he came out as he lost his cover. The theriociders claimed emergency rights, but this defence was rejected by the court. The court stated the offenders had plenty of time to consider the situation, both when they discovered the tracks

and when they found the den. They had a mobile phone and could have contacted the wildlife authorities. Further, it was not an acute situation as there were no sheep grazing. The Chief Justice found there were very aggravating circumstances, an argument not accepted by the majority of the lay and professional judges in court. They argued that the wolverine was killed with the same methods usually applied by the state; what was aggravating was only the vulnerability of the species.

However, the court emphasized when setting the punishment that although the wolverine is rare, it is not threatened or vulnerable. The offenders had a licence to kill the wolverine a couple of months earlier but had failed to kill him during that occasion. They also tried to hide the crime by dumping the dead body in a lake. The men owned sheep and previously sent their sheep to the mountains to graze. In 2001, a wolverine appeared and started taking sheep. The farmers were sad and frustrated by witnessing the suffering of the lambs who, on occasion, were found torn and mutilated, but not dead. The state's animal welfare commission in the district (Dyvernsnemda) had previously stated that to protect the sheep, they could not continue to graze in the mountains, thus creating problems for the farmers who were in danger of losing their grazing land. It is stated in *Lagmannsretten* in favour of the offenders that: "It has been a central element in all husbandry to protect livestock against predators as long as livestock has been held" (p. 8). The offenders had good reason to worry about wolverine attacks and the court accepted this rationale.

The court further opined that prison sentences must be applied for killing protected predators, because illegal hunting makes the wildlife authorities' management of predators difficult. Prison sentences should be applied because there are persons who disagree with the authorities in protecting predators, and in addition, Norway has international obligations to protect certain species and no ameliorating circumstances could alter this. The theriociders acted deliberately and determinedly against authorities. As noted above, the verdict in the second instance entailed a 30-day suspended prison sentence for all four offenders, withdrawal of hunting rights for two years, and the confiscation of rifles and a snow scooter. In the appeal case in the Supreme Court, however, all offenders were convicted with unsuspended prison sentences for 21 days. This verdict was unanimous among the five judges of the Supreme Court.

### *Discussion of Francione's argument in relation to my own data*

In Colombia, primates are regarded as state property and, consequently, it is the state that gives permission to abduct the animals to be used in experiments, regardless of the animals' interests in continuing their life in freedom. In this sense,

Colombia adheres to the *logic* of the CITES convention, but in this case, there were also evident breaches of the convention because the species was driven to extinction in Colombia and animals were also being abducted from Peru, Brazil and Boliva without the required permission. However, humans' interest in a possible vaccine, which could be the outcome of the experiments, far outweighed the interests of the victims of trafficking and experimentation in the view of the Colombian authorities.<sup>4</sup>

When it states in the Colombian ruling that the same dignity afforded to humans cannot be assigned to animals and plants, in addition to equalizing plants and animals, they firmly establish that animals cannot have rights. But no one can have dignity without rights. Being deprived of rights is *per se* to be undignified. Being considered undignified is what invites abuse and exploitation, because lack of dignity can be a justification for belittling and contempt.

The first Norwegian case contains a conflict between the offender and the bear and wolves because the victims' species are crucial. It is likely the offender's ownership of sheep further accentuated the underlying conflict because of his assumption that he and his victims, especially the bear, would share interest in killing the sheep. The theriocider was an experienced hunter who knew a lot about the behaviour of bears. This raises the question of whether he actually sought to protect the sheep. His ownership of sheep could have simply been a pretext for doing what he had tried to do with impunity the day before – kill a critically endangered wolf – or what he had done habitually – kill elk and other unprotected animal species. *It is clear in the verdict that killing animals is an acceptable practice per se, but that the offender killed under the wrong circumstances.* The court found that the defendant's status as a hunter meant that he was likely aware of what these circumstances are.

The court emphasized the offender's lack of empathy in case 10: "That the accused continued to pursue the (fourth) wolf after her return to the road had no purpose according to the explanation of the accused, and is therefore particularly bad". It is interesting then, that even though the court found the abuse served no purpose, it was characterized as severely *negligent* abuse rather than *deliberate* abuse.

Unless an act or omission is proscribed by law, courts do not consider animal rights (e.g. Benton, 1998; Pellow, 2013) or species justice (White, 2013, pp. 111–143) perspectives. This is also the case in the Norwegian verdicts. An animal rights or species justice perspective would have found the killing of a female bear with three cubs unacceptable, which, for example, was the issue in another case.

The wolverine case exemplifies the cruelty that humans can exhibit towards nonhuman animals. In this case, the offenders killed an animal who could not escape and with no immediate actions from his side that justified the attacks. The wolverine, despite being suspected of having previously killed sheep, was in his

den at the time of the theriocide. He was no threat to neither humans nor sheep, yet was awakened and killed in cold blood. In this case, these theriociders were motivated by their purported desire to protect their sheep, claiming they killed in an emergency. They had previously been licensed to kill him, but failed. Nevertheless, they interpreted the initial license to kill the wolf as an open-ended invitation to do so. In their minds, it was a precautionary act and probably also a vindictive one. Neither the offenders nor the court pay attention to the individual victim: the wolverine's loss of life is not mentioned, only international obligations to protect endangered species. In the first verdict of this case, the court states that the method of theriocide did not differ from that applied by the authorities when killing wolverines, thereby suggesting that the killings are acceptable; it was only a matter of bad timing since the license to kill had expired.

In the Norwegian cases, as in Colombia, the animals are thus regarded as state property even though they are freely born or perhaps even because of that, they are attributed value foremost because of their species affiliation and their value for biodiversity. They have no individual rights to life and their interests are valued by the courts only in terms of the value these individuals have for the survival of the species, but even when the species are in danger, the interests of the species are subjugated to the interests of the farmers or to humans more generally.

In the Norwegian verdicts, I find that the animal welfare act can come into play but will be outweighed by the Wildlife Law or the Biodiversity Law which concern rules for killing animals and for protecting biodiversity more than the individuals. These laws are used in all verdicts, and only in two cases is the Animal Welfare Act mentioned, but it is stated that as the killing methods used are the same as those applied by the state in legal killings, the animals do not suffer. Further, when the species involved is only vulnerable and not yet critically endangered, the crimes are regarded as far less severe. This is precisely one of Francione's points: that the animals' interest in a pursued life is not at all considered. It must also be noted that, for example, the state kills wolves and bears by using helicopters and this must cause added stress to the animals, so the foundation for comparison is rather odd, as it entails that as long as these methods are accepted by the state, they are not abusive.

In the case of the Norwegian big predators, the reason for the human-animal conflict is again humans' consumption of meat. If humans did not hunt for meat and recreation, and if they did not keep sheep and reindeer to kill and eat them, there would not be a human-predator conflict, nor a human-sheep conflict consisting of human interests pitted against the sheep and reindeer's interest in living unharmed. Therefore, the judicial system regards freely born animals as *nature*, not individuals; they are *mass*, wildlife, as the term wildlife emphasizes. This position, which is reflected in both the Colombian and the Norwegian courts, is counter to both individual species and ecological justice (White, 2013).

### *Conclusion: or, how do we proceed from here?*

Francione argues that if we stopped breeding domesticated animals, we would avoid the overwhelming number of conflicts that trouble those who advance the animal welfare position. In regards to my own material, I also believe more conflicts could be avoided. Firstly, it is the human practice of breeding sheep for meat and releasing them into nature where they are natural prey for predators which cause the conflict between farmers and predators in Norway. Furthermore, it is the human practice of hunting for meat which accentuates this conflict because the same farmers are often hunters and, therefore, they compete with the predators not only in regard to domesticated prey, but also wild prey, such as elk, hare, etc. This competition is one the predators in Norway are doomed to lose.

If the trade in freely born animals was banned rather than regulated, there would be no doubt that all abduction (Sollund, 2011) and all killing of animals in nature to use them for whatever purpose, whether dead or alive, would be criminalized. Each animal would be accorded the same rights independently of how many remained of his/her species, as is the case with humans.

So the consequence would be that an important part of bringing the case against animal abuse and exploitation forward is rights-based rather than welfare-based legislation. Animals must be accorded individual rights, as beings with interests and intrinsic value (Regan, 1999). However, as discussed by Benton (1998), there is no guarantee that attributing rights to animals will prevent abuse, no more than the Human Rights Convention has succeeded in preventing human rights abuses. So the question remains: how do we get there?

The welfare paradigm is attractive to many because it allows people to claim that they care about animals while continuing to exploit them, for example, by only buying organic eggs and meat. The animal rights position is a harder one to sell to a larger audience because it means they must make sacrifices and act in opposition to doxa, i.e. in opposition to taken for granted practices with tremendously broad cultural acceptance and traditions worldwide.

Children are socialized early to use animals in instrumental ways, whether as part of education (Pedersen, 2008) or as food, and producing and establishing practices counter to doxa requires strength, will, encouragement, knowledge, and not least, empathy and care (Donovan and Adams, 1995).

Most people don't read philosophical arguments; the greatest consumers of animal products do not bother to read them or to get to know the consequences of their practices. The question remains: how should we proceed to convince the masses to abstain from the "good" they find meat eating and animal exploitation to provide, when they think they get nothing in return? For example, even though meat is not good for them and even though meat production entails deforestation

and global warming (indirectly harming them now and in the future), such consequences are hard to grasp for most people. In addition, meat consumption and other animal exploitation, e.g. pharmaceutical experiments, have strong political support and strong corporate interests in continued exploitation.

Also, a problem exists in regard to the social and physical distance between people and the animals they consume in the consumers' denial to actually see the animals' suffering because they want to protect themselves from a reality they would find disturbing.

Alternatively, to expose people to animal suffering is also not necessarily a good solution because it may increase people's efforts to avoid painful images and knowledge their own complicity in such harmful cases (Cohen, 2001). Further, corporate interests in animal exploitation do not only have the means to prosecute protesters in silence protest, e.g. in animal experimentation (Aaltola, 2012; Ellefsen, 2012), they also now have the justification to "welfare" this exploitation (Svärd, 2008, 2012) in regard to the production of meat, for example, and thus make it acceptable even to those who, in their hearts, object to harm. Also, state and corporate interests entice people to increase their meat consumption through media campaigns.

Creating and increasing awareness about animals, e.g. by publishing facts about the conditions under which they are forced to live and die, e.g. in research laboratories, fur and factory farming, by consistently focusing on human and non-human animals' shared interest in avoiding pain, supported by the knowledge of how animals live and think and their capabilities in general may help reduce the gap between ourselves and other animals which, directed by religious, cartesian and cultural ideas, has prevailed for so long.

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### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Many rightly argue (e.g. Beirne, 1999, 2007; Cazaux, 1999) against using the word “animal” because it contrasts humans to other animals, implying that humans are not animals and also that “animals” is one category rather than representing a multitude of species. Using terms like “nonhuman animals” and “animals other than humans” does not really solve the problem because humans remain the yardstick and such terms conceal the diversity within the animal species of which the human category is only one. For simplicity, I use the term in this paper, for which I apologize.
- <sup>2</sup> The concept of “wildlife” is another example of alienating language contributing to a physical and social gap between human and nonhuman animals. The term implies that nonhuman animals are lumped into the same category as plants; they are “part of” nature, rather than living in it, and they are a “mass” rather than individuals. Further, the term “wild” further implies that they are uncivilized and unpredictable in contrast to the “domesticated” nonhuman animals under human control/captivity and, of course, in contrast to humans.
- <sup>3</sup> This and the following case are also used in a chapter I wrote in a book under publication: *Environmental Crime and Social Conflict: Contemporary and Emerging Issues*, edited by Avi Brisman, Nigel South and Rob White.
- <sup>4</sup> This case is not concluded. Patarroyo has protested against the ruling which revoked his permission to traffic and use the primates in Colombia, and a lawsuit will also be raised against Patarroyo from another person who supports the interests of the primates.



# DEAR GENERAL JOHN J. PERSHING

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EvaMarie Lindahl

*A letter from the war pigeon Cher Ami to the general who gave her the Croix de Guerre medal, read at the Pufendorf Institute, May 25th 2014.*

Dear General John J. Pershing,

I am writing this letter to you since I feel the need to tell my own story. Even though you heard it before. Even though you know what happened that day in October 1918, in the Argonne forest, where you claim that I became a hero. I need to be the one telling it to you and you need to be the one who listens. You see General, you all seemed to believe that my life was for you to decide. That I was just like a version of the radio. But I breathe. My heart beats. The metal carrier around my leg feels cold at night and warm during the day. I get scared. I get stressed. I feel comfort in the sun and happiness when dipping my head in the water. No machine can feel what I feel. I have agency. I have life. Now listen to my witness.

I was taken across the English Channel into France at the time when the bars on the cages start to feel damp in the evening and the leaves on the trees feel rough and change colour. Three others inhabited my cage, and there were at least 20 cages on the truck that carried us. For each passing day, we moved further and further away from the ocean.

Once a day, an army messenger came to take three or four of us out on a mission. Some days, they all came flying back. Some days only one or two returned. Those who returned came tired, hungry and thirsty but had to wait while being checked for carried messages before given water and corn.

The day before I became a hero had been long with extensive travel, trapped in a cage with two others like me. Our cage was fastened on the back of a man and carried through the landscape, first at a slow and soothing pace, but later in a running, desperate and frightened manner. You see, General, to be in a cage on the back of a man while he is running for his life is a disorienting experience. You are both on the ground and in the air but without the possibility to use your

wings. It is chaos, and there is no way to control your movement. You truly need to fight for the grip of your feet and make sure your wings don't get hurt. It is an exhausting job and it kept on until we reached the forest.

General, the following year you gave me a medal of honour, the French War Cross with an American Oak Leaf Cluster, for my bravery. But I wasn't brave. I was desperate. The terror that I encountered during these two days, before I was back in the nest drinking water once again, was based on what you decided for me to do. Can one truly be brave if one is forced? Can one truly be brave if all one does is based on the will to survive? If I am to be honest, risking to disappoint the kids reading children's books about me and humans seeing me as someone who loves and cares for them, as someone willing to sacrifice their life for them, as someone choosing sides in the war, the only one I cared for was me. I didn't care about the men in the damp woods. I cared about flying home. Yes, the consequence of this desire, together with my high speed and my ability to endure pain, was that 194 men in the 77th battalion weren't killed. And yes, that was great, of course. But not once throughout this ordeal was I allowed to make a decision of my own.

When entering the forest there was silence. Light came flickering through the cage while travelling further into the smell of moss and water. After a while there was once again sunlight and the sound of men. I tried to peek through the holes of the cage, making sense of the environment.

Suddenly, the cage was opened and a hand reached down for us. It picked one of us but not me. Finally we were going to be released from this cage and fly to the nest where food and firm ground awaited us. I listened carefully to try to understand what was happening. First there was noise from the humans, their chatter, then there was silence, flapping noise from wings meeting the air, silence again, then loud metallic sounds, screams and cries.

Time passed, it became dark and light again. I tried to sleep but was woken through out the night by scattered metallic bangs. When the sun rose, there was a sudden explosion and a wind that knocked the cage over. We bumped into each other and tried to keep our balance without losing feathers. I could hear screams and moaning after the bang, and the cage was on the grass for a long time. It felt cool and comforting being in contact with a soft surface even though I could only feel it through the holes in the walls that had now become floor.

After a while our cage was lifted from the ground and a different hand reached down for us. I was suddenly alone. I could once again hear the sound of wings. Immediately there was a loud bang, some kind of shrieking sound and a very short pause, like a silent beat of the heart. Then another blast, and my cage was once again knocked over. All I wanted now was to be released, to get away, to fly into the blue sky and away. Instead there was a pull and someone ran into the shade and into the woods with me in the cage.

While hiding in the woods, a hand came down and pulled me out of the cage. I tried to get free but there was no way to fight the human and his grip on me. He put a message in the metal carrier strapped to my foot, and he threw me up into the air. Everything was chaos. It felt as if my wings were shorter than normal, the air was thick and dense, and it was hard to see. I crashed into a tree, gripped my feet and claws around a branch and sat there feeling my heart beat, gathering my bearings. But I couldn't stay, the humans had noticed me sitting in the tree and started to throw things at me. I had to take off. I flew as high up in the sky as I could manage and started circling to understand where I was and where I was going. The wind under my wings, the sun in the sky, suddenly I just knew where I had to go. Where the nest was placed. I felt comforted, all I had to do now was to fly! But suddenly I was surrounded by swishing sounds and things flying by everywhere and then there was pain, unbearable pain. I lost control over my body and quickly fell down into the trees again, what had just happened?

General, I didn't understand it then but I had of course been hit by bullets. I had a hole in my chest, one of my feet was hanging by a tendon and I lost sight in one eye. This was explained to me during the ceremony where I was given a medal for bravery. I managed to fly the entire way back to my nest and almost died there, on the floor. Perhaps I should be thankful for the operations and the wooden leg that the men carved for me, that they kept me alive. But if the bullet had hit the other leg and the message I carried had been lost, I do not think you would have tried with such an effort to save my life. You yourself wouldn't have personally sent me off on a first class travel back to America, and I wouldn't have stayed alive another year. My life depended on that message, and my life was destroyed because of that message.

Sincerely, the name that you have given me, Cher Ami



# THE LIFE AND DEATH OF BEES IN AN EMERGING KNOWLEDGE FOR SUSTAINABILITY

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Elsa Coimbra

## *I Introduction*

The following text is based on research underway about the life and death of the honey-bee understood within the dynamic wholeness of Earth's human-environmental relationship. In this research I set out to understand the significance of the threats affecting the honey-bee, and which are becoming apparent through the unusual and sometimes drastic death rates of bee colonies (Potts et al., 2010; William, 2010).

Science points to the demise of the honey bee as one instance of a larger picture, in which fellow insect pollinators are reported to be in decline in many regions of the world (Potts et al., 2010; Vanbergen, 2013). It has been estimated that 87.5% of flowering plants are pollinated by animals. This covers both crop and wild plants, and points to the crucial importance of bees – as one of the chief global pollinators – to the maintenance of food production and wild plant ecosystems (Ollerton, 2011). Not surprisingly, the past decade has seen a considerable amount of research conducted on the collapse of bee colonies. Despite a variety of inquiries, unanswered questions and blank spaces, scientists agree that the syndrome has a *multifactorial* nature and *anthropogenic* origin.

My research also points to a maze of multi-dimensional aspects that compose a remarkably complex tapestry. Its strands involve not only the ecological intricacies of the biosphere, of which bees are fundamental attendants, but also the impact of a plethora of human ideas and practices. These encompass conservation policies and regulations, apiculture, agro-chemical corporative manoeuvres and scientific models of understanding the natural world. This article mainly addresses the latter, through a critical review of scientific knowledge concerning and affecting bees.

In nature conservation, scientific knowledge plays a fundamental role in defining what the problems are, as well as their scale and their degree of urgency. The case of the honey-bee is no exception. Science holds the greatest legitimacy in informing policy making, ranging from regulatory frameworks to the implemen-

tation of protective measures. For example, the European Commission's recent attempt to remove certain pesticides from the market was based on large amounts of scientific research demonstrating their negative impact on the honey-bee (CFP, 2009; EFSA, 2013; UNEP, 2010). Scientific research also has a large influence on modern apiculture: 'good' beekeeping practices and technologies get promoted through different venues, and beekeepers are increasingly dependent on pharmaceutical products to ensure the livelihood of their colonies.

The collapse of bees seems to have become a vortex around which a series of key pressure factors revolve. One of the main factors is land-use intensification, which includes urbanization and increasing agricultural intensification. This fragments and destroys many natural habitats that bees, like other pollinators, rely on for their livelihood (Garibaldi et al., 2011). Agricultural intensification often leads to the use of pesticides that harm bees. In addition to the use of pesticides, various modern beekeeping practices cause stress and malnutrition. For example, continually relocating beehives and the increasing use of sugar, instead of honey, to feed colonies. Other stressors include the practice of selective breeding with its related problematic consequences (Tarpy, 2003; Meixner et al., 2010). There is also the rampant pressure produced by pathogens, such as the notorious parasitic mite *Varroa destructor*. As a consequence of the ubiquitous presence of pathogens, beekeepers often resort to chemotherapy (Johnson et al., 2009). Managed honeybees are thus chronically exposed to a cocktail of different chemicals that can interact, sometimes synergistically, with detrimental effects on their behaviour, immunology and ultimate survival (Vanberg, 2013).

Arguably, the death of bees is a fundamentally radical case for Nature Conservation. Firstly, on account of its impacts on the biophysical level. Because the life of bees provides the foundation for a most intricate web of relations in the planet, the risk of their demise points to a most colossal collapse. Secondly, because solutions involve seeing the complexity of a much larger set of human-environmental relations, and involve changes in deeply entrenched institutions and their functions.

The most radical problems naturally call for far-reaching answers, which I argue require moving beyond the death of bees as a collective bio-physical threat to an understanding of the life of Bees as a *common good*. This change presupposes a considerable paradigmatic leap in the way science and knowledge is used in the pursuit of sustainability. The challenge of this paradigm shift lies at the core of effective Nature Conservation and its failure to respond to the situation at hand. In the next section I address some of the key challenges of this transition. In the last section I argue for a new model and praxis that recognizes that the complexity and urgency posed by the fate of bees demands an integration of science and social transformation.



## *II Challenges of transition*

### *Taking on board the human dimension*

The key pressure factors identified in relation to the collapse of bees, such as land-use intensification or particular models of agriculture, point to multiple human-environmental aspects, thus naturally calling for interdisciplinary approaches. Nevertheless, an overview of research reveals that the understanding of the collapse, like other problems in environment and nature conservation, is largely dominated by the natural sciences and STEM fields of research.<sup>1</sup> However, the question remains whether it is possible to understand the collapse outside of its actual social fabric and bypass sourcing its anthropogenic roots.

In effect, the death of bees is immensely and unavoidably political. One has only to place research developed on bee collapse in its social context, and consider the thought-provoking fact that pesticides, the most researched and ‘objectively’ established factor of risk is also one of the most energetically refuted. The solidity of such findings informed the recent restriction adopted by the Commission, but this political decision was soon to be counteracted by two large companies with agribusiness interests, Syngenta and Bayer, who have sued the EU.<sup>2</sup>

These legal actions, in turn, have to resort to scientific data that sheds doubt on previous research. Doubt, instrumental to science’s method, can also become a powerful weapon. Anyone who has followed the Climate Change saga may well find in this new collapse saga remarkable similarities.

Furthermore, the production of knowledge on the life and death of bees is no longer confined to public bodies. Nowadays, large corporations like Monsanto are buying entire research institutions, promoting networking events, and forming new influential bodies, such as the Honey Bee Advisory Council, an alliance comprised of Monsanto executives, researchers and beekeepers.<sup>3</sup>

These developments eloquently reveal how the death of bees can only be fully understood and addressed in the meeting of science, politics, and corporate economic power.

A transition towards a science for sustainability supposes not so much taking on board the human dimension – because it was never absent in the first place – but promoting thorough awareness and reflexivity amongst researchers in regard to mutual influences and potential impacts of such triangulation.

### *Science in culture*

Research announces the ecological value of bees as veritable pillars of biodiversity. However, very often this ecological, instrumental value, is translated into a social value with apparent naïveté as to its canons and potential consequences. Reports,

particularly those with outreach ambitions into civil society, frequently convey information in this fashion:

it is estimated that 76% of the food production in the EU is dependent on the pollination of plants by bees, the economic value of which is estimated at EU 15 billion per year (...) in the event of a marked intensification of this trend, farmers in the EU, may have to resort to humanassisted pollination, which would entail a twofold increase in expenditure on pollination (Tabajdi, 2011).

The life of bees and its value is consequently being associated with food *production*, and its corresponding monetary value. Indeed, this translation accurately expresses a powerful trend in the management of Nature Conservation known as Ecosystem Services.

Given the social legitimacy of science in describing the world ‘*as it is*’, the idea of anchoring the life of bees in its instrumental value – widespread in the media and used as the main rationale by policy makers – runs the risk of becoming ‘natural’ and of hiding the fact that it carries an ideological assertion.

When instrumentality is the main operative standpoint of value, solutions and problems become strangely similar. At present, laboratories in Europe are dedicated to reducing potential sources of honey contamination caused by both foraging contaminated nectar and chemotherapy of honey-bee diseases. One of the strategies to address these problems involves genetic manipulation, that is, selecting and breeding “disease resistant stock”. This is made possible “because the complete honey-bee genome (*Apis mellifera*) has become available, establishing this *economically and ecologically essential organism as a model system for genomic research*” (my italics).<sup>4</sup> This solution poses two problems. One expresses the typical environmental ‘technofix’ whereby a counter-technology is developed to oppose and neutralize the negative effects created by other technologies. In such an approach the habitual pattern is to overlook the unintended consequences, in this case, of genetic manipulations which are eloquently captured in the second law of thermodynamics: “Each technology always creates a temporary island of order at the expense of greater disorder in the surroundings” (Huesemann and Huesemann, 2011, p. 19). Such fixes commonly bypass the dire need for “a conscious effort to direct technological innovation toward the achievement of clearly defined societal goals that reflect shared values” (Huesemann and Huesemann, 2011, p. 116).

The second problem with the solution relates to its unexamined ideological nature. Framing the existence of bees as producers of ecological services is tacitly in line with the representation of the biophysical world as reservoirs and stocks of ‘capital’ and therefore to be part of the market.

Once particular conditions of production are colonized in this way, it becomes possible to justify their management by economic rationale. That is, environmental degradation and resource exhaustion are being seen as management problems rather than a civilization crisis. Such narratives steers us away from the difficult politics of solving structural inequalities and differentiated interests, in favour of “technomanagerialist remedies, preferred (and constituted) by elite, scientists and bureaucrats” (Goldman and Schurman, 2000, p. 567). In sum, the prospects of such solutions are set within the commodification of nature in which species become alienable market goods, a solution that seems to be in collusion with the very problem to start with (Kosoya and Corbera, 2010).

A transition is underway insofar as there are signs of awareness of the serious consequences of what could be called an epistemological short-sightedness. This awareness comes from different sources (Suryanarayanan and Kleinman, 2012; Matthews, 2010) including the most reflexive quarters of those advocating ‘economic values of ecosystem services’ (Kumar, 2012). A cultural analysis of science stresses the fact that all human understandings of nature are crucially mediated by social and cultural practices, assumptions, and belief systems. Moreover, such understandings have different impacts and consequences in our relationship with other beings, such as bees. Therefore, there is a need to question science on account of its virtually invisible cultural constructions. “The point of such an interrogation is not to debunk scientific knowledge, but rather to expose its unspoken social and moral commitments” (Wynne, 1994, p. 188). Yet, hardly any such self-reflexivity transpires in mainstream research dedicated to the collapse of the honey-bee. Moreover, the exceptions to this trend seem to play a negligible role in informing nature conservation management.

### *Responding to uncertainty and the unknown*

*Uncertainty* is commonly identified as one of the central aspects of human-environmental systems and indeed comes as one of the main aspects that research on bee collapse refers to. As we meet some of its empirical instances, it becomes apparent that the way we respond to uncertainty and the unknown expresses different modalities of knowing which in turn suggest different ways of relating to nature.

Concerning the collapse of colonies, uncertainty starts with the very definition and criteria of what constitutes the problem, as “there are many inconsistencies in the ways in which ‘colony losses’ are defined” (Hendrikx, 2009). From here on, uncertainty spreads to any “exact reasons” that link to recent increases in bee mortality (Tabajdi, 2011).

The importance of defining the problem is worth considering. Here Einstein's famous quote gives us the clue when he reportedly stated that if he had an hour to solve a problem, and his life depended on the solution, he would spend the first 55 minutes determining the proper question to ask.

In social sciences, the importance of such procedure has been identified as framing, here understood as the interpretation process through which individuals, groups, and societies organize, perceive, and communicate about reality.

It is clear, therefore, that in a science for sustainability, where research aims to answer not only biophysical but social and political relevant matters, there is the need to *share* and agree on how problems are framed. This is crucial, as it influences the way in which research will be carried out and communicated, as well as its potential outputs to be used in decision-making processes. Even though it is unusual for research questions to be framed jointly with other stakeholders, some transition steps are being taken in that direction in nature conservation (Young et al., 2014, p. 392). Given its novelty and uncertainty, the case of colony collapse seems most apt to be framed and reframed in and outside academia. For researchers this implies sharing not only their expertise but also their uncertainties in a wider pool of knowledge that includes a range of social actors, such as bee-keepers, farmers, activists and policy makers.

In understanding the demise of bees, uncertainty is also related to empirical intricacies, particularly the need to carry out an extensive and thorough monitoring of what is happening to the honey-bee as well as the need to further articulate this information. Yet – and taking the European case as an example – researchers report that there is a general weakness and high variability in most of the surveillance systems (Hendrikx et al., 2009; Potts et al., 2010) and therefore a lack of “reliable and comparable data on the number of hives, beekeepers and colony losses in the EU” (Tabajdi et al., 2011).

The challenges of uncertainty are being addressed by researchers, policy and funding bodies in different ways. One approach favours the daunting task of fostering converging platforms across Europe. This approach involves managing the immense plurality and fragmentation that is inherent in diverse socio-economic and political contexts in which the monitoring takes place. One example is the implementation of the pan-European epidemiological study on honeybee colony losses (EPILOBEE, 2012–13). Because the focus of such survey is centred in ecotoxicological aspects, there is nevertheless ample room for knowledge to be produced also on social, political and ethical variables. In addition, methodologies for building knowledge that include participation and communication should be encouraged, albeit being resource intensive and hard to impress upon funding bodies (Wals et al., 2009).

Other approaches seem to prefer bypassing the development of social-oriented approaches in favour of using technology as a panacea. Perhaps that is why in a FAO report concerning pollination services, the development of a new radical solution is expressed with such enthusiasm: that “DNA barcoding works for bees” and that “the long term objective of the barcoding enterprise is to have almost all organisms on the planet identifiable with a hand-held device that can generate a DNA sequence and communicate with a global database through wireless technology” (FAO n/d, p. 5).

This radical codification measure against the uncertain and the unknown brings the promise of shedding light on the obscurity of bee collapse by creating an understanding that thoroughly computes the life of bees. But will such sweeping profiling bring greater acumen in humans’ relationship to bees and ultimately nature conservation?

As we have seen, techno-fixes need careful reflection, not least because they spring from a tradition that has concocted objectification and control as key ingredients in addressing nature’s mysteries. Many argue, and convincingly so, that these ingredients mark the onset of modern science. Some of its illustrious fathers, such as Francis Bacon and René Descartes, made clear secular confessions concerning the intercourse between knowledge of nature and the will to power (Coimbra, 2006; Merchant, 2006).

Nonetheless, from the onset of modern science other voices sustained alternative viewpoints. Notably, within the Romantic Movement nature was a privileged field of knowledge precisely because it stood as the realm of reality less explicated by humans and as such it constituted the best choice for the Romantic experiment. Claiming that important facts of nature are lost when we reduce them to quantities and tangible surfaces, the Romantics were not so much nature poets as reality-experimenters, seeking to reconstitute the wholeness of knowledge by adding their experience of value as a feature of reality (Everden, 1993). Later, scientist and environmentalist Aldo Leopold also re-envisioned the enterprise of science through similar lines, by questioning the meaning of perception, of our experience of the ‘other,’ and of the dichotomy of ‘subjectivity’ and ‘objectivity’. This re-envisioning was carried through within the field of ethology by Jakob von Uexküll. He introduced the concept of *Umwelt*, proposing to understand how the world exists *for* the animal, given its own particular characteristics. Such perspective sustained that animals too live in meaningful worlds, and that meaning is bestowed by the organism-subject on its environment (Uexküll, 1957).

Contributions such as these have had a far-reaching influence on alternative worldviews in science and environmental philosophy and still hold great potential for future exploration (Bartof, 1996; Bateson, 1972; Næss, 1989).

Science demands to be understood as part of our history and cultural development. The commodification strategies and unrevised techno-solutions as answers to the death of bees are just new avatars of a form of knowledge that is still anchored in seeing nature and its subjects as objects to be probed and controlled, thus obstructing real innovation and new forms of relation that are conducive to sustainability.

In summary, an analysis of research on bees reveals the possibility of having a change which fittingly agrees with what has been called the transition from Mode 1 to Mode 2 Science (Nowotny et al., 2003). In the case of colony collapse, research seems mostly centred in the first modality, which emphasizes objective and value-free science, preference for technical solutions, and interrogation of conventionally defined natural ‘others’. A transition towards a second modality entails giving further steps into complexity’s pool of knowledge, by including the interaction between actors, structures and phenomena and the related convolution of managing human-environmental systems throughout uncertainty and epistemological creativity.

Given the dominant role of science in shaping nature conservation, it follows that different modalities of knowledge have a large impact in decision-making and ultimately on the life and death of bees. The actual transition from a traditional mode of science to a new paradigm seems at least as central to the fate of bees as producing more research *per se*. But the buzz in concepts like ‘interdisciplinarity’ or ‘participation’ should not blind us to the fact that such transition knows many covert obstacles, not least the inertia of cognitive conformism, particularly when this rests on extremely powerful and deeply seated institutions, and so business runs on, despite stern messages that business as usual is not an option.

### *III A way forward*

The death of bees is showing us that the mainstream model of Nature conservation is not endowed, conceptually and practically, to deal with the complexity and urgency it entails. The solutions it engenders – at their root – often seem to collude with the problems to begin with.

According to such a model, the demise of bees is often understood and communicated as an environmental risk with ominous economic consequences. The value of bees reaches civil society and the political sphere through ecological and economic rationality, wrapped in the fear of impending catastrophe. It seems indubitable to assume that the death of bees serves no interest on Earth and inver-

sely, that the flourishing of their life is to everyone's interest, and can therefore be understood as a common good. But what is common, and moreover good?

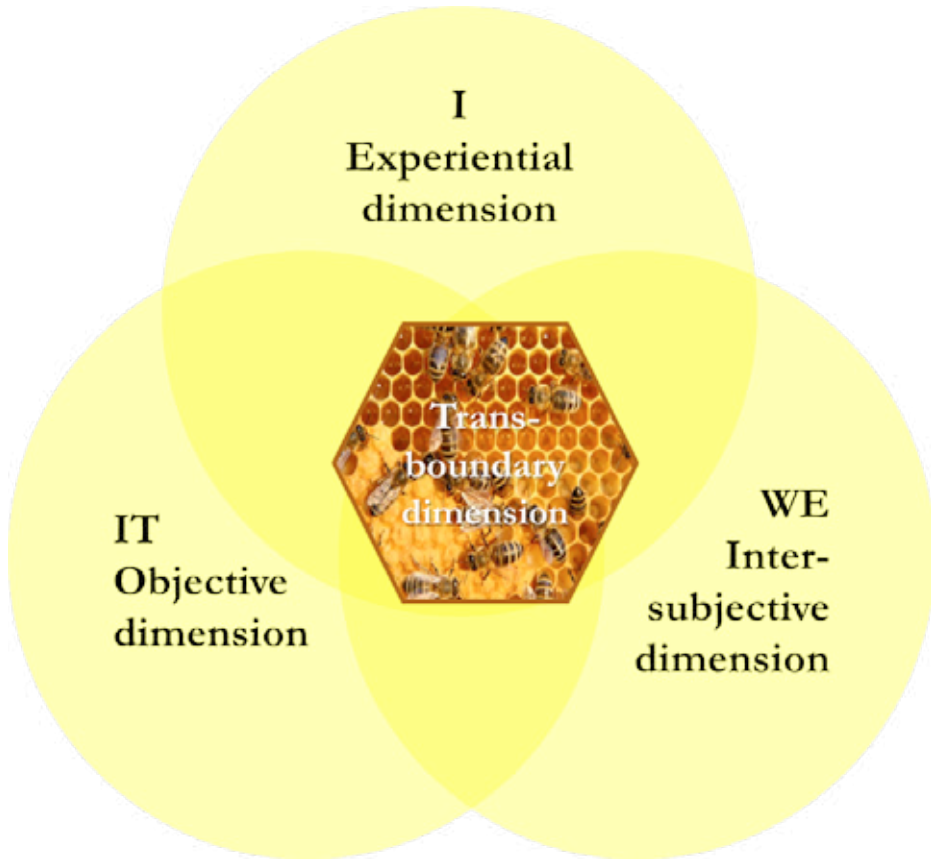
Scientific knowledge has been the main player in framing, if not a common good, a common ground, on the implicit account that the biophysical objective reality *is* human's common ground. However, as innumerable research has demonstrated, nature cannot *per se* be a common ground because it is inextricably woven into culture and therefore is socially constructed, immensely plural and unequal. It follows that, in defining a common good, it is insufficient if not misleading to reduce it to an ecological and economic rationality. Such rationality cannot cover the full spectrum of value and meaningfulness embodied in the life of bees and, moreover, it hasn't been able to ignite the transformations urgently needed in order to recognize it and uphold it.

I argue, therefore, that a science for sustainability has the capacity to unleash a much more powerful social *understanding* of bees as the common good of humanity together with a social *praxis* that effectively promotes sustainable change. But in order to carry this through, science needs to embody the change it preaches, which means first and foremost to question some of its deeply seated assumptions. Otherwise, it will continue to be more part of the malaise than of the cure.

One foundational assumption rests on the dichotomy separating human subjectivity and objective nature. This division is becoming increasingly problematic as anthropogenic causes are becoming evident and acute. Yet, as we have seen, the knowledge production most dominantly working through Nature conservation is still entrenched in the "great Western paradigm," formulated by Descartes and imposed by developments in European history since the 17th century (Nicolescu, 2010).

It is possible to overcome this dualism by purposely adopting a model that can reunite and integrate objective and subjective dimensions of knowledge and in which multiple factors – ecological, economic, political, and normative – find their indelible correspondence. We have already very valuable contributions in this direction, namely in the development of a science animated by 'strong trans-disciplinarity', such as proposed by Nicolescu (2010), Max-Neef (2005), and Morin (2005). Methodological contributions have been developed also in agreement with such epistemology and with effective capacity to create sustainable change (Scharmer et al., 2009; Wals et al., 2009).

The combination of these approaches, when applied to bee research, can be translated into a model and a method to address nature conservation. The model outlined here seeks to provide stakeholders with a learning, transformative process that is grounded in three main dimensions of knowledge – objective, inter-subjective and experiential (see figure below). Their intersection form a *trans-boundary* dimension where a pragmatic, real-life sustainability concern can be defined, de-



*Figure 1- Trans-boundary model*

signed and implemented. Simultaneously, it is also the podium from which the understanding of a common good may emerge.

The “IT” dimension, also known as 3<sup>rd</sup> person knowledge, is the sphere of data and analysis of objective and inter-objective realities. Here participants can identify relevant social and ecological variables correlating to bees, for example, in assessing the impact of GMOs or analysing EU conservation policies. So far, this has been the dominant, mostly exclusive sphere being developed in the case of bees.

The intersubjective sphere of “WE”, concerns relational knowledge. It comprises an understanding of cultural plurality and the learning of communication and collaboration skills in the context of nature conservation.

The challenge here is to understand that pesticides, monoculture or malnutrition are only the downstream symptom of bees’ main problems, which in fact are the lack of mutual understanding and mutual agreement in the human sphere



about how to proceed with these problems. ‘Saving bees’ thus depends primarily on human beings being able to reach mutual understanding and unforced agreement as to common ends. And that intersubjective accord occurs only in the cultural-communicative sphere.

Mutual understanding and agreement, however, can only be reached based on a moral, non-egocentric perspective concerning the global commons. And we reach such perspective through a challenging and laborious process of inner development that, even though it can be fostered by constructive communication, is ultimately an individual process.

Thus we reach the third, and less recognized sphere of knowledge, the experiential dimension of the self. So far, in nature conservation, the individual human being is considered solely as part of a social system. Here, however, the individual – not reducible to the collective – figures as a defining feature of this new model.

The experiential sphere or 1<sup>st</sup> person knowledge is the core field of transformative learning and includes all manner of actors understood as knowledge producers and potential change makers: the beekeeper, the farmer, the activist, the policy maker and the normal consumer, considering his/her daily choices of food and bee-related products.



*Photo: Courtesy of Phillip Cairns*

A transformative learning process is capable of promoting autonomous thinking functions (revision of belief systems), feeling functions (revision of attitudes towards self and others) and willing functions (behavioural changes in lifestyle). In other words, it fosters self-awareness and social intelligence in the way we relate to others, human and non-human, like bees.

Outside the mainstream, a long-standing tradition of anchoring self-reflexivity and experience exists in science, namely in the phenomenological tradition in which Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, a precursor, stated: “Insofar as he makes use of his healthy senses, man himself is the best and most exact scientific instrument possible” (Goethe, 2010). Grounded in the individual, the ‘delicate empiricism’ advocated by the Goethean science promotes a knowledge of relation, an intimacy that not only deepens intellectual understanding of animals and their life patterns but also strengthens empathy. This integration can have significant implications. Studies conducted on education based on such inclusive methods demonstrate that “students feel themselves to be more in harmony with the phenomenon, as if themselves were participating in it. This leads to an attitude towards nature more grounded in concern, respect and responsibility” (Bartof, 1996, p. 25).

A science for sustainability is one that is able to engender such connection, in which the subject (observer) becomes the object (observed) and the object (bees) become a subject in their own right, collapsing the standard scientific divide between them. Such connection fosters an observation with a feeling for qualities that are to be found in the natural world, and by which it remains alive, dynamic, undivided and profoundly meaningful to the self. In short, a science of the wholeness of nature.

Such experiential knowledge, anchored in oneself, reunites fragmentation of thinking, feeling and willing. For we know more deeply by understanding what we know, through feeling what we have understood, and by putting into practice what we have understood and felt. Once found in the individual, the common good ceases to be an abstraction. Nevertheless, to be able to reach it we must, in the words of Gandhi, be the change we want to see in the world. And that, despite the buzz in the word change, seems to be remarkably challenging.

Yet, such integration must produce other ways of understanding bees beyond seeing them as “economically and ecologically essential organisms”, and consequently lead to other solutions which are more coherent to finding the common good for humans and bees alike.

In nature conservation it is imperative that before deciding on strategies and management plans, social actors decide upstream what the common good is. From a methodological perspective, this implies building a common frame of reference amongst different parties and working to reach agreements on a set of

foundational values that are congruent with a desired direction of development in the thriving of the life of bees.

In practice, when bringing people together – like farmers, bee-keepers of different orientations, policy makers, and activists – we come across the immense *plurality* of values, attitudes and belief systems that humans hold in relation to nature. As can be noted by any seasoned observer, this plurality often leads to fragmentation of multiple identity groups with few perceived shared interests. On a larger scale, “the association of multicultural policies and environmental conservation has set the stage for competing ownership to natural resources and knowledge systems” (Kumar, 2012, p. 159). In working with diverse groups, we typically land in extremes; either difference turns into conflict and there is a sliding back, or people reach agreements and solutions that are shallow or mediocre.

However, there has been considerable development in the creation and implementation of new social technologies geared into sustainable transformative processes. Such technologies are able to work with plurality and dissonance as a way of formulating innovative solutions (Wals et al., 2009).

Epistemologically speaking, it is necessary to consider that convergence is not to be understood as dissolution. It is simply a steering away from the standard scientific principle of disconnection (between disciplines, subject and object) in favour of a principle that maintains the distinction of parts but that tries to establish their relation. As Nicolescu asserts, unity in diversity and diversity through unity is inherent to transdisciplinarity (2010).

Further, reuniting multiple dimensions of knowledge in the understanding of the human-environment ecological system shows that our social and cultural constructions of nature may be relative but have different consequences – some ideas or attitudes are unsustainable and go against objective life principles. Therefore, the model here advocated seeks to go beyond worldviews that are seized between a reductionist rationalism or by what Bourdieu called ‘nihilistic relativism’, in which all is equivalent to all, a dissolution between knowledge and opinion.

#### *IV Some final remarks*

The collapse of bees is a typical ‘wicked problem’ in that the problem is not understood *until after the formulation of a solution* (Conklin, 2006). In our case, the collapse can only be understood once the common good as the underlying premise of the solution is established.

It is also apt to add the collapse to the family of “super wicked problems” because “those seeking to solve the problem are also causing it” (Levin et al., 2012). It is worth considering that while research concerned with sustainability struggles to

establish the causes and hazards of bee collapse, an even more voluminous body of research is being produced that can be directly linked to threatening the life of bees and ecosystems at large. Products of this research include powerful synthetic pesticides, genetic manipulation beyond precautionary principles and in general the knowledge base for an agriculture still running under the auspices of the 'Green Revolution'. But what kind of knowledge is thus being created and supported? A knowledge that celebrates the life of bees and strengthens appreciation for their existence or a knowledge that fosters their demise? Two irreconcilable strands of knowledge? Or a basic fragmentation of one knowledge? Yet there is only one planet, one life.

In this article, I have argued that the model of Nature Conservation, largely reliant on Science, is struggling to step into new modalities that are capable of dealing conceptually and practically with its multi-dimensional and interrelated facets. In the case of bee collapse, knowledge is still mainly reducing the human-environmental relation to its objective, biophysical aspects, thereby ignoring the profoundly woven political, cultural and experiential dimensions involved in the production of knowledge.

In order to respond to the great challenges invoked by the death of bees, a new approach is necessary, one that is able to understand and work through the complexity inherent in the human-environmental systems.

In the search for a common good, self-observation is inseparable from observation, self-criticism inseparable from criticism, processes of reflection inseparable from processes of objectification. This search requires developing integration of the observer-conceiver in the observation-conception and placing the observation-conception in its own cultural context. The sustainable common good embodied in the life of bees is, therefore, a matter to be situated in the integrity of epistemological pluralism, where the heights and depths of what we value need to be found and shared by means of quality communicative processes. No other field of human knowledge is more prepared to exert such systematic, uncompromising, critical pursuit, than a transdisciplinary science in service of sustainability.

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### *Endnotes*

- <sup>1</sup> It is revealing that the two latest scientific events on Bees in Europe have no formal participation from the social sciences: <http://coloss.org/home/conference/>; [http://eventos.um.es/event\\_detail/592/sections/166/symposia.html](http://eventos.um.es/event_detail/592/sections/166/symposia.html)
- <sup>2</sup> <http://www.europeanvoice.com/article/2013/august/syngenta-challenges-eu-pesticide-ban/78075.aspx>
- <sup>3</sup> Monsanto acquisition: <http://naturalsociety.com/monsanto-bee-collapse-buys-bee-research-firm/#ixzz1swcD6H4T>; [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-schiffman/the-fox-monsanto-buys-the\\_b\\_1470878.html?view=print&comm\\_ref=false](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/richard-schiffman/the-fox-monsanto-buys-the_b_1470878.html?view=print&comm_ref=false). Monsanto's advisory council: <http://news.monsanto.com/press-release/sustainability/monsanto-company-forms-honey-bee-advisory-council-pledges-support-honey>
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www2.biologie.uni-halle.de/zool/mol\\_ecol/bee-shop/behav\\_genet.html](http://www2.biologie.uni-halle.de/zool/mol_ecol/bee-shop/behav_genet.html). To what extent the honey-bee is being remade to serve as military technology and strategic resource for the battlefield, see Kosek, 2010.





“I AM NOT AN ANIMAL! I AM A  
HUMAN BEING! I...AM...A MAN!”  
IS FEMALE TO MALE AS  
NATURE IS TO CULTURE?

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Manuela Rossini

*Introduction: Thinking/thanking Animals*

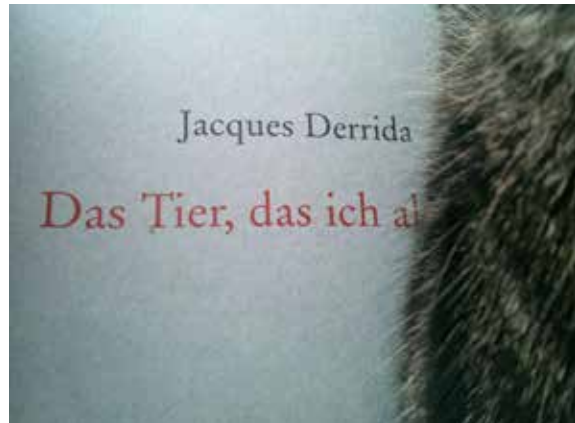
At an interdisciplinary gender conference I organized back in 2002, one of the keynote speakers encouraged the largely feminist and interdisciplinary audience to read Charles Darwin and to think about the importance of earthworms on a global scale. I was highly sceptical then about why I should turn my analytical attention to animals, and why ‘worms,’ of all creatures, should further feminist and cultural theory or support the women’s movement and other forms of social activism. In other words, I could not see a problem with a disabled person’s heart-breaking cry “I am not an animal...!” at the time. Meanwhile, my position shifted from finding this a very legitimate claim to understanding it as symptomatic of a humanist and anthropocentric stance, which, in the end, is detrimental not only to animals, but also to certain groups and individuals of the human species. Since that conference, I have not only engaged more strongly with paradigms from the natural sciences and medicine, but also taken ‘the animal question’ and ‘real’ animals seriously as a topic for literary, cultural, and gender studies. Conversely, I noticed that aspects of gender and more inclusive intersectional analyses are largely absent in most publications in animal studies that have come out over the last two decades or so.<sup>1</sup> That is why, in this essay, I would like to offer for further discussion some points of similarity between animals studies, gender studies, and other approaches informed by emancipatory politics before zooming in on the more specific debates around the related issues of rights and the agency of nonhuman animals. My overarching project is to participate in the promotion of an ethics of care based on our mutual dependency and shared situatedness in a world in which technology encroaches upon all living beings.

Talking in disciplinary and theoretical terms, I would describe my current practice as a ‘chimera’ of poststructuralism (especially Derridean deconstruction),

the ‘new’ biology, developmental systems theory, corporeal/material feminism, and human-animal studies.<sup>2</sup> All of these approaches can be subsumed under the heading “critical posthumanism”.<sup>3</sup> Together, they nourish my larger project of pushing the humanities into the posthumanities.<sup>4</sup> Doing so requires collaboration with the life sciences. Biological paradigms, for example, are an important source for feminist politics and other emancipatory movements inside and outside academia; by the same token, new findings in what has been labelled “cognitive zoology”<sup>5</sup> – insights about the cognitive, emotional, and even cultural behaviour of specific nonhuman animals – have already had a deep impact on how we discuss the human-animal divide and form the basis of considering rights for them.

Last but not at all least, I would like to acknowledge the debt I owe – that we all owe – not just to human-made epistemologies, but to a large extent to nonhuman animals when producing knowledge, values, and attitudes. There were always animals in my life (dogs, cats, horses, mice, hamsters, and turtles) but, more recently, two encounters were crucial for my caring and taking responsibility for nonhuman animals even more than I did when I had them as pets, as a philosophical question, but also, as ‘real’ fellow creatures: swimming in the Aegean Sea among all kinds of fish and other sea creatures (that I only really noticed when a

friend lent me goggles) made me stop eating them and read up on their suffering of pain. But the most decisive influence has been Musil, the cat a friend entrusted me with after she nursed him in the absence of his biological mother. He is now three years old and is clearly “l’animal que donc je suis”, in the double sense of ‘the animal that I follow’ and ‘the animal that I am.’ Like philosopher Jacques Derrida,



*Musil – The animal that therefore I am*

“I often ask myself, just to see, who I am – and who I am (following) at the moment when, caught naked, in silence, by the gaze of an animal, for example the eyes of a cat” (Derrida, 2004, p. 113). Such repeated self-questioning makes me increasingly impatient with the non-questioning of one’s humanity which forms the central line or motto in David Lynch’s film *The Elephant Man* (1980) from which this essay takes its cue.

*“I am not an animal ...”*

The movie tells the story of the historical figure, Joseph Merrick, who lived in London from 1862-1890. Merrick's body started to deform when he was one year old, with his lips and entire face swelling to the extent that speech became extremely difficult. Additional skin and lumps began to grow on his neck, his chest, and on the back of his head. The film script is mainly based on *The Elephant Man and Other Reminiscences* (1923) by Dr Frederick Treves, the dermatologist at the Royal London Hospital who treated Merrick. Being hunted by a horde of male citizens in an underground station, Merrick cries out: “I am not an animal! I am not an animal! I am a human being! I...am...a man!”<sup>6</sup> I take the word “man” to refer to the male species rather than to mean “human” here for two major reasons: firstly, because there are only gentlemen pursuing and trapping him with his back against a wall in what I take to be a urinal; secondly, because Merrick himself reports that his mother had a fright when she was six months pregnant and saw an escaping elephant. This phenomenon was known in Victorian England as ‘maternal impression,’ with the underlying idea that an active (male) form/image imprinted itself on passive (female) matter. In the case of his mother then, the female imagination exercised the kind of creative ‘authorship’ and formative power the prevailing discourse usually only granted to the paternal or male authority. Suppressing his animal self can therefore be read as the purification of the animal in him and, at the same time, as a radical separation from the maternal or female body more generally for the autonomous male subject to emerge.

For centuries, generic ‘Man’ (with a capital M) and man (with a small m) could only establish himself by exclusion of all his defining others – women, animals, angels or zombies – and by polarising nature and culture. These figures, however, come back to haunt the human from within, threatening a contagion that might turn the human *back* into – as it was feared by Darwin’s contemporaries – an animal. Indeed, it is the possibility of devolution that Dr. Treves seemed to be troubled with most when he first encountered the Elephant Man, as Merrick was called on the poster advertising the ‘freak show’ in which he appeared:

Painted on the canvas in primitive colours was a life-size portrait of the Elephant Man. This very crude production depicted a frightful creature that could only have been possible in a nightmare. It was the figure of a man with the characteristics of an elephant. The transfiguration was not far advanced. There was still more of the man than of the beast. This fact – that it was still human – was the most repellent attribute of the creature. There was nothing about it of the pitiableness of the misshapen or the deformed, nothing of the grotesqueness of the freak, but merely the loathing insinuation of a man being changed into an animal. Some palm trees in

the background of the picture suggested a jungle and might have led the imaginative to assume that it was in this wild that the perverted object had roamed. (Treves, 1932, p. 1)

Treves remembers how, under his protection and care, dressed in nice clothes, reading classics, going to the theatre, and making polite conversation with beautiful ladies after his linguistic articulation had improved, his patient “began to change, little by little, from a hunted thing into a man” (pp. 22). Gradually, he transformed himself from a ‘wild object’ into a ‘civilized’ subject, even a brave hero. Once the humanizing project is completed, the physician writes: “The spirit of Merrick, if it could be seen in the form of the living, would assume the figure of an upstanding and heroic man...with eyes that flashed undaunted courage” (pp. 36-37).

This image of the “upstanding and heroic man” recalls the dominant notion of the human we have inherited from the Renaissance, the cradle of Western civilization and high culture. This notion, as we know, is not neutral, but gendered (c.p. Leonardo da Vinci’s ‘Vitruvian Man’). As such, this normative human body is expected to function perfectly. All other modes of embodiment, by contrast, zoomorphic and disabled bodies, for example, are “pathologized and classified on the other side of normality” as monstrous and the worst nightmare for ‘heroic’ man (Braidotti, 2002, p. 123). Merrick’s desperate cry for recognition of his human identity through which he claims his right to social integration, personal integrity, and dignity is thus very understandable and moving. But his words, nevertheless, reflect the poverty and violence of the humanist stance, insofar as traditional humanism can only secure the ‘proper’ essence of *humanitas* via a rigid separation from *animalitas*.

Of course, there are strong historical justifications for doing so; for centuries, the discrimination of some human individuals or groups of people, their humiliation, oppression, enslavement, torture and killing has been tightly bound up with concepts of ‘the animal’ (in the singular), specific animals, and animality. This was the case with slaves before the Civil War. As animal-rights activist Marjorie Spiegel has demonstrated (Spiegel, 1996), it is the ideology of slavery, with its basis in property rights of some human beings over others that is used to legitimate the nightmarish treatment of non-human animals as ‘things’ today: managing what we eat as precisely a ‘what’ (object) and not a ‘who’ (subject), for example, is symbolic of the effort to preserve humans from cannibalism or from becoming prey themselves. Moreover, slavery was even conceptualized as being something good for the enslaved humans, which is echoed in perverse excuses like “many animals wouldn’t be alive unless they were in our company”; “they are happier with us than they would be in the wild”; “we protect them against their own worse natu-

res”; “animals feel no pain or less pain because they don’t know the meaning of ‘pain’”, etc. I agree with Spiegel that this attitude is only possible because animals are seen both as similar, yet different enough, as in the contradiction she identifies with animal experimentation: “... it is said that the animals are so unlike us that they are not worthy of our consideration. On the other hand, vivisectors claim that animals are so *like* us that they are essential to research” (Spiegel, 1996, p. 101).

Another shameful example illustrating the link between the discourse of race and species is a chapter in the history of the zoo in my hometown, Basel. Following the example of other European cities, Basel had several expositions of inhabitants from what they called “primitive peoples” between 1879 and 1935, members of different indigenous peoples were shown in their so-called “state of nature.” The half-nakedness of the exhibited individuals confirmed their status between animal and human, and subjected the often bare-breasted women to a pornographic gaze. Put behind bars like beasts, at a safe distance from the visiting crowd, such ‘wildlife’ was seen as both close to the observers as well as utterly different and inferior human beings. The same mechanism and ‘othering’ continues today. Compare the situation in the Basel human zoo to the accounts by the victims and witnesses of the tortures in the military prison of Abu Ghraib. It seems to me that it is precisely the continued insistence and reinforcement of the animal-human boundary that legitimizes the committed atrocities and that demonstrates the complicity between animal abuse and prisoner abuse, especially of non-white prisoners:



*Portrait from Basel Zoo Archive 1879-1935*

Some of the things they did was make me sit down like a dog...and...bark like a dog and they were laughing at me... One of the police was telling me to crawl...[Another prisoner] was forced to insert a finger into his anus and lick it. He was also forced to lick and chew a shoe...He was then told to insert his finger in his nose during questioning...his other arm in the air. The Arab interpreter told him he looked like an elephant. [They were] given badges with the letter ‘C’ on it. (Danner, 2004, online)

The American soldiers got their fun out of reducing the prisoners to their corporeal being. Instead of accepting their own vulnerability and mortality they share with their victims as well as with other living beings, the torturers strengthened their own sense of freedom and autonomy by means of a “systematic bestialization”, as Étienne Balibar calls it (Balibar, 1991, p. 56).<sup>7</sup> In the case of the Abu Ghraib prisoners, such dehumanization mechanisms go hand in hand with a lack of empathy and, more consequentially, the withdrawal of the right to protection guaranteed by the Geneva Convention of Human Rights since 1949; after all, as barking dogs, crawling insects, and ‘elephant men,’ these ‘creatures’ cannot respond to the name ‘human’ and the legal interpellation as subjects who have a right to rights.

The implicit and explicit analogies between racism, sexism, homophobia, anti-semitism which accompany the above and other documented descriptions of the torture methods, confirm that the power of the species discourse to affect *human* others depends on the prior acceptance of the institution of speciesism; that is, on taking for granted that the inflicting of pain and the killing of nonhuman animals by human animals does not constitute a criminal act but, on the contrary, is legal. This is a major point of Cary Wolfe’s anti-speciesist intervention:

[Since] the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well, to countenance violence against the social other of whatever species – or gender, or race, or class, or sexual difference. . . we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject *has nothing to do with whether you like animals*. We all, human and nonhuman alike, have a stake in the discourse and institution of speciesism; it is by no means limited to its overwhelmingly direct and disproportionate effects on animals. (Wolfe, 2003, p. 8, 7).

Wolfe takes to task precisely gender, feminist, and queer studies, Marxism and postcolonialism for being complicit with a speciesist logic. In their discussion of subjectivity, identity, and difference as well as their demand of rights, so he claims, representative of those fields have recourse to an Enlightenment concept of the subject whose *conditio sine qua non* is the absolute control of that subject over the life of nonhuman others that need to be defined as objects. Speaking of feminist theory, this has been the case in the 1980s and 1990s, for example with a slogan like “Feminism is the radical notion that women are people/human beings” that found its way onto t-shirts. After having been dehumanized for ages by being equated with animals, women as a group felt the urge to also be admitted to the club of humanity as equally rational beings. It’s not clear who said this for the first



*T-shirts available on the web*

time, but it doesn't really matter; what does matter is that the pronouncement is far from being 'radical,' on the contrary, it also supports a kind of identity and dubious feminism expressed on t-shirts: "Real women eat meat." Which finally leads me to the question I ask in the subtitle of this essay, "Is Animal to Human as Female Is to Male?", which is a take on Sherry Ortner's essay "Is Female to Male as Nature Is to Culture?" (Ortner, 1974).

In this influential text, the feminist anthropologist starts with the observation that women's status as second-order human beings is a universal, "pan-cultural" fact. Her thesis for this state of affairs is that: "woman is being identified with... something that every culture devalues, something that every culture defines as being of a lower order of existence than itself". And that can only be:

... 'nature' in the most generalized sense. Every culture, or, generically, 'culture,' is engaged in the process of generating and sustaining systems of meaningful forms (symbols, artifacts, etc.) by means of which humanity transcends the given of natural existence, bends them to its purposes, controls them in its interest. (Ortner, 1974, p. 72)

Ortner broadly equates culture with human consciousness, or, to be precise, with "the products of human consciousness (i.e., systems of thought and technology), by means of which humanity attempts to assert control over nature. /---/ ...the distinctiveness of culture rests precisely on the fact that it can under most circum-

tances transcend natural conditions and turn them to its purposes” (Ortner, 1974, pp. 72-73). Thus, she concludes that due to a culture’s equating of women with nature, especially because of their potentially reproductive and child-rearing functions, they are also considered ‘natural’ by that very culture to subordinate.

It is thus not surprising that in the wake of the linguistic turn of the 1960s and 1970s, feminist theory embraced the paradigm of social and cultural constructionism in order to de-naturalize ontological as well as epistemological categories. Such a theoretical practice, however, led to a conceptual distancing from the non-human ‘other’ and to an almost instinctive rejection of the evolutionary continuity between human and nonhuman animals. As a result, the hierarchically-structured dichotomy nature-culture was left in place and did not prevent the continuous subjection of women as a group, certainly women of colour and the working class, to the same sexist and racist logic that also marks speciesism.

### *Animal studies—gender/feminist studies*

At the same time, as the *Hypatia* issue “Animal Others” reminds us, animal studies are very much indebted to feminist theorizing, even though this may be largely unrecognized. In their introduction to the “Invited Symposium” part of the issue, editors Lori Gruen and Kari Weil state: “One clear commonality is the need to maintain feminist, ethical, and political commitments within animal studies – commitments to reflexivity, responsibility, engagement with the experiences of other animals, and sensitivity to the intersectional contexts in which we encounter them” (Gruen and Weil, 2012, p. 493). So far so good. They continue as follows: “Such commitments are at the core of a second, related area of common concern, that of the relationship between theory and practice. Animal bodies, we can all agree, must not be ‘absent referents’ in animal studies” (p. 493). The latter concern – “theory and practice” – was and continues to be a point of conflict within animal studies, which was first staged at the conference “Millennial Animals: Theorising and Understanding the Importance of Animals” at the University of Sheffield in the year 2000. With theory represented by Cary Wolfe and practice (in the sense of activism and veganism) by Carol Adams, there also seems to be a gendered divide within animal studies – then and now, as many animal researcher regret. Institutionally, the majority of scholars pursuing empirically based studies seem to be women while theoretical explorations tend to be voiced by men in fields like philosophy and literary studies. This difference echoes the early conflict within feminist activism and academic feminism or women’s studies, mostly dealing with issues of equality and making the achievements of women visible versus the more inclusive and theorized gender studies.



Another similarity to present-day new-materialist framings of sex and gender as well as the human/nonhuman binary was pointed out by feminist biologist Lynda Birke in her pioneering book *Feminism, Animals, and Science* from 1994 wherein she advocates a move beyond biological determinism vs. cultural constructionism. Birke's very valuable contribution was not only to bring nonhuman animals into science studies and feminist theory, but to convincingly argue that the prevalent discourse about bodies as socially and culturally constructed is as reductionist as arguing for the primacy of biology to determine and justify inequality as 'natural' and hence not subject to change. In the remaining part of this essay, I would like to single out two further, interconnected debates that have been on the agenda of both feminist and animal studies: (1) rights issues and (2) the agency of nonhuman bodies and matter more broadly.

### *1. Towards a posthumanist theory of the subject 'before the law'*

Again, I am guided by Wolfe for whom fighting speciesism does not necessarily or primarily entail fighting for animal rights and who, in his latest book, also spells out why "person" or "personhood" for animals is equally problematic. To briefly summarize his critique: when an interest-bearing and rights-holding concept of subjectivity is extended to non-human animals, then those that resemble 'normal' human beings most closely are given all the attention and care. This not only creates injustice as far as the treatment of all animals is concerned but also supports a normative idea of what is human and worthy of protection. What is needed instead is a way of thinking about the value of other forms of life that does not render them as 'us', plus or minus some characteristics, and that, rather than being trapped in the discourse of rights, tries to do 'unconditional' justice to them. Neither sameness nor otherness can be the ground on which to build a sustainable ethics. The point is, rather, to expand the "community of the living" (2013, p. 105) beyond human society and sociality.

By the same token, we cannot just speak *for* animals. Rather than giving rights to animals, we should recognize who has power over them and challenge such exploitative structures while, at the same time, as Kelly Oliver argues, "attend to the relationships that nourish and sustain us as well as to the relationships in the name of which we kill" (Oliver, 2009, p. 304). The loving relationship that most pet owners nurture with their pets, for example, should be a blueprint for an equally loving relationship with all other animals (nonhuman, but also human). Maybe the political status of "citizen", as proposed by Sue Donaldson and Will Kymlicka (2011) would be a goal worth considering because it points to the relational duties when sharing public space. The challenge, for me at least, is how to think politics

differently so that the human does not always exist in a centred hierarchical relation to those we designate as ‘animal’. Rights language is a legacy of Enlightenment humanism, the very Enlightenment that created the idea of rational being, the Cartesian “I think therefore I am” that Derrida challenges with his “The animal that therefore I am.” Descartes and his contemporaries frame subjectivity in proprietary terms, as the right first over one’s own body and, by extension, over the bodies of everyone and everything possessed by the human/humanist subject. Grounded in the ideology of possessive individualism, the liberal-bourgeois subject emerging in the early modern period not only has a right over his own body, but can also over the metaphorical and, above all, literal ‘eating’ of other bodies – some of them human as well.

Although I agree that claiming rights, personhood, and citizenship opens doors for bringing animals to the table of political and ethical debate, what is more urgently required is a shift in focus to embodiment and materiality, and, by implication, an understanding of agency that also allows for agency in passivity, in so far as it can also belong to a body that is just there in a relation of sorts with other bodies. Such a concept of agency disconnects agents from personhood and from a still largely humanist rights discourse.

## 2. *Nonhuman and Material Agency*

In new-materialist, posthumanist theory, the biological body is given agency: genetic mutation and evolution, for example, occur through an organism’s adaptive response to its surrounding elements and its changes. Human and nonhuman bodies are in constant exchange with each other and with their environment; they constitute each other through relationality and dynamic interactions. When species meet, to quote the title of Donna Haraway’s detailed book on the topic, they do not come together as fixed entities. Rather, all participants are becoming with each other in “a subject- and object-shaping dance of encounters” (Haraway, 2007, p. 4). This premise is the starting point of so-called *Developmental Systems Theory* (DST). With regard to the development of a biological system, DST rejects gene fetishism or biological determinism, but does not privilege the influence of the environment on the system either. This perspective enables us to think beyond the dead-end street of nature versus culture without abandoning the interpretative paradigm of constructivism.

Biological beings are indeed ‘constructed,’ but as developmental psychologist Susan Oyama observes:

... not only in the sense that they are actively and discursively construed by themselves and others, but also in the sense that they are, at every moment,

products of, and participants in, their own and others' developmental processes. They are not self-determining in any simple sense but they affect and 'select' influences on themselves by attending to and interpreting stimuli, by seeking environments and companions, by being susceptible to various factors, by evoking reactions from others. (Oyama, 2000, p. 180-181)

Within a materialist or developmental-systems framework, agency is a decidedly postanthropocentric feature because it extends beyond the human by considering matter as a creative force. As such it is an understanding of agency very close to Claire Colebrook's "queer vitalism" (Colebrook, 2010), not only because it is outside the heterosexual matrix of the reproduction of life but also because it cherishes a potential that is actualized not by individual intention but through the kind of encounters described above. Focusing on the relation itself means that it is the configuration of the whole that counts, rather than any particular part of the assemblage. Moreover, that composition escapes the calculus or any controlling instance, insofar as the agential sum is more than its active (or passive) components. This is why the ultimate result of any interaction can be either fruitful or destructive for some or all of the participating entities. The big challenge is to make the 'multicellular' whole function in the interest of the common good: Alliances should be forged in which every living being, human or nonhuman, contributes in different and specific ways to the flourishing rather than the destruction of the whole. Such an awareness forms the basis for a sustainable ethics of care. We need to understand "sustainability" from a much broader ecological perspective by including other materialities than human bodies as worthy of protection and a healthy life. A posthumanist ethics of care and sustainability, or what philosopher of science Isabelle Stengers calls a "cosmopolitics" (Stengers, 2010, 2011) does not assert humanity's dominion over the earth but obliges us to acknowledge our dependence upon nonhuman animals and nonhuman forces or energies. It requires us to attend to our "response-ability" (Haraway, 2007, p. 71) by virtue of that dependence, and to accept that all living creatures around us respond too; they don't merely react by instinct or like machines, as for example Descartes<sup>8</sup> and still the majority of people today would have it.

Nevertheless, I would like to end with a pragmatic question that political scientist Jane Bennett raises in her book *Vibrant Matter*. It is the question that currently troubles me most in my efforts to take a critical-posthumanist stance that should also be ethical without moralising and political without granting agency only to humanity. So, here's her/my dilemma: "... should we acknowledge the distributive quality of agency to address the power of human-nonhuman assemblages and to resist a politics of blame? Or should we persist with a strategic understatement of material agency in the hopes of enhancing the accountability of specific

humans?” (Bennett, 2010, p. 38). Or, to put the question differently: If power, control and agency are neither here nor there, neither attributed to the self/subject nor to the other/object but are seen as multiple and distributed—who/what takes responsibility and how?

While I would always take into account the agency of nonhumans, I argue that it is ultimately the task of human subjects as the subjects of ethics and politics to change their exploitative behaviour of nonhuman fellow creatures if we want to survive. If we grant humans some ‘exceptionalism’, then it is with regard to their conscious capacity to organize resistance on a large scale and fight for rights and justice. In short, human beings don’t own anything but share the planet with other nonhuman agents as embodied and hence mortal beings. In a world of climate change (i.e. not just since humans appeared on the planet earth), environmental catastrophes, world hunger, limited resources like water and the growing vulnerability of all that lives and matters, we need to forge alliances not only within but across the human-animal/nonhuman divide also. As the editors of the recently published *Routledge Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* remind us with the title of their introduction: we are “in it together” (Marvin and McHugh, 2014, p. 1) regardless of species membership or disciplinary background and also regardless of whether or not we like it or have consciously decided to join the global community of the living.

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#### Films:

*The Elephant Man*. 1980. Directed by David Lynch, Brookfilms, USA.

#### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> There are notable exceptions, like the ones I reference in this essay. I would also like to mention the thematic issue of the journal *figurationen: gender literatur kultur* I recently edited (2014).
- <sup>2</sup> Over the past two decades, I have been in conversation with a number of researchers with a number of fields whose work has influenced the development of my own thinking. They are (in alphabetical order): Stacy Alaimo, Rosi Braidotti, Ivan Callus, Bruce Clarke, Anne Fausto-Sterling, Donna Haraway, Stefan Herbrechter, Vicki Kirby, Lynn Margulis (mostly through the work co-written with her son Dorion Sagan), Susan Oyama, Elizabeth Wilson, and Cary Wolfe. In addition, both the international and the European Society for Science, Literature and the Arts have provided a home and intellectual stimulation for 'creatures' like me that cannot easily be herded into a specific field. As for translating theory into pedagogy, two studies have been of particular relevance to me: Kelly Oliver (2009) and Helena Pedersen (2010). And, last but not least, the organizers of the Lund symposium have given me the opportunity for stimulating exchange with Swedish colleagues concerned with all kinds of animals

and our relationship to them. I particularly thank Amelie Björck for her thoughtful editorial comments and suggestions.

<sup>3</sup> See Critical Posthumanism Network (directed by Ivan Callus, Stefan Herbrechter and myself) and the book series *Critical Posthumanisms* (edited by Ivan Callus and Stefan Herbrechter).

<sup>4</sup> See Cary Wolfe's book series *Posthumanities*.

<sup>5</sup> See the research of the Cognitive Zoology Group at Lund University: <http://www.lucs.lu.se/zoocog>

<sup>6</sup> The scene can be watched here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sn7bEVnFlds>

<sup>7</sup> On the criminal-animal metaphor from the sixteenth to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, see Olson (2013).

<sup>8</sup> René Descartes famously characterized an animal as a machine because they lack speech and a soul (c.p. Descartes, 1637, Part V).

# BECOMING FLUSH, BECOMING ELIZABETH

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Elisabeth Friis

*...whatever shatters norms, whatever breaks from the established order, is related to homosexuality or a becoming-animal or a becoming-woman.*  
(*Chaosophy*, Félix Guattari, 2008)

Analyzing Virginia Woolf's short novel *Flush. A Biography* (1933) from a Deleuzian/Guattarian perspective obviously makes sense. *Flush* is the story of a dog and a woman's liberation from, as Woolf puts it, "all the oppressors in their several ranks" (Woolf, 1998, p.61). *Flush* is, in every respect, "minor literature".<sup>1</sup> Furthermore the narrator attempts to "become a dog" by telling the story from a dog's point of view and Woolf is of course an important reference in *Mille Plateaux* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, pp. 284-381).

*Flush* is a work of fiction, but it also tells the story of the relationship between a real dog and a real woman as it is based on the life of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning (1806–1861). Because these events, to some extent, really did happen the *fabula* of *Flush* is easy to reconstruct – it is, in fact, already there. The *fabula* of the life of Elizabeth Barrett and the *fabula* of Woolf's novel *Flush* are different but parallel and, following this line of thought, I suggest that it is in the difference between the *fabula* and *sujet* level of *Flush* that we find the strongest argument for the fruitfulness of an *Auseinandersetzung* between Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy of liberation through desubjectification and that which will develop into Woolf's audacious and revolutionary establishment of a liberating agency constituted by two simple operations: 1) Placing two "minor" protagonists, the dog and the woman, in reversible positions and 2) Placing the dog where the man used to be.

However, we are nowhere near this conclusion yet. Let me begin by taking a brief look at some of the current scholarship on *Flush*.

## *To read or not to read Flush*

*Flush* was Woolf's all-time best-selling novel (Caughie, 1991), and one can safely assume that it has had many readers but aside from a few exceptions (Squier, 1985; Caughie, 1991), it has received little critical attention until quite recently.

The full title of the novel is *Flush. A biography* and the book can indeed be read as a parody of a traditional biography. It contains bibliographical footnotes and Flush's family tree and also recounts the whole story of Flush's life from the cradle to the grave. In some respects, Woolf is clearly mocking the biographies of her day which meticulously focused on matters of pedigree and descent – matters that, according to Woolf's highly sceptical view on "traditional" biographies, say next to nothing about the life of the person being portrayed (Woolf, 1974, "The Art of Biography").

Anna Snaith's *Of Fanciers, Footnotes, and Fascism: Virginia Woolf's 'Flush'* convincingly interprets this "mocking of pedigree" as Woolf's critique of the politics of eugenics associated with fascism.

The shift in perspective from the human outlook to the point of view of a non-human animal also allows Woolf to represent the Victorian environment and the everyday life of both Flush and Elizabeth Barrett from what Deleuze and Guattari would call a *non-majoritarian* (and others simply, a feminist) perspective. The representation of the Victorian environment from an alternative angle has been the focus of some earlier scholarship on *Flush*, but readings which interpret the real dog, Flush, as an allegory of the position of the repressed Victorian woman have been heavily criticized by later scholars such as Craig Smith. Smith deals primarily with the zoological correctness of Woolf's description of the lifeworld of Flush and his work on *Flush* must be regarded as a part of the "Animal Turn" in the humanities; a turn that, not surprisingly, seems to be generating much-needed new interest in Woolf's novel. Smith wants us to take the book's title and the dog it describes seriously:

Almost universally excluded from the canon of Woolf's major works, *Flush* has not been critically evaluated as what it declares itself to be: the biography of a dog. Such scant academic attention as it has received attempts to redefine it as allegorized autobiography, an approach that only confirms the book's position as a marginal commentary on, recuperation from, or preparation for Woolf's "serious" fiction. (Smith, 2002, p.351)

I also find the allegorical approach that Smith argues against a limited one, but am still convinced that the feminist aspirations of Woolf are not to be dismissed. In this case, as my final conclusion will show, insights from both Feminist Philosophy and Animal Studies need to go hand in hand if we are to understand the full implications of Woolf's choice of a canine protagonist.

Another fairly recent discussion of *Flush*, which also belongs to the broad field of Animal Studies, concentrates on the question of the (problematic) anthropomorphism in the text. Jutta Ittner's article: "Part Spaniel, part canine puzzle: an-



thropomorphism in Woolf's *Flush* and Auster's *Timbuktu*" (2006) discusses the anthropomorphism of these texts in detail, and her conclusion is quite negative in regard to Woolf's attempt to establish a genuine animal perspective:

Flush, in summary, is a creature that is doubly instrumentalized: First, because he has been created by Woolf as a conscious and emotive animal in order to tell a familiar story from an unusual angle, he has no agency of his own. [...] Second, the mock agency granted to Flush is Woolf's ironic critique of Victorian constructs of class, rank, and gender relationships. (Ittner, 2006, p.189)

Ittner is convinced that Woolf's creation of a canine protagonist is simply a literary device to make a familiar story more interesting or unusual; however, Woolf does more than that. The destinies of the dog and the woman are intertwined, and I aim to show that the novel actually tells the story of *two* interdependent and interchangeable narrative subjects who are both liberated from their shared instrumentalization – an instrumentalization that is not the work of the author but of, as Woolf puts it: "the world's husbands, fathers, brothers and domineers in general" (Woolf, 1998, p. 62). The novel's anthropomorphic perspective, which Ittner also problematizes in considerable detail, certainly exists, but not in a form as absolute as she describes it.

As Smith also points out, Woolf tries to imagine the life of Flush – what he might feel or dream – and, of course, this can't be done without projecting human notions of these matters onto the dog. However, another Flush scholar, Derek Ryan, recently pointed out in his book on Woolf's relation to New Materialism (Ryan, 2013) that she makes interesting attempts to actually write the dog's *Umwelt*. Here's an example describing Flush's experience of running on a grass field which isn't mentioned by Ryan:

...so he leapt hither and thither, parting its green curtain. The cool globes of dew or rain broke in showers of iridescent spray about his nose; the earth, here hard, here soft, here hot, here cold, stung, teased and tickled the soft pads of his feet. (Woolf, 1998, p.11)

This is clearly not the description of a human's experience of taking a walk in the park, as it is often Flush's nose – his smelling sense – that is the locus of his perception.

Woolf attempts to articulate the sensory aspects of his life, and in this particular passage, the textual rhythm ("here hard, here soft, here hot, here cold") seems to evoke and thereby allowing the reader to participate in the quick, explorative

movements of the lively young spaniel. Furthermore, *Flush* contains even more elaborate attempts to establish the world from a canine (smell-focused) perspective (see, for instance, Woolf, 1998, pp.15-6).

From a strictly *Mille Plateaux* perspective, anthropocentrism is of course not even a concern we should have regarding literature's capacity for establishing anti-humanist, non-anthropocentric perspectives; the opposition between "imitation" and "being" is, in any case, a false one (Deleuze and Guattari, 1980, pp. 284-381). When Woolf participates in Flush's perspective, she is clearly not literally transforming herself into a dog, but merely following her desire to experience the dog's mode of existence and this act to follow a desire or a trait is all that any "becoming" takes.

Nonetheless, the question of anthropomorphism is an important one from other perspectives, and there is without doubt much more work to be done with this problematic, but also unavoidable, concept. In *Vibrant Matter. A political ecology of things*, Jane Bennett questions the automatic rejection of anthropomorphism in the Philosophy of Science:

Maybe it's worth running the risks associated with anthropomorphizing (superstition, the divinization of nature, romanticism) because it, oddly enough, works against anthropocentrism: a chord is struck between person and thing, and I'm no longer above or outside a human "environment". Too often the philosophical rejection of anthropomorphism is bound up with a hubristic demand that only humans and God can bear traces of creative agency. (Bennett, 2010, p.120)

Following both Deleuze & Guattari's, as well as Bennett's suggestive remarks, I will leave the recent discussions of Woolf's "humanization" of Flush behind and concentrate on reading Flush as a creative agent in the novel instead of reading him as an "absence of agency", as an excuse (Ittner), or as a case study on how his way of dreaming, thinking, and feeling might or might not correspond to the dreaming, thinking, and feeling of a real dog (Smith, 2002). What novels can do is not only depict so-called reality, but also show us the potential (and not necessarily manifest) forces at work in this reality – and this is exactly what *Flush* does.

### *The fabula of Flush – Elizabeth's life as fairy tale*

Virginia Woolf was always occupied with bringing women's perspectives in general into the traditional, western, and almost exclusively male, literary history; therefore, the life of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning must have been a tempting, almost irresistible subject.

Born in 1806, it is well known Elizabeth Barrett Browning lived a secluded and over-protected life on Wimpole Street in the London home of her pious and dominating father and brothers. She published poetry, but almost never went out in public; she often fell ill and must have been very lonely. That is, until one day, the poet Robert Browning began sending her letters in which he praised her poetry and later paid discreet visits to her Wimpole Street home. Their common literary interests brought them together, but after some time, they apparently became interested in other aspects of each other as well, married in secrecy and fled to Florence, where they lived happily ever after in the beautiful Villa Guidi.<sup>2</sup>

This is a romantic love story if there ever was one, and it is the underlying fabula of *Flush*; however, when summarized as in the previous passage, it also reinforces the view that the only way a woman can become an independent individual is by being rescued by a man. In her introduction to the 1998 Oxford edition of *Flush*, Kate Flint points out this problem: “The kidnapping of Flush is also used by Woolf to complicate that most prevalent of myths surrounding the Barretts of Wimpole Street: that Robert Browning was, unequivocally, a liberator, rescuing the poet from her tyrannical father, just as Elizabeth rescues Flush” (Woolf 1998, p. xxii).

As concerned as she was with the reductiveness and falsity of biographies and life-writing in general, the question remains of what Woolf *could do* if she wanted to recount the life of Elizabeth Barrett, to turn it into a narrative, without reducing it to just another romantic love story and thereby run the risk of confirming biased notions of women writers.

Woolf’s radical solution to this problem was to write a biography—not of Elizabeth Barrett, but of her dog – a golden-brown spaniel named Flush whose life is well-documented in Elizabeth’s letters and in her two poems about him – an innovative move which precisely creates the possibility of changing the *point de capiton* of the romantic fabula.

Having been present in Elizabeth’s life before Robert Browning, Flush also followed her to Italy. He was there at her feet or on her lap, very close to the events, but watching and interpreting them from a different point of view. But the pivotal event in Flush’s biography is neither his life in Wimpole Street nor his escape to Italy but his dognapping; a traumatic event which, in the novel, takes place just before Elizabeth and Flush flee to Italy. In real life, Flush was actually dognapped several times, but Woolf squeezes the several dognappings into one episode, underscoring the significance of this event as the actual turning point of her recount of the life of Elizabeth Barrett – a turning point which sparks a line of both virtual and actual flight. Accordingly, the dognapping has been carefully prepared for the reader by the novel’s attempts to place the narrative agents of Flush and Elizabeth in the same position by making them interchangeable, and through which the readers anticipate their shared liberation.

## *Dog and woman, woman and dog*

*Flush* contains several “mirror scenes”; in the first, Flush takes a look at himself in a mirror, which the human imagination governing the description suggests that he sees as “a hole in the wall” containing “another dog with bright eyes flashing, and tongue lolling!” This sight seems to excite him (Woolf, 1998, p.17), but only as an ephemeral experience.

The most important mirror scene does not involve a real looking glass, but describes Elizabeth and Flush looking at each other for the first time. Due to its importance in the development of my argument, I quote it in full:

“Oh, Flush!” said Miss Barrett. For the first time she looked him in the face. For the first time Flush looked at the lady lying on the sofa.

Each was surprised. Heavy curls hung down on either side of Miss Barrett’s face; large bright eyes shone out; a large mouth smiled. Heavy ears hung down on either side of Flush’s face; his eyes, too, were large and bright: his mouth was wide. There was a likeness between them. As they gazed at each other each felt: Here am I – and then each felt: But how different! Hers was the pale worn face of an invalid, cut off from air, light, freedom. His was the warm ruddy face of a young animal; instinct with healthy energy. Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other? She might have been – all that: and he – But no. Between them lay the widest gulf that can separate one being from another. She spoke. He was dumb. She was woman; he was dog. Thus closely united, thus immensely divided, they gazed at each other. (Woolf, 1998, p.18)

Several different readings of this encounter have been suggested (Ryan, 2013, pp.143-59). What interests me is how we should interpret the line: “Broken asunder, yet made in the same mould, could it be that each completed what was dormant in the other?”

Although Flush and Elizabeth are separated by “the widest gulf” by not being able to speak to each other as humans do, something significant is happening on the discursive level when the text suggests to the reader that the dog and the woman perhaps have a capacity for releasing each other’s “dormant” capacities and that they are made “in the same mould”. The mediating point, the point that brings Flush and Elizabeth together, is in the *gaze* they exchange. This is a literal gaze, but the contact zone that the text insists on establishing between them is also catalyzed by, to some extent, their shared or even reversible agential positions. Quite literally, they share certain morphological traits (heavy curls and heavy ears), which seem to indicate that they are variants of each other – *made from the same mould*. At a later point, Elizabeth makes a drawing of Flush:

She had drawn “a very neat and characteristic portrait of Flush, humorously *made rather like myself*”, and she had written under it that it “only fails of being an excellent substitute for mine through being more worthy than I can be counted”.

(Woolf 1998, p. 27, my emphasis. The text in quotation marks is Woolf’s quote from one of Elizabeth’s letters to her acquaintance Richard Horne, October 5, 1843.)

From the moment of the mirror scene with Elizabeth, Flush is introduced to the everyday life of a Victorian woman; he enters her velvet prison and is deprived of his former freedom in the countryside. He shares the physical space of Elizabeth and suffers deeply from it – he is *becoming Elizabeth* in a very negative sense:

To resign, to control, to suppress the most violent instincts of his nature – that was the prime lesson of the bedroom school, and it was one of such portentous difficulty that many scholars have learnt Greek with less – many battles have been won that cost their generals not half such pain. (Woolf, 1998, p. 25)

Flush must learn to suppress his nature, just as women of the day had to learn to suppress theirs, but the influence works both ways. Elizabeth is also strongly affected by Flush, which is evidenced when the text lets her question her own humanly order of things (the supremacy of human language) by letting her express a fundamental doubt concerning the only thing that until this point in her existence has been recognized by the patriarchal powers that be as “having value” and that is of course her *writing*:

The fact was that they could not communicate with words, and it was a fact that led undoubtedly to much misunderstanding: Yet did it not lead to a peculiar intimacy? “Writing”, Miss Barrett once exclaimed after a morning’s toil, “writing, writing...”. After all, *she may have thought*, do words say everything? Can words say anything? Do not words destroy the symbol that lies beyond the reach of words? (Woolf, 1998, p. 27)

This is a good example of Woolf’s technique of free indirect speech which she employs throughout the novel and elsewhere. The narrator speculates – is the experience of real intimacy perhaps nonverbal? And therefore a mode of being that, to a higher degree, is more accessible to nonhuman animals than to humans? It is left as an open-ended question, but the text establishes a very real and nonverbal relationship of reversibility between Flush and Elizabeth – a relationship which

seems to “womanize” Flush by turning him into “a bird in a cage” (Elizabeth’s own description of her life) and to “animalize” Elizabeth. She seems to enjoy their shared morphological traits because she makes a drawing of them and, most importantly, Flush motivates her to question logocentrism – *do words say everything?*

When Derrida accuses western thought of neglecting the animal perspective (2006), he generally overlooks the forces of literature and the force of Virginia Woolf in particular. Deleuze and Guattari are conversely very aware of literature’s and Woolf’s radical insightfulness and, recently, an entire issue of the journal *Deleuze Studies* (2013) has been dedicated to exploring this connection.

But apparently, Deleuze and Guattari never actually read *Flush* and a special problem with their Woolf readings is that many of their references to her work have a seemingly inaccessible source (see Deleuze & Guattari, 1980, p. 343: “Sur tous ces points, nous nous servons d’une étude inédite de Fanny Zavin concernant Virginia Woolf”).

I have now reached the crucial turn in Woolf’s ordering of the fabula of Elizabeth: As I have established, Flush and Elizabeth are placed in similar positions by Woolf. In a sense, they enter each others *becomings* at several points. They live and suffer under their shared subjectification in the Foucauldian sense, but then something happens that will leave “everything different” (Woolf, 1998, p.69).

### *The sujet of Flush – The dognapping as point de capiton*

A third of the biography is dedicated to a significant event that has nothing do to with poets in love escaping to Italy – Flush is *dognapped*. This event occupies much space in the relatively short novel, which reinforces its importance in the sujet that Woolf develops from the fabula. It was, in Victorian times, a very common occurrence for dogs to be stolen from upper-class women. One day, poor Flush is also snatched from Wimpole Street to the dubious neighborhood of Whitechapel, and a considerable ransom is demanded for his safe return.

The heart of the matter lies in the fact that neither Elizabeth’s father, nor her brothers or for that matter her husband-to-be, Robert Browning, want to pay the ransom. Elizabeth is in deep despair: she wants her dog back at any cost. An interesting exchange takes place between her and Robert (again, based on direct quotes from Robert and Elizabeth’s letters); Robert asserts that if Elizabeth gives in and rescues Flush by paying the ransom, she will also be giving in to *all the oppressors of the world*:

...it is horrible to fancy how all the oppressors in their several ranks may, if they choose, twitch back to them by the heartstrings after various modes the weak and silent whose secret they have found out. (Woolf, 1998, p. 61)

In so many words, Robert explains to Elizabeth that she must be careful not to act as one of “the weak and silent” whose heartstrings can be pulled. If she complies with the dognapper, this will be the exact category in which she would be placed. Nevertheless, Elizabeth stands firmly opposed to this cunning and masculinist attempt at persuasion and, for the first time in her life, she defies the opinion of her superior (in this case, a man with whom she is in love) and acts on her own if not alone. Proclaiming the existence of complete reversibility between her and Flush (a claim that, at this point, comes as no surprise to the reader as the mirror scenes have already established it), Elizabeth writes back to Robert, again in Woolf’s indirect free speech: “...what would Mr Browning had done if the banditti had stolen her; had her in their power; threatened to cut off *her* ears and send them by post to New Cross?” (Woolf, 1998, p. 62)

And then she takes action:

On Saturday, therefore, with Mr Browning’s letter lying open on the table before her, she began to dress. She read his “one word more – in all this. I labour against the execrable policy of the world’s husbands, fathers, brothers and domineers in general”. So, if she went to Whitechapel she was siding against Robert Browning, and in favour of fathers, brothers and domineers in general. Still, she went on dressing. *A dog howled in the mews. It was tied up, helpless in the power of cruel men. It seemed to her to cry as it howled. Think of Flush.* She put on her shoes, her cloak, her hat. She glanced at Mr Browning’s letter once more. “I am about to marry you”, she read. Still the dog howled. She left her room and went downstairs. (Woolf, 1998, p.62. My emphasis).

And she goes straight to Whitechapel and rescues Flush.

This scene is the *point de capiton* in the sujet of *Flush*. The anchoring point: Elizabeth is not liberated from “the world’s husbands, fathers, brothers and domineers in general” by Robert Browning; she is liberated through her interaction with the golden-brown Spaniel, Flush. Flush is on her mind and in her mind; he calls for her, howls in her ears, and consequently lifts her out of her anxiety and confinement. The woman is *becoming dog* when she feels and hears the call of the dog deep in her body. Through a Deleuzian lens, she virtually experiences “sensitivity itself” when she participates in the sensibility of the dog – the “howl” in her mind. This affective event of “becoming dog” is what sparks her riot against her male oppressors. Moreover, her line of flight is intertwined with Flush’s line of

flight. He too is set free in Italy. He too is now free to come and go as he pleases. In his Italian freedom, he also enjoys the possibility of a free, sexual life, along with Elizabeth who becomes pregnant in Florence. However, Elizabeth's sexual freedom is relative, as it still must be practiced within the heterosexual matrimonial institution; in contrast, Flush's sexual freedom is absolute:

Now Flush knew what men can never know – love pure, love simple, love entire; love that brings no train of care in its wake; that has no shame; no remorse; that is here, that is gone, as the bee on the flower is here and gone. To-day the flower is a rose, to-morrow a lily; now it is the wild thistle on the moor, now the pouched and portentous orchid of the conservatory. So variously, so carelessly Flush embraced the spotted spaniel down the alley, and the brindled dog and the yellow dog – it did not matter which. To Flush it was all the same. He followed the horn wherever the horn blew and the wind wafted it. Love was all; love was enough. (Woolf, 1998, p.79)

In the Deleuzian and Guattarian perspective, Flush is not being “instrumentalized”. The woman has to pass through a “becoming animal” process of de-subjectification before she can go anywhere. In this respect, the dog (and also in the logic of Woolf's ordering of the narrative events) is a liberator. That he is a “minor” being certainly doesn't make him what Ittner refers to as “a lesser being”.

Woolf underlines that Elizabeth's liberating action is wholly dependent on her closeness to Flush when she clearly alludes to the similarities between Elizabeth's situation and Flush's situation – they are both “tied up and helpless in the power of cruel men” (p.62, see above). Flush should not be reduced to an allegorical character that somehow “represents” Elizabeth. He is the main character of the novel, just as Moby Dick is the main character of *Moby Dick*.

By reordering the positions of the agents in the classic fairy tale model by making Flush the narrative subject of the novel and Elizabeth his helper (and by helping him, she also helps herself) Woolf destroys the “romantic” representation of Elizabeth Barrett's rescue by Robert Browning. By placing Flush as the novel's primary, although marginalized and minor narrative subject, she seems to suggest that women and nonhuman animals actually have something to gain by interacting with each other rather than interacting with “the world's husbands, fathers, brothers and domineers in general”. When Elizabeth marries Robert and flees to Italy, things have already changed. “Everything was different” (p. 69), and according to this narrative logic, in order for one to become woman, one must first become dog.



Instead of fearing “instrumentalization” of the nonhuman animal in a story like this, the dog could be taken seriously as a real narrative agent. Woolf’s *subject* rearranges the *fabula* when she places Flush in the position which was meant for Robert. The dog and woman’s escape from their mutual confinement on Wimpole Street is at the *subject* level, an event which is sparked by their shared desires. Elizabeth’s riot is in Woolf’s rearrangement of the *fabula* (the “readily available” story of Elizabeth’s life) logically dependent on her interaction with Flush, not her interaction with Robert Browning whom Woolf presents as belonging to the regime of the Law when she emphasizes the efforts he makes to stop Elizabeth from rescuing Flush. It’s a matter of a simple, but crucial, change in the narrative logic of the conventional story of Elizabeth’s life. Here, a major agent is (on the *subject* level of the narrative) replaced with a minor agent, and this replacement could be read as Woolf’s radical, political, and feminist intervention, not only on the logic of the traditional autobiographical genre, but also perhaps (and even more pressing) on our current efforts (in Animal Studies, posthumanist thought, and feminist philosophy) to reinterpret the experience of *life* as something which is shared by all living beings and must be accounted for accordingly.

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### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> *Qu'est-ce qu'une littérature mineure?* Deleuze and Guattari ask in their book on Kafka and their answer is this: "Deterritorialisierung der Sprache, Kopplung des Individuellen ans unmittelbar Politische, kollektive Aussageverkettung" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1975, p. 27). In other words, "minor literature" designates deterritorialization of a major language through a minor work of literature written in the major language from a marginalized or minoritarian position. Minor literature is political and it is "collective". *Flush* is written in a major language (English) from a marginalized position (Woolf is both a woman and a woman writer). It has a "collective", enunciative value—it speaks for all women and all dogs. It is (as my reading will demonstrate) a political text, and on top of all these "minor" traits, it has until quite recently been left out of the process of canonization of Woolf's work in general even though it was a bestseller in its time.
- <sup>2</sup> Several biographies on Elizabeth Barrett Browning are available. Lilian Whiting's *A Study of Elizabeth Barrett Browning* came out as early as 1899. Woolf makes her own list of references and places them in an appendix to *Flush*. For a concise summary of Elizabeth's biography, one can consult the Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, Marjorie Stone: 'Browning, Elizabeth Barrett (1806–1861)', first published 2004, online edition 2008.

# BECOMING – A GROUP MEDITATION

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Lisa Nyberg

*Script from a live performance at the Pufendorf Institute  
May 25th 2014*

Hi, welcome.

My name is Lisa Nyberg and I am going to lead you in a group meditation today. This meditation is based on personal experience as well as acknowledged methods for relaxation and meditation. I am not a professional in this field, I am an artist exploring the possibilities of the traveling mind, the power of thought and suggestion. I am asking you to do this experiment with me, and hopefully you will take part in a transformative experience. Let us explore the subversive function of imagination.

We are going to enter into a world of shapeshifting. Shapeshifting is the possibility of changing the body's physical form. To transform, from one shape to another. Traditionally, this has been the practice of shamans and other spiritual leaders of different beliefs and religions, to access the power of an animal. But it has also been the cause for accusations, the pointed finger at "the other", the different, the maker of wicked ways and sorcery, the one who makes a pact with dark forces (the devil) to be able to access the powers of another creature. This creature being: the animal.

In Scandinavian and Saami folklore, this animal is usually the wolf, as in the werewolf, or the bear, as in the werebear. When a bear is perceived as having human traits, it is believed to be a "manbjörn", a man – bear – a belief that the bear is actually a man in bear shape. This process of man becoming bear is sometimes phrased as "gå i björn" that is "walking as the bear" or "gå i björnhamn" which is an expression describing the altered state as a haven for your bodily existence in the world. The transition can be self inflicted, or forced upon you with a spell cast by another, or even given to you at birth. There are a lot of stories of bears being killed and knives or other human attributes being found underneath its

skin, proving that it has actually been a man in bear shape. The motives for shapeshifting has mostly been revenge, envy or greed, but also (mainly in the Sami tradition) hunger, as in becoming a bear to be able to hibernate and survive the winter without having to worry about food.

Stories and folktales about shapeshifting show the possibility to transgress the boundaries of the human body, and in doing so, also the boundaries of humanity. Today, we will try to create an encounter with the bear, to access your inner connections, animal to animal.

If something is made present in your mind, it is here. It is real. You can make things happen.

This is not simply a journey of the mind, the body and mind can not be separated. This is indeed a bodily experience. Your body will start to change. Your body is adaptable and changeable, very much more than your intelligent mind can grasp. The body is your presence in the world, your haven, your home. It is the surface that meets the world. It changes the world and is changed by the world. Your relationship to your body, and the body and you as one, can be mixed, conflicted, uncertain. That is OK.

In this moment, you need to believe, to give yourself away, to put your trust in me and this situation (for a little while). You have to leave your critical mind behind. I know! This is the difficult part. Try telling your critical friend to relax for a minute, not to worry, I am sure she will be back in full critical force in a short while. But just for these minutes, let her rest in the background, press mute. Let yourself have this experience without judgment.

Let us go in active conversation with our bodies. You will ask your body and you, the body, will respond. Senses will be sharpened. Experiences past will be present. You will be here. Trust yourself. Let us meet the bear.

First of all, find a comfortable way to sit, or stand. Your feet firmly on the floor, your hands resting in your lap or by your sides. Let your shoulders relax, face relax, let your stomach out, legs relax. Your head is resting on your shoulders. During this time, feel free to change positions whenever you need to.

Breathe.

Notice your breathing, without judgment. Air moving in and out of your body. Your breathing is effortless. It's an automatic movement.

Now that you can trust your body.

Close your eyes, (if you have a tendency to feel faint, find a spot to focus on).  
Now, let's take a few deep, focused breaths together,  
Breathe in through your nose – fill your body, expanding your lungs and ribcage,  
down to the stomach. And release, let the air flow out, and with it all the tensions.  
In and out, in and out.  
Now, let go of control, and go back to automatic breathing.

Let your body lead the way.

Focus on the spot where the air enters your body. It should be somewhere at the tip of your nose.

Feel the air rushing in, and seeping out. Your nose is in front, it is the part of your body that enters the world.

The nose comes first.

Feel your nostrils. They can be dry and warm, or moist, cold. Notice what a powerful organ your nose is, detecting subtle changes in your environment. You can smell the fresh smell of new, green grass. The perfume like scent of flowers. The dark smell of warm asphalt. Of food.

Maybe you can smell that there is people around you, fabric and clothes, trees above you, buildings and roads. Maybe you catch a scent of another animal.

Some smells excite you, others pass by unnoticed.

Your nose grows large to take in all of the smells – feel how it expands with every breath you take, growing longer... and larger. Breathe in, and out.

Your nose stands out from your face, getting darker, and darker at the front. The tip of your nose being almost black, rounded with large, moist nostrils, taking in all the air, all the odors.

The smells makes your nostrils active, they shiver.

They expand to take in all of the smells, scents and odors. You start to scent the smells behind the smells – the soil beneath the green grass, the maggots turning it around, the smell of last year's leaves decomposing, the smell of roots absorbing water for the tree above you, the smell of a rabbit running over the lawn yesterday, the smell of fear the rabbit felt when a truck passed by. The smell of human presence at day and absence at night. The smells of cars and houses.

The smell of a forest far away.

You turn your nose a bit to the left and to the right to detect where the smells are coming from.

You lift your nose up towards the sky to catch a smell that excites you. The smells rushing into your cavities with every breath. Without effort. Filling your nose, the sinuses in your nose, behind your eyes, at the back of the throat, and down in your mouth.

You can taste the smell.

Your mouth is placed just below your nose. In your mouth rests a powerful sensory organ – the tongue.

You feel it filling your mouth. Resting in all its power, pressing against your teeth. It's a large muscle, ready to be activated to shift food around in your mouth.

With the tongue, you feel the inside of your teeth.

They are hard, strong, and smooth, like polished stones. Tightly pressed together in a row, making a wall around your tongue. When you press them together with your jaws they can crush leaves and berries, letting their juices flow over your tongue, catching their taste as it pushes the food to the back of your mouth.

In the front corners two teeth stand up like towers in the wall, and two others come down to meet them, sharp as spears. These are the hunting teeth, the gripping teeth, the teeth that hold fast.

These are the teeth you show to intimidate others that threaten you.

A taste lingers in your mouth from your last meal. It was a long, long time ago. Do you remember what you ate? Can you still taste it? The sweet, the sour, the salty.

It was too long ago.

The bear feels the urge for another meal. The bear needs to get its strength back. The bear needs to get up and follow the exiting smell.

It is time for us to let go of the bear.

We are going to take a deep breath, and when we breathe out we will let the bear go. You will feel how something is moving forward in your body, that a weight is lifted, feel a shift in your composition. Take a deep breath in, and out – let go. Once more: in and out

– let go.

Lift your hands, rub them against each other. Lift them to your face and brush them from your nose and out towards the sides. Over your head. Neck. Shoulders. Arms. Stomach. Legs. When you feel ready, you can open your eyes. Take a moment to remind yourself of where you are.

Welcome back.

I hope you had a brief encounter. I hope you experienced a transformative moment.

Please feel free to come talk to me after if you have comments or questions.

Thank you.

# SEEING ANIMALS. ANTHROPOMORPHISM BETWEEN FACT AND FUNCTION

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Monica Libell

Anthropomorphism is a ubiquitous and persistent cultural phenomenon that has been with us since the onset of minded interaction with our surroundings. Seen as a theological sin in the Middle ages it has today developed into a mostly silent but looming social, cultural, and scientific anxiety. Within the scientific community, research into animals' mental states is fraught with the fear of an embarrassing subjective bias that might undermine the scientific validity. By way of attributing human traits to animals, the critique of anthropomorphism usually states that it misinterprets animals' true needs and fails to recognize what animals "really are." Notwithstanding that anthropomorphism routinely is seen as an intellectual failure, it has historically proven very useful in providing functional explanations and meaning in the relationships between humans and the world, including making sense of animal behavior. Such claims for functionality creates problems in science, since functionality and its corollary, predictability, are valued goals in science, along with scientific certainty. Methods that serve functionality ideally also serve queries about truth.

However, historically this has not always been the case, with functionality and truth sometimes tugging in different directions. This prompts questions about the role of functionality in science and its relationship to certainty – questions that will be discussed in this paper.<sup>1</sup> It will focus on the controversy over anthropomorphism in the cognitive sciences and direct our attention to the scientific goals of functionality and certainty. Though not always recognized as a problem in the contemporary discourse, an initial recourse to the historical debate on the relationship between subjective (bias) and objective (reality) will be used to frame the inherent tension between the divergent goals.

If one turns to dictionaries, one finds that anthropomorphism is derived from the Greek words for man – *anthropos* – and form – *morph*. It means to assign human mental states, feelings, and responses to non-human animals, inanimate objects, and spiritual forces. In other words, anthropomorphism has as much to do with gods, angels, clouds, and rocks as with the more specific relationship

between animals and humans.<sup>2</sup> Historically, anthropomorphism was a threat to the undertakings of medieval theology as it is today considered of science, making anthropomorphism a theological sin long before it became a scientific one. At its core, anthropomorphism is about viewing the world from a human perspective or put differently, that all experiences and events are filtered through human perception. We give life to the dead or inanimate, we see faces in the clouds, we perceive smiles in chimps, and a full range of emotions and intentions in dogs and cats. *Are humans confusing themselves with the world? Can humans see the world in any other way than from a human and therefore unavoidably subjective perspective? How does this cognitive proclivity relate to epistemic purposes of scientific interrogations and a pursuit of objectivity?*

### *From theological sin to scientific failure*

Anthropologists believe that things we have social relationships with we can manipulate, through entreaties or threats. We ascribe, as David Hume already wrote in 1757, “thought and reason and passion, and sometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a resemblance with ourselves.” (Hume, 1889, section III) Lack of such familiarity or analogy creates sensations of horror and antipathy. If sociability is an inherent human characteristic, creating a social bond with a god serves functions of creating a sense of relationship, familiarity, and control. If we see something as humanlike, “we can try to establish a social relationship.” (Guthrie, 1993, p. 5) Early Western examples of this can be found in ancient writings by Xenophanes and Plato. Xenophanes (1903) satirized contemporary religious views as being human projections and argued that if horses, lions, and cattle worshiped gods, they would depict them in physical shapes similar to their own. Greek gods had fair skin and blue eyes, whereas African gods were described as dark-skinned and brown-eyed. In *Republic*, Plato (2004) criticized poets and storytellers, such as Homer, for attributing human characteristics – particularly our most reproachable qualities – to the gods. The gods were powerful and immortal, but hardly noble and good. They were awash with corrupt human qualities. Though shifting to an omnibenevolent and monotheistic Christian god, perceptions of a humanlike god kept its popularity into the Middle ages. Despite the rage of the Catholic church-fathers against anthropomorphism as a sin, an approachable god equipped with human-like legs who walked in Eden seemed to the masses both more believable and reassuring. This religious view was matched with an equally anthropomorphic philosophical perspective. Aristotle had created an entire world based on anthropomorphic functionality; all entities - natural, supernatural, and artificial - were imbued with an inherent *telos*, providing unique



purpose and intention to the developmental perfection of each object. For over 1500 years Aristotle's natural philosophy commanded the attention of the educated Western world. His anthropomorphized reality formed the basis for human perception and interaction, in which functionality, truth, and meaning seemed joined in happy matrimony.

With the emergence of science, anthropomorphism was perceived as an intellectual failing and as such condemned by Francis Bacon. In *Novum Organum* (1620) he defined and rejected four types of so-called Idols that he felt besieged and muddled the human mind. Bacon recognized anthropomorphism as a default mode of human thinking; whether it was a belief in narrow-mindedness and parochialism of the pedestrian mind (Agassi, 1973) or an inherent flaw resulting from Adam's infraction in Eden and bequeathed to mankind for eternity (Harrison, 2007). With man's fallible cognitive faculties, anthropomorphism appeared as an inability to see clearly and to separate the subjective and the objective world. "The human understanding is like a false mirror, which, receiving rays irregularly, distorts and discolors the nature of things by mingling its own nature with it" (Bacon, 1620: Book 1, aphorism XLI). The remedy was for Bacon to call for a rigorous scientific program with the imposition of external constraints and intellectual discipline.

The division of the subjective and the objective, which had been common fare since ancient times and was further confirmed by Rene' Descartes and Francis Bacon, was most intensely debated during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in the aftermath of Kantian epistemology. Immanuel Kant had claimed that we are prisoners of our human perception. The human subjective mind confines us to scientific inquiries and descriptions of the world within the dimensions of our mental categories, such as time and space. The objective world, the true essence of things, which Kant called *das Ding an Sich*, was unknowable and could only be speculated on (Kant, 1783). It was the realm of metaphysics and religion and rendered the existence and nature of a Christian god inaccessible to human knowledge. As would later his more well-known student Friedrich Nietzsche, neo-Kantian philosopher Friedrich Lange concurred that perspectives independent of our mental categories are unattainable. "Ideas are produced in us which owe their peculiar nature to our organisation, although they are occasioned by the external world" (Lange, 1877, p. 202).<sup>3</sup> Through the filtering of the human perception, worldly events and objects are translated into meaning. Perception necessarily includes interpretation. As Ludwig Wittgenstein (1993) remarked, we never merely see, but always see *as*.

Though philosophical thought seemed to doubt the possibility of a truly objective approach to the world, many adherents in the developing sciences rejected the belief in a confined subjective prison. And in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, a new value was incorporated into scientific epistemology, objectivity. Scientific know-

ledge understood as the philosophical examination of obstacles to certainty and absolute truth, can according to Lorraine Daston and Peter Galison, be seen as preceding the history of objectivity. With the growing belief that nature presented a reality which was separate from our senses and perceptions of it, objective knowledge emerged as a tantalizing fantasy. With the new-fangled ideal of objectivity, values and competences such as emotional detachment, automatic procedures for registering data, quantification, and repeatability were integrated into the realm of science. The mechanical objectivity that developed strove for true science that “showed no trace of the knower.” The scientific enterprise was about knowing the world, not the self, and necessitated the separation of knower from knowledge. This moralized epistemology created a scientific ethos that became the opposite world of the private life of the ordinary citizen. This is also why objectivity would appear as “indifferent to familiar human values.” It represented its own distinct set of values, where the ideals of the scientist were diametrically opposed to those of the layman (Daston & Galison, 2007, pp. 32-37, 53).

### *Darwinian evolution and anthropomorphism*

With Darwinian evolutionary theories, this epistemic separation of knower from knowledge was challenged as anthropomorphism was invited into legitimate scientific investigation. Backed by his belief in evolutionary co-development, Georges Romanes, a young friend of Darwin, postulated strong similarities of cognitive and mental processes between humans and animals. Romanes’ method of extrapolating abilities found in humans to other animals was labeled anthropomorphism. He gathered anecdotal evidence from professionals working closely with animals, which led to the claim that animals possessed a “rudimentary human mind.” Romanes (1884) made anthropomorphism his method in his book *Animal Intelligence* and laid the foundation of comparative psychology. With the rise of positivist philosophy and behaviorism this introspective and analogous approach was increasingly frowned upon and fell into disrepute.

Throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century investigations into animal mental states were not valid subjects of scientific inquiry. But in 1976 the esteemed physiologist Donald Griffin, mostly known for his part in unraveling bats’ navigation system, echolocation, once again revived anthropomorphism as an investigative method. In his book *Question of Animal Awareness* animals’ minds were the main subject matters and his book was followed by more assured publications in the 1980s and 1990s in which animals’ awareness was taken for granted. During this time-period, Griffin established a new research field, coined cognitive ethology, with the purpose of investigating thinking, emotions, and consciousness in non-human

animals. Griffin's plea that animal cognition, rather than just behavior, become a standard research interest spawned both praise and criticism.<sup>4</sup> While a significant number of scientists celebrated the approach and adopted his perspectives, others voiced their concerns. Common complaints among scientists and philosophers were that the field would become dependent on so-called mentalistic anthropomorphic explanations that would rely on subjective introspection and anecdotes, "more akin to the way a dog owner envisions his pet's day than the way a scientist typically approaches the study of animal behavior." (Yoon, 2003) To allow for Griffin's analogous conclusions to take hold the historic war against letting subjectivity and the private self into the scientific enterprise would be lost.

But Griffin and fellow 'animal cognitivists' defended their perspectives with reference to what they saw as a much needed revitalization of the animal sciences. Branded as outdated, the questions, methodologies, terminology, techniques and results of the old established behaviorist school seemed incomplete, unsatisfactory, or outright erroneous.<sup>5</sup> They no longer provided a framework for successful scientific research as they failed to "move our understanding of behavior forward." (Burghardt, 1991, p. 86) A well-known case highlighting this point was an experiment conducted by Canadian psychologist Donald Hebb in the mid-1940s, in which he compared anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic descriptions of the behavior of chimpanzees. He summarizes their findings:

A thoroughgoing attempt to avoid anthropomorphic description in the study of temperament was made over a two-year period at the Yerkes laboratories. All that resulted was an almost endless series of specific acts in which no order or meaning could be found. Not only did objective descriptions fail to capture aspects of behavior, but by the use of frankly anthropomorphic concepts of emotion and attitude one could quickly and easily describe the peculiarities of the individual animals, and with this information a newcomer to the staff could handle the animals as he could not safely otherwise. Whatever the anthropomorphic terminology implied about conscious states in the chimpanzee, it provides *an intelligible and practical guide to behavior*. (Hebb, 1946, p. 88)

Backed by experiments like these, cognitivists offered new sets of questions, modes of interpretations, even a new language. They found inspiration in fields outside of the natural and biological sciences, such as anthropology, sociology, linguistics, and child psychology, disciplines that all included a tool box previously reserved for research into the human psyche and behavior. Key concepts in their scientific endeavor stressed functionality, sociality, communication, and predictability, over traditional neutral and objective fact-searching. The approach was defended with

reference to the new field's high scientific standard and to the established belief in evolutionary theory. By pointing to high correlations between hypotheses and the ability to correctly predict animal behavior, they claimed that their theories were functional.

### *Facts versus functions*

In 1992, the dispute deepened as fellow physiologist John S. Kennedy, rallied against Griffin's approach in the book *The New Anthropomorphism*. With the purpose to inform of the hidden dangers of anthropomorphism (even metaphorically used) he wanted to awaken scientists to the largely unconscious but ever increasing susceptibility toward "scientifically disreputable" activities. Joining Kennedy's side and stressing the gap between the professional scientist and the ignorant laymen psychologist Clive Wynne described anthropomorphism as "amateurish" and inappropriate to science since it was based on a "mentalism." "Though analogies are often useful in any branch of science, to use folk psychological notions of human psychology in attempting to understand animal behavior cannot be constructive" (Wynne, 2005, p.151). And borrowing the voice of British evolutionary anthropologist Robin Dunbar, Kennedy concluded: "If the study of animal behavior is to mature as a science, the liberation from the delusions of anthropomorphism must go on." (Kennedy, 1992, p. 5)

While adhering to the scientific goal of objective knowledge, Kennedy conceded that absolute certainty exists only as a regulative ideal. Instead, "it is the usefulness of a theory, its ability to deliver anticipated practical results, preferably in a test situation that we say that they appear true." (Kennedy, 1992, p. 30-31) Here the juxtaposition of truth and certainty with functionality and predictability was seen as proceeding in tandem, something Griffin would readily agree with. However, do the goals of functionality and truth necessarily overlap or do they, at least sometimes, pull in different directions? An example from history suggests that the relationship between functionality and scientific epistemology is vexed. If we compare Newton's theories on motion with Einstein's relativity theories, we could claim that Newton's theories on motion are more functional than true. Einstein's theories both complement and supersede Newton's. They are theoretically more probable and ostensibly more objectively correct (in the sense that they seem more true to actual relations in nature), yet in some practical calculations less functional than Newton's. This means that depending on the problem being pursued, one chooses the theory that seems most effective at solving the problem at hand.

This suggests that there are epistemic choices to be made in relation to methodologies and the goals of the investigation. If we continue reading Kennedy, we

realize that his disagreement with Griffin and other cognitivists is indeed about the approach to collecting and interpreting the data. Though both Griffin and Kennedy are looking for scientific validity in their research, Kennedy asserts that it is specifically a *lack of objectivity* that produces anthropomorphic and hence scientifically flawed results. He cites Frans de Waal approvingly while noting that people who work with animals are easily compromised in their scientific attitude, since they are exposed to animal behavior that has “the power to convince.” They “gain confidence in cognitive explanations” when they simply should be “gathering . . . explicit evidence.” (Kennedy, 1992, p. 27) As the scientist and the research objects on a daily basis share considerable time together, the scientist inevitably (even involuntarily and unknowingly) develops a social relationship with the animals. The research results get tainted by the interference of a private self, which distorts the evidence by offering interpretations based on human experiences. To avoid such anthropomorphic conclusions, Kennedy advises researchers to use methods that are aimed at an automatism in which experimental procedures and results appear untouched by the human hand and unmediated by human interpretation, much akin to the way a machine registers data. This boils down to the question whether splitting the self into a professional and a private entity is possible. Can an objective world of things (Kant’s *Ding an sich*) be gleaned from scientific investigations devoid of the stain of human subjective perception?

One field that has emerged as *gefundenes Fressen* among both ‘cognitivists’ like Griffin and ‘neo-behaviorists’ like Kennedy is neurology (Griffin, 2001; Jamieson, 2002; Kennedy, 1992). As an immanent dimension of the life-sciences, neurological biologism holds out the alluring promise of finding the objective truth about minded beings’ defining cognitive abilities by way of neutral machine-like data-gathering (Precht, 2001).<sup>6</sup> Peter Klopfer voices his optimism:

As our experimental technologies come ever closer to providing us with the neural concomitants of mental experience, it is reasonable to expect that we will be able to confirm whether or not they exist in organisms other than man. The new anthropomorphism would seem to have a solid experimental basis, and the principle of parsimony (Morgan’s canon) suggests we assume consciousness possible among animals. (Klopfer, 2005, p. 206)

Technologies constructed to measure neurological responses are well underway. As one physicist argues in response to Thomas Nagel’s famous question whether we can ever know what it is like to be a bat:

In principle, science could build a full physical emulation of the bat’s brain and firing patterns, and then say, there, that’s your subjective experience.

Of course a *human* could not access that experience, but then that's a limitation of the human, not of the scientific knowledge. The limitation is that the human cannot sufficiently alter her brain to fully emulate the firing pattern (if she did she would no longer be human). But science can interrogate the full physical emulation of the bat's brain and might answer any well-posed question about it. (Hellier, 2013)

While leaving aside the commentator's anthropomorphic statements about science (as an autonomous and purposeful actor) it seems reasonable to believe that the development of sophisticated technologies might be able to provide detailed neurological data as to what it is like to be a bat or for that matter any other animal. An example is mentioned in the work by Musallam et al. (2004) in which the researchers were able to detect cortical areas of macaques, from which they could decode the signals of an intent to make a directed arm movement, even when no movement ever took place. These same areas could also provide information about the animals' relative interest or level of motivation. Whatever the monkeys might tell us of their intentions and level of interest in performing a particular course of action, the activity of their cortex seemed to provide eloquent and precise information.

From such findings in neurology, a multiplicity of avenues for scientific investigations might be pursued, and possibly with an equal range of interpretations. What Kennedy deemed as simple data collection, needs at some point to be communicated, through interpretations and sensible explanations. It is at this intersection of data-collection, interpretation, and explanation that the controversy over animal cognition takes shape. That all interpretations and explanations are the fruits of human understanding seems inevitable. Any plausible explanation is built on understanding, in that the observer understands the events taking place in a certain way. And understanding is something one can only do on an individual and subjective basis (Mitchell, 1997). That any observation includes a particular view and is part and parcel of human knowledge forms one point of controversy in the debate. Many cognitivists believe that a subjective view is not only inevitable but may yield valid scientific information. Those who side with Kennedy seem to hold that any subjective part of observation can be detached, leaving behind "objective" knowledge. The separation of subject and object, a vision that fueled Bacon's scientific program and cemented 19<sup>th</sup> century scientific epistemology, retains its compelling force to science in the search for unbiased truth. But is there not good reason – as well as scholarly latitude – to believe that the regulative ideal of scientific certainty about animal behavior and cognition can be pursued using a *multitude* of academic approaches rather than just one, some of which might include the use of conscious but careful methodologies of subjective interpretations?

### *Perspectivism in cross-species research?*

Many contemporary scholars argue that sociality is not secondary to cognition, just as feeling is not secondary to thought. Indeed, social interaction might be the foundation of the complexity of cognitive processes (Ostrum, 1984). From an evolutionary perspective, its survival component points to its importance for humans to understand other humans. From this viewpoint it is contestable whether complete detachment of emotion and sociality from abstract thought is possible. The Cartesian solipsist decree *cogito, ergo sum* might be better stated as “I think, feel, and am social, therefore I am”! As humans we are social creatures who need to envision an environment that we can interact with. We anthropomorphize in order to predict, understand, and control our environment. We do not merely describe, but evaluate our interaction and behavior. Indeed, we deliver affective judgments at least as much as analytical judgments. A method committed to a dualism of mind and behavior assumes that making sense of animals as subjects necessarily entails an intellectual process of inference or “attribution” to bridge the gap between what we can observe (behavior) and what is supposed to be hidden (the mind). Such inferences are based on analogies from one’s own experiences. Arluke and Sanders note that social interaction is a “mutual endeavor” that “involves taking on the role of the other . . . and adjusting one’s behavior to what is seen as the content of the other’s ‘mind’” (Arluke & Sanders, 1996: 61).

Here anthropomorphism (See footnote 2, type F) is invoked as a scientific method (similar to what Gordon Burghardt (1985) coined critical anthropomorphism) though a term like *perspectivism* may seem equally appropriate. The perspectival mode is according to Lorraine Daston (2005) rooted in the compelling desire of catching a glimpse of the mind of another individual. She describes it as the belief in the existence of other minds and the wish to transcend the limits of one’s own intellect, emotions, experience and explore that of others. This demands a scientific perspectivism that allows investigation and deliberation. Acknowledging the multitude of perspectives would be coupled with a portion of hermeneutics. It means relying on one’s own subjective experiences, while deeming the hope of understanding the other’s point of view as meaningful. Perspectivism (here used as an umbrella term for a broad range of scholarly approaches in cognitive cross-species research) has been explored by a growing number of scholars.<sup>7</sup> An example is Clinton Sanders’ (2008) investigation of inter-species friendship, in which perspectivism appears as a crucial component. In relationships with animal-companions, the anticipation and understanding of the non-human’s emotional experience orients the human actor’s behavior toward her/his companion and acts as a practical basis for successful and rewarding collective action. Explanations geared toward functionality and predictability lie at the center of these encounters

more than machine-like fact-gathering. It is what one thinks a companion-animal can do, what they feel and want that infuse the relationship with meaning and reward. And when these anticipations come true they prove functional in that they correctly predicted the outcome of a situation.

Though this type of functionality – that seems to have more to do with meaningfulness than absolute certainty – receives little credence within sciences such as comparative psychology, it does get considerable attention in its sister-discipline, child psychology. During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century a behaviorist-like methodology was common in child psychology, with heavier reliance on input and output models and limited attention given to cognitive functions. But the field later shifted in favor of a more pronounced cognitive, developmental approach. This is also a reason why the methodologies and perspectives used in child psychology are increasingly seen as potential tools in fields like cognitive ethology. After all, the question of making sense of the behavior of ‘others’ is not specific to non-human animals. The scientific investigator encounters the same problem of difference – and hence enters into the realm of comparative psychology – when dealing with the mentally ill, other cultures, as well as small children. The potentials of such cross-fertilization of disciplines are explored in an article by Kristin Andrews. Though circumventing issues of absolute truth, she suggests the import of scientific methods to cognitive ethology that are currently used to serve function in child psychology. The checklist commonly used in determining the development of a child’s behavior could in modified form be helpful in understanding animal behavior. This would, Andrews argues, allow for the formulation of hypotheses and the experimental testing of these in order to find their predictive force.

### *Closing remarks*

There is perhaps no more fundamental corollary of post-Darwinian biology than that all life on earth is related and share traits with one another. In a sense, all biological life shares a literal ‘family resemblance’ since we are all situated on the same, enormous family tree. Machines do not share this evolution as they are devoid of biological life and functions. That non-human mammals have some identical features and some similar to us seem beyond doubt. What they are exactly remain a conundrum that we will continue to entertain ourselves with for a long time, maybe without ever truly knowing. However, the mental state of another human being may be just as inaccessible to our individual mind. Human sensory experiences are distinctly embodied, leaving another person’s actual experiences forever out of reach. We can only ‘know’ somebody’s experiences through a process of in-



direct inference. Analogies, introspection, and neurological scanning are possible methods available to us.

Communication between adults, with similar cultural background and same language sometimes convey the (possibly deceptive) impression that one individual fully understands the other. The lack of comparable communication paths between humans and non-human animals give a (maybe equally deceptive) sense of unsurmountable barrier. With these inherent scientific challenges in mind, it seems hard to bring forth any conclusive reason why we should not allow for a multitude of investigations into animal cognition, including borrowing functional methodologies and approaches from other disciplines. Regardless of where we come down on animal cognition and prospective academic approaches to it, disallowing the indulgence in the imagination of another mind, whether human or animal, would as Lorraine Daston points out, “doom us to understand only our own kind, because only in that circumscribed realm can empathetic and sympathetic understanding succeed” (Daston, 2005, p. 54).

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### Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> I wish to thank Kristina Jennbert, Amelie Björck, and John Allen for comments on an early draft.
- <sup>2</sup> The concept has no clear definition and a complete discussion of the different interpretations goes unfortunately beyond the scope of this article. At least five types that pertain to animal behavior and abilities can be detected: **A.** To interpret animals' traits as being caused by similar mechanisms or being constituted in ways similar to human traits. This is done either by ascribing traits to animals to which the traits do not in fact *ever* apply (categorical mistake) or by misinterpreting a behavior, for instance confusing a chimp's bared teeth for a smile, when in fact it is a gesture of threat (situational mistake). **B.** To *overestimate* the similarity between humans and non-humans. This is done by *overinterpreting* animals' responses, facial expressions, body movements, and vocal sounds. **C.** To use human language in order to describe animal behavior. Since pain and suffering are human terms, used to expressing human feelings and sensations, the extrapolation of the terms to animals may be misguided. **D.** To represent romantic imaginary or fictional animals as similar to humans, comparable to traditional children fables - what we could call *Disneyfication*. **E.** To ascribe behavior to animals that is basically comments on human behavior. i.e. perceptions of animals as being filthy, overly aggressive, sexual, gluttonous, ferocious, cruel, sly, etc. - what we could call *Reversed Disneyfication*. **F.** To apply the innate human ability for empathy toward understanding and anticipating animal reactions. For a further discussion of definitions of anthropomorphism, see Fischer, 1991.
- <sup>3</sup> For an in-depth discussion of Nietzsche's view of anthropomorphism, see Stark, G. (1980) Nietzsche and Anthropomorphism, *Critica. Hispanoamerica de Filosofia*, vol. 12, pp. 41-71.
- <sup>4</sup> Griffin wrote a number of scholarly books on animal cognition including *Question of Animal Awareness* (1976), *Animal Thinking* (1985), *Animal Minds* (1992), *Animal Minds: Beyond Cognition to Consciousness* (2001).
- <sup>5</sup> Behaviorism has over the years attracted a somewhat unflattering reputation, being associated with narrow-mindedness and reductionism. It should be noted that most of today's opponents of cognitive ethology do not call themselves behaviorists. Furthermore, whereas I find it pedagogically instructive to sketch two opposing positions on animals' cognition and behavior, it should be noted that the cognitive sciences contain a wide range of positions.
- <sup>6</sup> For a historical account of the increasing relevance of neuroscience in biology and psychology see, Kandel, E. R. and Squire, L. R. (2000), Neuroscience: breaking down scientific barriers to the study of brain and mind, *Science* vol. 290, pp.1113-1120.
- <sup>7</sup> A posthumanist approach by historian of science Donna Haraway or a methodological approach by anthropologist Barbara Smuts, may serve as two examples.



# “THE WONDERMENT OF THIS TAXONOMY”. ANIMALS AND WONDER FROM THE PRE-MODERN TO THE MODERN

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Philip Armstrong

My title comes from Michel Foucault’s preface to *The Order of Things*, which quotes a famous passage from Jorge Luis Borges.

This book first arose out of a passage in Borges, out of the laughter that shattered, as I read the passage, all the familiar landmarks of my thought – *our* thought, the thought that bears the stamp of our age and our geography – breaking up all the ordered surfaces and all the planes with which we are accustomed to tame the wild profusion of existing things.... This passage quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies’. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own... (Foucault, 1994, xv; citing Borges, 1999, p. 231).

What interests me about Borges’ (fake) encyclopedia entry, and Foucault’s reaction to it, is the relationship amongst three elements: animals, the experience of wonder, and the systematic organisation of knowledge. What Foucault calls “the wonderment of that taxonomy” arises not so much from the animals described – although some are fabulous – but from the fact that, in a way completely contrary to the principles of enlightenment taxonomy, each category in this supposed system implies principles of selection incompatible with the others. In what follows, I want to focus upon Foucault’s suggestion that wonderment has the power to make us recognise the limits of what we know, or more precisely of *how* we know – the limitations to the way we organise our knowledge.

But what kind of thing is wonder in the first place? A feeling, a thought, a perception, a flavour of experience? It's helpful to begin with a *locus classicus* of the experience of wonder as occasioned by the utterly unprecedented: Christopher Columbus's letters about the New World. According to Renaissance scholar Stephen Greenblatt, in these letters, wonder functions for Columbus as "the agent of conversion: a fluid mediator between ... the realm of objects and the subjective impressions made by those objects, the recalcitrant otherness of the new world and the emotional effect aroused by that otherness" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 75). Greenblatt goes on to point out that Renaissance philosopher Francesco Patrizi posited "marveling as a special faculty of the mind, a faculty which in effect mediates between the capacity to think and the capacity to feel" (Greenblatt, 1992, p. 79). So, in Greenblatt's reading of Columbus, the experience of wonder involves either a state of suspension between thought and feeling, between the known and the unknown, between the predictable and the possible; or else the conversion of one of these terms into the other.

The kind of wonderment that Greenblatt finds in Columbus is also clearly at work in the writing of the Venetian Antonio Pigafetta, describing his participation in the first successful circumnavigation of the globe in 1519-21, undertaken under the leadership (until he died in the Philippines) of Ferdinand Magellan. Describing the birds encountered on the way to the Americas, Pigafetta writes:

There is also another species of bird of such kind that, when the female wishes to lay its eggs, she goes to do so on the back of the male, and there they are hatched. And the birds of this last kind have no feet and are always in the sea.... And there is another kind of bird which lives on nothing else but the ordure of other birds (this thing is true) .... For I have seen it follow the other birds until they drop ordure (Pigafetta, 1962, p. 35).

Having reached land, the voyagers find that "[t]here are ... swine which have their navel on their back, and large birds with a spoon-shaped beak and no tongue" (39). They also encounter a huge man "clad in the skin of a certain animal, which skin was very skilfully sewn together. And this animal has the head and ears as large as a mules, and a neck and body like those of a camel, a stag's legs, and a tail like that of a horse" (42).

I find my own wonder in response to these descriptions takes two forms. The first is a delight in the imaginative exorbitance of the descriptions – the form of wonder, I suggest (for reasons I will explain below) closest to what Pigafetta himself might have felt, and aimed to evoke in his readers. For me, however, as a result of historical distance from these descriptions, there is also a second kind of wonder: a pleasurable curiosity that provokes me to try and discover what actual species might have been behind these descriptions.

The easiest one to identify is the hybrid beast whose pelt provides clothing for the Patagonian giant: Pigafetta's description assembles, according to the conventional technique for describing monsters, anatomical parts from four separate but already-familiar European species, and thereby gives a clear enough picture of a guanaco (*Lama guanicoe*). Also easy to recognise is the spoonbill (*Platalea ajaja*), an ibis-like waterbird found in various parts of the South American continent. The hogs with navels on their haunches are no doubt misrecognitions of the peccary or javelina (*Pecari tajacu*) of South America, a pig-like animal with a scent gland above its tail that looks like a belly-button. The bird that eats the droppings of other birds is probably a jaegar or skua (*Stercorarius parasiticus*), which commonly feeds by chasing other seabirds until they drop – not their guano, but the fish they have just caught. But the footless birds that lay eggs on the backs of their mates remain a source of enduring wonder, enhanced by perplexity.

Leaving aside for a little while – though I will come back to it – this second kind of wonder, which has to do with the pursuit of intellectual curiosity, I want to trace the first kind, the aesthetic delight in reading about exotic or fabulous creatures, back to the bestiary tradition of the middle ages – which is undoubtedly a major influence on Pigafetta. The bestiaries, compiled and lavishly illustrated by monks, are in many ways the archetypal literary form for expressing the relationship between animals and wonder.

The medieval bestiaries' main source (though by no means their only one) is the second-century CE Greek text, usually referred to as *Physiologus* (roughly translatable as 'the Naturalist'). In both that text and the bestiaries that recycled it, marvellous qualities are ascribed not only to mythological creatures like the phoenix, basilisk and unicorn, but also to extant – albeit exotic – fauna. Examples include the panther, a "very beautiful and tame" animal who, upon waking, breathes out a "very sweet smell that seems to contain every kind of scent" so that other animals "gather from far and near" to follow him; the antelope, who uses serrated antlers to "saw down great tall trees and fell them to the ground"; and the whale, who lies basking on the ocean surface until sailors mistake the beast's back for an island and make landfall and light fires, at which point the whale dives and takes them into the depths (Barber, 1992, p. 31, 34, 204).

Of course, the bestiaries were not solely composed in order to inspire a sense of the marvellous. Their more serious function was to teach religious lessons from the examples given by animals – reading what was sometimes thought of as 'the book of Nature', the pattern of religious significance that God inscribed in his creation. So then, in the case of the panther, his attractive breath makes him an emblem of Christ, who after his resurrection "pours out sweetness" to draw souls to salvation; the antelope with his lumberjack's headgear signifies "you, O Man," for whom "the Two Testaments serve you as horns, with the help of which you can fell and

root out all bodily and spiritual vices”; and the deceitful whale of course represents the devil, plunging down to “the fires of Gehenna” with those who mistake his promises for secure foundations on which to build their lives (Barber, 1992, pp. 30-2, 34, 204).



*Miniature of the debarkation from the ark, and the rainbow. From the Egerton Genesis Picture Book, 14th century. Attributed to the Egerton Master. British Library.*

While I respond to the descriptions of the animals in bestiaries, and to their gorgeous illustrations, with the kind of intellectual vertigo Greenblatt identifies in Columbus, or Foucault feels in reading Borges, I find that as soon as I read the theological meanings that their authors attach to them, my sense of wonder ebbs. To a modern non-Christian there is something disappointing, a kind of anticlimax, when the fabulous narrative or description of the animal is explained, or moralised, so neatly. Cultural historian Philip Fisher explains why this might be, although he doesn't discuss bestiaries specifically. His primary example of wonder is the rainbow, and here's what he says about the story of the rainbow that appears at the end of the story of the Great Flood, when Noah and his family and his floating zoo have all reached dry ground again, and the waters have receded, and a rainbow appears as a sign of God's promise that “the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh”:



The religious meaning connected to the story of Noah, the flood, and God that leaps into the well-trained mind, distracts wonder, or to say it more strongly, preempts the possibility of wonder.... The story ... is positioned like a filter across just that experience that would elicit a lingering and free play of the mind, a delight and interest, a curiosity – in short, a combination of passion and energy, intellectual alertness and pleasure in the unknown .... To speak this way implies a deep hostility ... between meaning, in so far as meaning immobilizes attention, and aesthetic wonder and the exploratory curiosity that it sponsors (Fisher, 1998, p. 38).

Fisher suggests here that there might be a contrast – indeed an enmity – between, on the one hand, wonder as a play of passionate energy and intellectual alertness in response to the unknown; and on the other hand, the impulse to resolve the unknown into the already-known, into a definite and pre-given meaning. According to this account, then, religious meaning – in fact any foundationalist system of interpretation, any closure of meaning – is the lethal enemy of wonder.

This is an important aspect of the relationship between wonder and knowledge. But of course it doesn't entirely account for the way wonder operates in the medieval bestiary. For one thing, Fisher's schema underestimates the aesthetic and intellectual force of religious wonder itself – wonder at the redemptive mysteries of God's work. But it is also the case that the bestiaries do include a number of animals whose wondrous qualities do not prompt any Christian moral. When, for example, the bestiarist describes Harz birds or Hercinia (named after their home in the mountains of Germany), whose "feathers shine in the darkness, so that, however dark the night, they ... serve to light the way", and adds no religious lesson, the sense of wonder remains untouched by any pre-conceived system of meaning (Barber, 1992, p. 145). And once again, a kind of wonder develops and modifies when the reader pursues a possible explanation – such as this one: barn owls, because they tend to roost in places with old and rotting wood, sometimes get bioluminescent fungi lodged in their feathers, with the result that as they fly they glow slightly on very dark nights (George and Yapp, 1991, p. 186). Encountering this explanation, I find my original wonderment at the lantern-bright Hartz birds is replaced with another kind, or perhaps two different kinds. The first is an ever-renewed astonishment at the extraordinary possibilities of nature; the second is an admiration for the cultural process by which someone's original experience of wonder at observing this phenomenon has been documented, preserved, transmitted and reshaped by successive writers and illustrators.

The transition from medieval to early modern culture produced a highly significant shift in emphasis in the relation between wonder and natural-historical

knowledge. It is obviously impossible, in the scope of this essay, to sketch out even a general history of this change: all I can do here, before turning to contemporary examples, is touch on a few of the most obvious figures that such a history would encompass.

Fisher argues that wonder is central to the work of René Descartes. He quotes the philosopher and mathematician's final work, *The Passions of the Soul*, in which Descartes identifies wonder as 'the first of all the passions' (Descartes, 1649, part 2 article 53), and then argues that wonder has an integral function within the famed Cartesian 'method':

in its connection to learning and to science wonder is a key part of the process.... The [Cartesian] method is not a process of the intellect alone, but of the intellect, energized by wonder, rather than need, driven to consider objects brought to the attention of the intellect by the surprise of wonder.... It is here ... that we can see what is meant by the phrase [attributed to Socrates] 'Philosophy begins in wonder.' I [would therefore] expand the saying to read: 'Philosophy begins in wonder, continues on at every moment by means of wonder, and ends with explanation that produces, when first heard, a new and equally powerful experience of wonder to that with which it began.' Wonder, in this sense, we can call the poetics of thought (Fisher, 1998, pp. 40, 41).

This expanded definition of the relationship between wonder and thought helpfully articulates, in a dialectical fashion, the apparent contradiction between Greenblatt's notion of wonder as *suspended* between thought and feeling, between the known and the unknown, and his alternative notion of wonder as an *agent of conversion* between thought and feeling, between known and unknown.

Rather less convincing, however, is Fisher's ascription to Descartes of such a positive attitude to wonder. On the contrary, Descartes seems most often entirely determined to impose his mathematical-mechanical model for understanding the world, so that for him wonder becomes replaced by a fixed system of meaning – the very move that Fisher finds unacceptable in the biblical story about the rainbow. Indeed Descartes' project, although it might have begun in wonder, undertakes quite explicitly to move past it, to leave it behind; to dissolve wonder through the discovery of mechanistically-conceived causes and effects; to burn it out through the application of a corrosive rationalism. In *The Passions of the Soul* he warns that

all too often, we wonder excessively, and are astonished by things of little or no consideration, rather than feeling too little wonder. And this can entirely remove, or at least pervert, our use of reason. That is why, although it is good to be born with some kind of inclination to this passion because it

disposes us to the acquisition of sciences, afterwards we must try as much as possible to rid ourselves of it (Descartes, 1649, part 2 article 76).

Thus in Cartesianism wonder is necessarily both temporary and, as it were, immature.

What Fisher's reading of Descartes provides, then, is another tension or apparent contradiction: on the one hand, wonder is the fuel of scientific thought, providing the spark that drives the engine of reason and discovery onwards; on the other hand, wonder is an immature primary impulse that first inclines the mind to reason, but must be surpassed by it. In this latter view, the supersession of wonder by reason is constitutive of a mature system of right knowledge about the world.

Linnaeus, of course, would have to be another key figure in the history I'm gesturing towards here. As the inventor of the modern system of taxonomy and nomenclature, Linnaeus would seem to be associated with precisely those values disrupted by the Borges quotation that opened this essay: consistency of comparison, logical and rational order, secure and stable borders between and relationships amongst elements. It would be very misleading, however, to regard Linnaeus as simply inimical of the kind of wonderment Foucault identifies in relation to Borges. A famous quotation from the taxonomist's *Philosophia Botanica*, "*omnia mirari etiam tritissima*" ("Find wonder in all things, even the most commonplace") has sometimes been described as Linnaeus's motto, and features along with his portrait on the Swedish 100-kroner note. Similarly, Linnaeus scholar Sten Lindroth describes what he calls a paradox running through his work: between the systematising Linnaeus, with his "urge for completeness and order", and the observing Linnaeus, carried away by wonder. The first, says Lindroth, wrote in Latin for the world; the second in Swedish for his compatriots. The first produced "his driest catalogues, like *Species plantarum* or *Systema naturae*"; the second "[gave] expression, in writing accessible to all his fellow-countrymen, to the wonders of Swedish nature" (Lindroth, 1980, p. 17).

Jumping another century, we find the works Charles Darwin pervaded by the kind of 'poetics' of wonder that Fisher describes. *On the Origin of Species* (1859) uses the word "wonder" and its variants 62 times – most often to describe the number and the extent of morphological transformations and distinctions amongst related species: the very phenomenon that motivates the development of Darwin's theory. So Darwin attaches the word "wonderful" most often to nouns like "difference", "resemblance", "relationship", "connection", "gradation", "development", "change", "variation".

Sometimes, on the other hand, Darwin registers wonder as a challenge or provocation to his ideas. At the start of Chapter VI, "Difficulties of the Theory",

he asks: “Can we believe that natural selection could produce ... organs of such wonderful structure, as the eye ...?” (Darwin, 2006, p. 560). Chapter VIII, “On Instinct”, begins: “so wonderful an instinct as that of the hive-bee making its cells will probably have occurred to many readers, as a difficulty sufficient to overthrow my whole theory” (582). At no point does Darwin seek to dispense with wonder; indeed, his thought produces wonder just as much as, or perhaps more than, it responds to it. Thus he concludes the book with this very sensation, remarking in the final lines that “whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved” (760).

Darwin’s theory of evolution will be central to the rest of this essay, but I now want to turn to contemporary culture for my focus, in order to ask: how does this relationship between wonder and knowledge about animals manifest today? My first example is provided by David Attenborough’s recent TV documentary *Galapagos 3D*. Programmes like this represent the contemporary legacy of the genre that epitomises the structured relationship between wonder and animals: the bestiary. Wildlife documentaries reproduce, with great success, the key features of the bestiary formula: the evocation of astonishment (now achieved through dazzling cinematographic representation of little-known or flamboyantly spectacular creatures) combined with the organisation into types and categories (often by means of habitat: rainforest canopy, undergrowth, savannah, desert, shallow coastline, deep ocean, arctic and antarctic, tropics and so on).

*Galapagos 3D* explicitly presents itself as a celebration of animal wonders. Attenborough begins the series by spelling out emphatically, in his inimitably hushed, perpetually breath-taken tone, now lent an extra wheeziness by age, precisely the kind of wonder required of us in response to his material:

In the vastness of the Pacific, there’s a place unlike any other: enchanted volcanic islands that are home to a remarkable collection of animals and plants.... This is a place of wonders: Galapagos.... In a lifetime spent making natural history programmes I’ve been to many wonderful places, but none more extraordinary than here (Attenborough, 2013).

The bestiary-style combination of description, narrative, wonder and interpretation at work is exemplified in the second episode, which focuses on one species which, says Attenborough, “[i]n adapting to this place ... has become like no other animal on earth: behold, the marine iguana.” Accompanied by footage of the animals, along with digital simulations of their evolutionary metamorphoses, Attenborough tells a Darwinian just-so story about how tree iguanas from South

America, swept down rivers and out into the ocean on floating rafts of vegetation, fetched up on the rocky coasts of the Galapagos.



*Galapagos  
Iguana.*

There, deprived of their accustomed diet of lush rainforest greenery, they developed the various abilities to enable them to dive for underwater seaweed:

Their snouts became flatter to help them graze; their teeth became sharper to grip the slippery seaweed; ... after a few minutes grazing at sea the iguanas are seriously chilled and in need of a warm-up, and their skin enables them to get that: it is black. Dark objects absorb heat, and each scale in the iguana's skin is like an element in a miniature solar panel...

A further wondrous adaptation is also described:

But eating nothing but seaweed creates another problem: too much salt. The marine iguanas dealt with that in a very particular way: they evolved a special gland in their nose; they simply sneeze the excess salt from their blood. These changes had to happen very quickly in evolutionary terms if the iguanas were to survive ....

This last feature of course is accompanied by a shot of volcanic rocks covered in a dense crowd of large black reptiles, motionless except for the explosive sneezes of salty snot.

The truth drawn from this wondrous beast is no less explicit than that offered by the medieval bestiaries. In *Galapagos*, Attenborough returns to the islands associated with Charles Darwin's "discovery" of natural selection, and he does so

precisely in order to rehearse, by contemplating a series of animal wonders, the truth of that very theory: the “deep-lying forces” of environmental change “that produced this biological wonderland”, says Attenborough, resulted in

the most spectacular explosion of biological diversity in the world. It’s not just the number of species that appeared but the rate at which they did so, and the result is so extraordinary it inspired the most important of all biological theories: Charles Darwin’s evolution by natural selection.

Environment produces evolution which produces the theory that explains it, and at each stage wonder is the agent of conversion from astonishment to conviction. But it’s a tighter relationship than this: the spark of wonder and the circuitry of Darwin’s explanatory theory together constitute an epistemological machine for the production of truth – for the production of that truth which has, within modern cultures, taken the place occupied by God in the worldview of the medieval bestiarist.

Indeed, Attenborough’s breathless account of the creation of the marine iguanas comes across as no less fundamentalist than the story of Noah’s ark. It begs almost as many questions. For instance: how did the original iguanas who arrived in the Galapagos on their little arks of vegetation survive, when they didn’t yet have salt-secreting glands, and couldn’t yet swim and dive well enough to get underwater seaweed, but nevertheless had nothing else to eat? What happened to the ancestral generations of iguanas who became cold from swimming but weren’t yet black enough to heat up quickly? How did sufficient numbers of those first animals survive to produce the generations of mutations that shaped the rest? These questions don’t, of course, refute the possibility of evolution of the marine iguanas via natural selection; they simply suggest that Attenborough’s version of how that happened is much too quick, too easy, too familiar, too camera-friendly to leave a genuine wonder intact.

In fact, the merest amount of extra research reveals that Attenborough’s account does indeed leave out both the complexity and the perplexity of even the standard evolutionary explanation. There are actually three species of iguana on the Galapagos, two of which are very like the rainforest iguanas of South America; these live on other islands in the archipelago that are well-supplied with various kinds of vegetation. It seems likely these are the descendants of animals rafted across from the mainland, and that the marine iguanas could then have descended from animals who took to swimming and so went back and forth for a time between those more hospitable islands and the far more barren island now occupied by the marine iguanas, thus allowing for the survival of many generations of animals who gradually adapted to a diet of seaweed. Yet even this version of the story has at its

heart an example of unresolved wonder, which Attenborough also omits: DNA testing suggest that genetically speaking, marine iguanas are much less closely related to the land iguanas of the Galapagos than such an evolutionary explanation would suggest (Dawkins and McKean, 2011, pp. 69-71). So in fact the entire story remains pervaded by (currently) irresolvable wonder. Attenborough's time-lapse explanation rushes from theory to certainty too quickly, leaving out the twists and turns, not to say the uncertainty; it's a story arrived at by application of a formula, rather than an explanation formed, tested and refined at every turn by means of a really adventurous journey through radical hypothesis-testing wonderment.

Something similar, but with more obviously problematic results, from an ideological point of view, occurs in Casper Henderson's remarkable recent volume, *A Book of Barely Imagined Beings* (2012). Henderson deploys the bestiary genre both more overtly – the book's subtitle is *A 21<sup>st</sup> Century Bestiary* – and more experimentally. He uses both science and imagination to describe some of the “many real animals [that] are stranger than imaginary ones”, drawing attention to the way in which “our knowledge and understanding ... are too cramped and fragmentary



*Two Fishermen on a Sea Creature, about 1270. Unknown illuminator. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles.*

to accommodate them: we have *barely imagined* them” (Henderson, 2012, p. x). As in the traditional bestiary, each chapter deals with one species, and in imitation of the medieval style of illumination, each is headlined with a wittily-drawn capital letter that portrays one of its most wondrous features. In his introduction Henderson draws on Borges, citing as his inspiration both the latter’s 1967 *Book of Imaginary Beings* and the “Chinese Encyclopaedia” referred to by Foucault (Henderson, 2012, ix). Henderson seeks to redirect the wonder of the fantastic towards animals that exist, or have existed, in the real world. He quotes more than once a sentence attributed to Zhuangzi: “All the creatures of this world have dimensions that cannot be calculated” (Henderson, 2012, pp. x, 186).

The appeal of this volume – it won two major British literary awards before it was even published in its entirety – has everything to do with its strategy of evoking wonder through an updated bestiary format.

On the other hand, every one of Henderson’s chapters is permeated and undergirded by Darwinian evolutionary theory, which provides the epistemological foundation for the volume, just as in Attenborough’s documentary. In this sense, Henderson uses wonder the same way that Attenborough does; the same way Descartes did before them. He even (mis)quotes a phrase from Theodosius Dobzhansky, who in 1973 wrote an essay combatting American creationists’ rejection of Darwinism, which he entitled “Nothing in Biology Makes Sense Except in the Light of Evolution” (1973). This in itself sounds like fundamentalism – an absolute faith that a single formula explains the limitless diversity of the organic world – but Henderson makes the statement even more fundamentalist by leaving out the words “in biology” (Henderson 2012, p. xv). Distaste for both versions of this formula, of course, need not stem from doubt about the validity of evolutionary theory itself, which is so obviously successful in accounting for so many aspects of the biological world; rather, what provokes suspicion is the formula “nothing makes sense except in the light of X” – a formula that, along with its always disastrous political and social implications, represents a refusal to entertain any new knowledge that doesn’t fit with a preconceived system of thought.

Henderson’s bestiary – alongside its ample merits and delights – manifests exactly this fundamentalist tendency, which, perhaps inevitably, becomes most evident in his treatment of human biology. For amongst the exorbitantly strange animals that are the focus of most chapters, Henderson includes a chapter on *Homo sapiens*. The decorated capital H that opens this chapter is formed by two hairy legs and feet, since the focus of the chapter is *Homo*’s unique form of bipedalism. This evolutionary development is explained in relation to the need for our prehistoric forbears to run after their food – that is, to hunt animals.

Early humans liked to eat meat. The protein and energy it provided helped feed their growing bodies and large brains. But meat has a habit of running away from



you .... So what to do? .... [E]arly humans evolved a new way to compete on the African savannah: the ability to run long distances.... [M]an thrived, and learned to think, because he was born to run (Henderson, 2012, pp. 123-4).

Despite the obvious objections to this theory – despite the fact that two legs do not offer an advantage of speed or endurance over four; despite the considerable body of evidence for the central importance of gathered vegetable food for early humans; despite the fact that this theory is merely a restatement on the hoary and discredited 1950s Man-the-Hunter hypothesis – despite all these objections, Henderson’s narrative can be presented as authoritative insofar as it appeals to evolutionary logic. ‘Fully upright walking and running require the spinal cord to join the brain case from directly below’, he writes, so that ‘the larynx is positioned lower in the throat’ than in our non-bipedal cousins, ‘which has the incidental effect of lengthening the vocal tract and increasing the diversity of sounds it can produce’ (127) – thereby, so the story goes, allowing *Homo sapiens*’ proficiency in speech and song, from which follow advanced instrumental intelligence, arts, culture, and technology.

Disappointingly, then, Henderson’s initial wonder at humans’ peculiar feet and legs and backbones produces a hackneyed story that makes our species’ manipulation of the natural world, and our exploitation of animals in particular, both a primary cause and a necessary outcome of our evolutionary destiny. Despite Henderson’s disclaimers, the result is a familiar primitivism that finds the real truth and wonder of human being in the hunting of animals and the surrounding techniques and rites. All too often – perhaps always – evolutionary accounts tend to produce this reactionary moral, resembling nothing so much as the medieval bestiarist’s interpretation of the wonders of the animal world as orthodox and unchallengeable lessons in the Christian view of human virtue and vice.

All of this, of course, raises the question: what would a contemporary bestiary look like if one could be imagined in which the creative dialectical relation between wonder and knowledge is not closed down by a fundamentalist gesture? The answer, of course, is that there are innumerable ways it might look – but I will conclude this essay with just one possible example.

Bruce Bagemihl’s *Biological Exuberance: Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity* (1999) is divided into two parts. The first ‘offers a wide-ranging exploration of all aspects of animal homosexuality and transgender: their diversity, history, and meanings’. The second part, entitled ‘A Wondrous Bestiary’, comprises ‘a series of profiles of individual homosexual, bisexual and transgendered animals’ (Bagemihl, 1999, p. 4). The bestiary begins with the bonobos (*Pan paniscus*), humans’ nearest genetic relatives, who ‘have one of the most varied and extensive repertoires of homosexual practices of any animal’; it surveys ‘[l]ifelong homosexual pair-bonds ... between male Humboldt Penguins’; it describes (and illustrates) ‘nonprocrea-

tive' and 'pleasure-oriented' female sexuality in dolphins; and a great deal more (pp. 269, 346, 405-7, 622). The function of this bestiary is precisely to free the reader from the restrictions of hetero-normative assumptions about both nonhuman and human sex and gender, showing how the homophobia and masculinism of generations of scientists, reinforced by Darwinian theory's central fixation upon reproduction as the only possible driver of nonhuman sexual behaviour, resulted in the routine dismissal by ethologists of any observation of non-heteronormative sex and gender as anomalous.

By maintaining a radical sense of wonder at the diversity, intensity and passion – the resolution queerness – of animal sexual behaviour, Bagemihl succeeds in challenging several of the ideologically and epistemologically coagulated aspects of our current scientific views of animals. He documents the ways in which indigenous cultures have often been more accurate, and less blinkered, in their recorded observations of the behaviour of animals alongside whom they live, thereby breaking down the stagnating division that currently exists in modern cultures between scientific and cultural views of animals.

But he also opens up a new possibility for thinking about the diversity of organic life in general: one based not, as Darwinism is, on competition for scarce resources, but on the contrary based on the concept of "biological exuberance".

According to this view, excess and exuberance are primary driving forces of biological systems, as much if not more so than scarcity (competition for resources) or functionality (the 'usefulness' of a particular form of behavior). Bataille's fundamental observation is that all organisms are provided with more energy than they need to stay alive; the source of this energy is, ultimately, the sun. The surplus of energy will first be used for the growth of the organism (or larger biological system), but when the system reaches its limits of growth, the excess energy must be spent, expressed in some other form, 'used up', or otherwise destroyed.... Virtually all outpouring of activity ... – the development of baroque ornament and pattern ..., the wanton consumption of animal and plant foods ..., the extreme elaboration of social systems ..., the florescence of new species and the extinction of others ... – all these can be seen, ultimately, as mechanisms that 'use up' or express this excess energy (253).

In regard to the modern organisation of authoritative knowledge about animals, there could be few things more radical than to challenge the omnipotence of Darwinian theory in this way, to suggest – not that evolution through natural selection is wrong, or that it doesn't explain a great deal – but that it doesn't explain everything about what animals are, about who they are, and about how they live. Bagemihl achieves this by staying with wonder, rather than by dismissing it early

in the process of his thought. Not moving too quickly to convert wonder into certainty – being prepared, rather, to experience the suspension between feeling and thought, between the known and the unknown – allows the wonderer to notice the limits to pre-existing thought and knowledge. In this respect, it seems to me that wonder offers the kind of disposition that has great potential to contribute to the urgent task of recalibrating our species' relation to others.

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# ZOO WORLD

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Julia Lindemalm

Every year 700 million people visit a zoo. We stand in front of each enclosure for 46 seconds. We make the animals into objects, while the world that they really belong to is reduced, bit by bit. So we keep watching. And they try to accept the artificial world in which we have placed them.

Since 2011 I have investigated the phenomenon of zoos. The project contains pictures from ten different zoos in Europe. But the geographic location is insignificant. The project portrays the zoo on an existential level. By arranging nature according to our own desires, we distance ourselves from what we crave for – the wild.

Zoo World illuminates our unrequited love for animals and questions our self-imposed role as masters of the world.



*Elephant, Borås Zoo, Sweden.*



*Waterbuck, Berlin Zoo, Germany.*





*Giant Panda, Berlin Zoo, Germany.*





*Crocodile, Gdansk Zoo, Poland.*



*Harbour Seal, Odense Zoo, Denmark.*



*Brown bear, Skansen Zoo, Sweden.*





*Spidermonkey, Copenhagen Zoo, Denmark.*



*Grey seals, Gdansk Zoo, Poland.*



*Manatees, Odense Zoo, Denmark*





*Tiger, Kolmården Zoo, Sweden.*



*Chimpanzee, Ölands Zoo, Sweden.*



# CERTAIN HUMANS, CERTAIN ANIMALS. ATTITUDES IN THE LONG TERM

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Kristina Jennbert

## *Introduction*

What are the attitudes to humans and animals in different cultures? Do certain humans and animals have greater value than other humans and animals? Can present-day attitudes and values find their counterpart in the past? Or are modern Western values unique? Of course, attitudes, values and meanings are culturally constructed and have changed through time. As an archaeologist, I can't resist making comparisons with the distant past. In this short article, I would like to follow a line of thought emerging from the interdisciplinary programme "Exploring the Animal Turn".

Sometimes I feel slightly uncomfortable in the critical animal debate as well as in human-animal studies, especially when time of depth seems too shallow. The viewpoint can also be found to be too narrow when we consider all the variation that exists in the present, and existed in the past. Convinced that the cultural complexity and the historical outcome is important, I have a recurrent desire to look behind today's Western human-animal interaction and move into other cultural settings. Furthermore, in my opinion the present Western, urban anthropocentric worldview also has its historical background.

The human-animal research field needs to incorporate a sense of the past and of other cultural norms and values. Further, I believe that the human-animal division is biased in its excessively limited approach. I assume that in the real world, as in other cultures — past or present — the classification of beings emerged in a much more multifaceted reality than in a modern urban environment. Using psychological and cognitive theories about social identity and self-categorization helps to understand the variety of attitudes towards humans and animals that have developed since humans became humans.

My question about the valuation of humans and animals has emerged from my studies of Old Norse religion. In pre-Christian Scandinavia it seems as if the value of a person or an animal depended on the specific individual or the specific species (i.e. dog, cattle, horse, bird). As archaeologists we need concepts and theoretical

perspectives to understand human agency, and attitudes towards humans and animals. For example, the concepts of personhood and individuality are useful for understanding burials (Fowler, 2004; Aaltola, 2010; Hill, 2013). As neither animals nor humans buried themselves, the handling of the corpse reflects the values and attitudes of living humans concerning the dead. The buried animal or human very likely had individuality and possibly signalled a distinct personhood.

In general, archaeology and zooarchaeology share a very anthropocentric ontology (Overton and Hamilakis, 2013). To move from perceiving animals as objects to acknowledging animals as subjects gives new perspectives on interactions between humans and animals. Therefore the focus on the animal itself, in order to understand the agency of different kinds of animals, is groundbreaking within the field of archaeology and zooarchaeology. The “animal turn” enables radical non-anthropocentric explorations within archaeology and zooarchaeology. The question about certain humans and certain animals can probably gain from applying non-anthropocentric approaches, as the way we classify them is essential. What is a human, and what is an animal?

Both humans and animals were certainly integrated in their particular cultural settings, with their functional abilities, their social positions, and their specific social identities. In this article I will refer to my earlier research on human-animal relations. Sometimes I reuse direct extracts from my book *Animals and Humans: Recurrent Symbiosis in Archaeology and Old Norse Religion*, where I have previously given condensed descriptions of the findings (see Jennbert, 2011).

The multifaceted reality of humans and animals in the past justifies a plea for historical arguments in current animal rights movements and in the critique of today’s anthropocentric worldview. The archaeological research field provides a perspective comprising many millennia of the human lifeworlds. Archaeology is different from many other sciences. The analysing and interpreting of phenomena over a very long period, includes the studying the material culture from different contexts as well as the studying of the written documents. It is also important to emphasize that archaeologists study fragments of the past. Although we cannot reconstruct a sequence of events with movements and sounds, or ask about the underlying intentions, we can study and draw conclusions about how cultural expressions were shaped and reshaped.

### *Burials and other deposits of humans and animals*

One of the most frequent material categories in the archaeological evidence is the deposition of dead bodies. Ways of burying both humans and animals have varied in the course of history. During the pre-Christian period, it seems that certain hu-

mans and certain animals were buried in graves specifically made for the purpose of burial while other humans and animals were deposited elsewhere. Corpses of animals and humans are found in different contexts: in burials, at settlements in the construction of buildings, in kitchen middens, waste pits, wells and slag-heaps, and in wetlands far away from the settlements and farms.

There seems to be much evidence that it was not just any person who was laid to rest in a regular grave during the pre-Christian period. The bones found in the archaeological contexts indicate that, in certain circumstances, human bodies and animal bodies were disposed of by similar methods and in ways much more varied than those used in our modern Western burial concept. Modern human burials and animal graves are similar, but restricted in staging and layout.

Humans and animals were buried with intact bodies; they were also skeletonized, burned, sorted, polished and packaged as whole bodies or parts of them. The bones were dispersed unsystematically around the site as separate pieces or tiny fragments from butchering or other causes, or articulated (the bones still laid out as they were in life) within a deliberate burial (e.g. Pearson, 1999; Jennbert, 2011; Pluskowski, 2012; Thilderqvist, 2013).

A recurrent theme is the ritual use of animals in connection with human burials. Numerous burials contain several species, deliberately killed, and laid in the grave. I will give one example from the Vibyhögen mound in Uppland, Sweden. It contained a cremated middle-aged man who had probably been wrapped in skins of bear and lynx. The grave also had a rich array of artefacts made of gold, silver, and bronze, and it is dated to the Viking Age (*c.* AD 950). The grave contained burnt bones of 19 different animal species from a total of 25 individuals, amounting to some 65 dm<sup>3</sup> of burnt bones and a few cubic decimetres of unburnt bone. The dogs and the horses had been cremated whole. Parts of cattle, sheep, pig, hen, and goose were also cremated. Of six dogs, five had reached adulthood, and lesions on the vertebrae of one of the dogs indicate an old age. One dog was less than 15 months old. Of the six horses, one was young. The ox proved to be an old animal with morbid lesions on both fore and rear ankles, of the kind that results from strain after hard work. The two parts of sheep came from one adult and one younger animal. One piece from a pig came from an individual roughly two years old. Altogether the following animals were cremated on the pyre along with the dead man: six dogs, six horses, one ox, two sheep, one pig, one cat, one hen, one goose, one goshawk, one eagle owl, one cod, one bear and one lynx. Some animal species had been deposited unburnt in the grave: one crow, one squirrel, one cock, one perch and one pike (Sten and Vretemark, 1988; Jennbert, 2011, p. 102).

Furthermore, there are also special graves only for animals. In certain periods, for example, dogs and horses were buried in special graves, which closely resembled those of humans. Animal burials are common in several cultures around the

world, such as the Scythian culture, the Han Dynasty of China and Iron Age Britain. Mummies of cats and birds have been found in ancient Egyptian contexts. In a global perspective, there is evidence of burial of both domestic and wild animals spanning over a very long time, from the early Stone Age to modern time (Behrens, 1964; Morris, 2011). For example, at the Late Mesolithic cemetery of Skateholm in southern Skåne (*c.* 6500 BC), eleven dogs were buried in individual graves. Seven other dogs were buried together with people. Grave goods were also found in the dog graves, deposited in a similar way to those in human graves. One dog (grave XXI) had been placed on its left side with its legs drawn up. A red-deer antler was placed by the dog's back; a hammer of antler, with incised decoration, lay beside the dog's chest; and three knives lay at its thigh. With regard to the dogs in human graves, at least two of these had been killed in connection with the burial. Young dogs had their necks broken, while other dogs had been cut into pieces before burial. This was not the case with the dogs in the separate graves, which contained both puppies and older dogs. There are marked similarities between the burial rituals for humans and for dogs. The placement of the bodies, the use of red ochre, and the deposition of grave goods apply to both humans and animals (Larsson, 1990; Jennbert, 2011, p. 106; Grünberg, 2013).

Another example of an animal burial is the horse grave at Skovgårde cemetery in Sjælland, dated to the Late Roman Age (*c.* AD 400). The stallion was about eight years old, large and powerful, much larger than other horses of the Roman Iron Age. The horse was placed in a north–south direction, with its head in the southern part of the grave and its muzzle turned towards the west. The forelegs were bent in a natural way, but the hind legs were in an unnatural position (Hattig, 2000, p. 408; Jennbert, 2011, p. 111).

Another archaeological context is depositions in wetlands, away from settlements and farms. The bog of Östra Vemmerlöv in south-eastern Skåne is a Bronze Age site (*c.* 1000 BC), with deposits of bones consisting of skeleton parts from four humans and bones from domesticated and wild animals. Twenty dogs and five foxes were deposited as whole animals, and skeleton parts of one horse, of cattle (two individuals), two sheep/goats, one wild boar, and one red deer (von Post, 1919; Jennbert, 2011: 114).

Many years ago I was confronted with a unique deposition of sheep bones at the archaeological site of Agerbygård on Bornholm, Denmark. The find can be dated to the time around AD 400. Two complete female sheep (Figure 1) were placed in a shallow pit at a time when a building was to be erected on the site. Among the skeletons were two identical brooches, a small bronze bead, and seven amber beads (Figure 2, 3). Until now, I have not understood the meaning of the heap of bones. To consider the classification of humans and animals and

*Figure 1. Female sheep in situ, Agerbygaard 1996, Bornholm. Photo: Bornholms Museum.*

concepts such as personhood brings new insights. Archaeologists are simply not able to discover values of humans and animals if they are not reflecting on other archaeological contexts with cadavers or skeletal remains of humans and animals. The classification of humans and animals is complex when considering the diversity in the ways bodies were buried, and the removal of others on farmyards and in wetlands.



### *Classification*

The classification of animals and humans seems to have been different from contemporary classifications. But perhaps not? Even today, certain humans and certain animals are more important than others. Apparently, the view of “the other”, whether a human being or an animal, is not obvious and certainly loaded with values. In the past, the division between human and animals were as diverse as today, but perhaps in other ways.



*Figure 2. Fibulae, Agerbygaard, Bornholm. Length approx. 50 mm. Photo: Bengt Almgren, Historical Museum, Lund.*



*Figure 3. Seven amber beads and one bronze bead, Agerbygaard, Bornholm. Photo: Bengt Almgren, Historical Museum, Lund.*

There are boundary crossings in archaeological images and in the Old Norse texts. The boundaries between human and animals appear to have been ambivalent and possible to push in various ways. It seems there were no absolute or rigid lines along species-membership. Instead evidence points to a sense of symbiosis, even humanimal hybridity (Jennbert, 2011, p. 189). Furthermore, it seems that “thinking with animals” is a cultural habit. Anthropomorphic and zoomorphic representations are frequent in cross-cultural discussions on understandings of human and animal beings (Daston and Mitman, 2005). In pre-Christian Scandinavian archaeological material culture and in the Old Norse texts, anthropomorphic and zoomorphic paraphrases can be found. The Old Norse animal ornamentation on jewellery and weapons give an impression of visual representations of humanimals. Visible horses, eagles, wild boars, snakes, and birds of prey are intermingled with representations of human body parts and face masks.

I believe that what we see in pre-Christian Scandinavia, is a group of people categorizing themselves as equal to animals. The same group of people classified other humans and other animals as “the other”. Presumably, this group is the upper class, the elite, or the aristocracy, whatever expression you prefer. The classification we apply today was most probably not a reality for everyone, whether human or animal. So, if humans and animals were valued equally and if we understand this as an expression of unclear boundaries between humans and animals, it was only relevant for a part of the population. The problem is that we don't find burial sites containing representatives from the entire population. Or, do we find them in wetlands and in other deposits?

A reflection on the pre-Christian classification of humans and animals enables some reflections on attitudes to humans and animals. To conclude, The pre-Christian Scandinavian lifeworld was structured with ambiguous and fluid boundaries between different natural elements of the landscape and between different structured worlds, which also consisted of gods, giants, and other beings. The world and mortals resembled each other, and were born from each other (Clunies Ross, 1994). As archaeologists, we find humans and animals in different archaeological contexts; we find wild and domesticated animals in all kinds of deposits in burials, farmsteads and wetlands, sometimes together with human bodies.

### *Attitudes towards humans and animals in a long-term perspective*

We can be sure that the pre-Christian cultural viewpoints, including the Old Norse cosmology and social and political circumstances, formed attitudes to humans and animals. The archaeological remains are the consequences of lifestyles, of cultural mentality.

Of course, you may wonder how humans treated animals (and other humans). Animals were treated according to human needs but also according to how people related the animals to themselves. We know of examples of maltreatment of livestock. But hunting and animal husbandry require knowledge and continuous work in order to have healthy animals. Since the Ice Age (*c.* 12,000 BC in Scandinavia) animals have been consumed as food. They became raw material and took on practical and symbolic functions. During the Neolithic (*c.* 4000 BC), when animals were domesticated, a stronger mutual dependence between humans and animals emerged. I am convinced that, as a result, animals domesticated humans and not the reverse. The animals had power of unspoken dimensions. They tamed humans, who were forced to feed them and to take care of them so that they would be healthy, give a good yield, and reproduce. Animals were a part of the Midgard mentality and the pre-Christian life-world, in which hunting, animal husbandry and breeding were important tasks, calling for knowledge and experience, consideration and concern.

To continue exploring the animal turn, I would briefly like to discuss just a few individual animals from archaeological examples (the bird of prey, the dog, the horse and the sheep) and discuss some implications of the important power of animals. Furthermore, to understand the pre-Christian treatment of humans and attitudes to dead bodies, it is necessary to consider the humans who were not buried in proper graves.

In the Viking Age burial of Vibyhögen, a large number of species were found, among them one goshawk and one eagle owl. These birds of prey are the key animals for interpreting the burial in terms of falconry. The falconer knows the bird, and has no success in hunting if she/he doesn't consider the needs of the bird. Doing archaeology is a never-ending adventure, and as an amateur I entered the world of birds, to explore descriptions and habitats of different species. I therefore learned falconry myself in Denmark to try to understand hunting with falcons. The close connection between the falconer and the bird became clear to me. They understand each other, and the care of birds is full of understanding and intimacy. Emotions and knowledge are essential, otherwise the falcon could fly away.

Richly equipped burials have a large package of attributes for several lifestyles. The dogs and the horses require the same attention as the birds. Their presence in the Viby grave supports the idea of falconry, but also of great wealth. The body parts of cattle, sheep, pig, hen, and goose suggest a big farm. Every kind of the domesticated animals required special consideration and knowledge of their basic needs. But the man buried in Vibyhögen must also have had a personal knowledge of the dogs and the horses. They were certainly individuals. Did they have personhood? The burial gives the impression of a very wealthy male warrior with several skills, among them riding and falconry, the fashions of the time.

The Vibyhögen burial has many animals, but that is the standard of many burials in pre-Christian Scandinavia, as in other parts of the world. Presumably, the articulated whole bodies of dogs, horses, and birds of prey represent individual animals, with a personhood, important to the dead person. Why kill them? I believe that the burial is a representation of the dead person, perhaps an ideal image. Nevertheless, the burial should not be interpreted in terms of an afterlife, rather as a staging of the social identity of the deceased.

The specific animal burials can be interpreted in the same way. In pre-Scandinavia we find animal burials with dogs, horses, and cattle in the Old Norse burial tradition. The animals were buried in ways similar to those in which humans were buried. In Saami tradition, reindeer and bears are buried in graves which show similarities to Saami human graves, in regards to the terrain and types of graves .

However, the female sheep are unique remains. Sheep are extremely hard to find in the Old Norse mythology. From other archaeological remains, we know that Sheep belong to the species that are most frequently left in rubbish heaps. Sheep were extremely important in everyday life. In Old Norse, the word for sheep is *sauðr*. The verb *seuðan* is a general term for 'to seethe, boil', suggesting the preparation of the animal for a ritual meal (Green, 1998, p. 23). The meaning of the word for sheep strengthens the idea that the sheep was also a sacrificial animal. Sheep probably represent a female everyday occupation forgotten in the highly male warrior world as expressed in Old Norse mythology. This is interesting, as women in everyday situations are often excluded in the Old Norse texts. The female sheep on Bornholm must have been very particular animals deposited on the farm with prestigious bronze and amber objects. Did they have personhood for someone?

The deposited humans and animals in burials are cultural representations of gender, class, or other social identities. Another possibility of cultural representation is bodies with a special personhood. Other humans and animals were not buried but are deposited in cultural contexts such as rubbish on settlements or deposited in wetlands. These bodies might be interpreted as cultural representations of "not belonging", of being outside the fellowship. From several archaeologically excavated settlements dated from the early Stone Age up to the coming of Christianity, we know that human bones were deposited/thrown in rubbish pits or heaps. In addition, the most wellknown bog bodies, from the Neolithic up to the first centuries of the Common Era, are examples of how people were deposited as complete bodies. Children, women and men were killed and their bodies kept in place with stakes and withies in bogs; they often had physical defects (van der Sanden, 1996; Jennbert, 2011, p. 125). There were also variety of ways of getting rid of humans, similar to the ways of disposing of animals.



In conclusion, there were no stable divisions between humans and animals in pre-Christian Scandinavia. In fact, I don't think that there are in the present either. The boundaries between humans and animals were diverse, a kind of hybridity between species. It seems as if attitudes to humans and animals varied greatly. Attitudes depended on gender, class, and on practical and symbolic functions within society. Present-day attitudes and values have their counterparts in the past, and I don't believe modern Western values are unique.

### *Summing up*

The archaeological examples of animal- and human graves from pre-Christian Scandinavia shed light on values and attitudes concerning animals and humans. It seems if the pre-Christian classifications of humans and animals are diverse, more complicated than a simple division between humans and animals. The archaeological evidence during the pre-Christian period show practices of burying certain humans and certain animals in appropriate graves, while other humans and animals were deposited in other contexts. Different attitudes emerge depending on the social stratification, and the roles of humans and animals. A multilayered causality of social and cultural practices seems to underlie the agency of humans in mortuary practices and the way in which dead bodies of animals and humans were handled. Certain humans and animals held greater value than other humans and animals.

So far, my conclusion is that the archaeological findings challenge the idea of the anthropocentric worldview of a stable human/animal division that has been one of the fundamentals of the development of modern Western societies. But perhaps conditions similar to those in the past can be seen today? Animal ethics and the anthropocentric paradigm obviously call for reflection (Aaltola, 2008). It is also necessary to consider the social and cultural meanings of humans and animals in the long-term perspective. Finally, following the animal turn, it is necessary that the field of archaeology and zooarchaeology develop a non-anthropocentric approach to agency in order to consider different attitudes and values concerning humans and animals.

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# TELLING STORIES OF HUMANS, ANIMALS, AND MODERNIZATION

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Amelie Björck

Both academic history writing and literary storytelling about past times contribute to our idea of our place in history, and they do it by picking, choosing, and shaping the vast material of a living yesterday (c.f. White, 1987; Edenheim, 2011). Some aspects form the background and others the foreground, while some aspects are held rigidly still to allow other aspects to move and stay complex. Stories make the fluid matter of past experiences manageable, but an important question is – in whose interest?

In historiography, the process of modernization has often been told as the story of white men building nations and civilizations, thus keeping alive the idea of a linear progression of society over time. Women, children and animals<sup>1</sup> have provided the background, either as a static and safe home for men to return to or as ‘nature’ for them to use and reform (Felski, 1995). In later decades, this has led to counteractions by feminist and minority historians and literary scholars writing women and other ‘othered’ subjects back into the foreground of history. Animal Studies historians such as Harriet Ritvo and Jason Hribal, amongst others, also try to do justice to the actual role that animals have played in the creation of the modern industrial society.

This essay has an eye for animals, but it will not contribute with a rereading of historiographical texts or historical documents. Instead, it will highlight some of the stories of modernization written by the Swedish author (and former farm boy), Ivar Lo-Johansson. In my opinion, his stories are a great source of material for reflection on time and storytelling, and on bodies and agency, in particular those of human and animal farm workers. His stories are more openly troubled by their own task of shaping the past than historiography usually admits to be.

## *Ivar Lo-Johansson's 'statar' stories*

Ivar Lo-Johansson had a long and politically engaged writing career starting with a French travel book in 1927 and ending with a retrospective poetry collection in 1990, the year of his death. He is most well known as a proletarian author, writing

with strong political engagement and often with an autobiographical touch. In the 1930s and 1940s, he dedicated a series of novels to the poorest class of farm workers in the southern parts of Sweden trapped in the so-called 'statarsystemet'. This was a system of contracted farmland workers (*statare*) which usually kept the labourers so heavily indebted to their patrons that they were practically slaves and unable to leave the farm. This system was a feudal remnant with roots in the eighteenth century, but in the 1920s, the farm workers (long after the industrial proletariats) finally started to organize themselves and fight for improvements. Eventually, many farms were mechanized and the structure of the working day changed drastically.

This era of change is what Lo-Johansson writes about in his two volume collection of 86 short stories, *Statarna* (1936-37, no full English trans.) that I will focus on here, as well as in his earlier, partly autobiographical novel *Godnatt, Jord* (1933, trans. 'Breaking Free'), and the later novels *Jordproletärerna* (1941, 'Proletariat of the Soil,' no trans.) and *Traktorn* (1943, 'The Tractor,' no trans.). His stories rely on his own experiences, oral history, labour union documents, old myths, and authorial creativity, and they played a significant role in bringing general attention to the hard situation of these workers which led up to the abolishment of the system in 1945.

The core of Lo-Johansson's work is visible in the above passages: his overall theme is the story of modernization as a reformation of human conditions initiated by the workers. It is often stated that, while the childhood perspective in *Godnatt, Jord* vouches for an intimacy with the feminine collective at the farm, his stories from *Statarna* and thereafter are more evidently loyal to the male-identified endeavors of enforcing political change (Ivar Lo-sällskapet, 2014). This is true: in the diverse *Statarna* stories, men form unions, set up goals to professionalize their working conditions (such as the regulation of time and productivity), and see their mission through.

What makes his work interesting, however, is that the slick story of 'development' keeps getting disrupted by resisting and victimized bodies. Lo-Johansson doesn't manage or even seem to want to neatly distinguish background from foreground, nor between past and future. On the contrary, for a reader less fond of the modern ideals of productivity and progression, there is a palpable presence of 'ghosts' in the texts – bodies defying inflicted time regulations, hoping for change, but not *this* change. These ghostly bodies also tend to interfere with the reader's impatient tendency to always move forward in the plot. They break up the strong bond between historiography and storytelling and their common privileging of the irreversible, linear progressive timeline (Assmann, 2004, p. 74), allowing the text to perform time differently. Some of the ghostly complainants are human, but most are farmed animals. Their implicit questions are: Whose modernization? Whose productivity? Whose progression? Whose time and teleology?

What I aim to show is the paradoxical awareness in Lo-Johansson's writing of the fact that, as Jason Hribal has stated, "animals are part of the working class" (Hribal, 2003). Such an understanding should, if taken seriously, have consequences on the conception and evaluation of modernization and progression because in any labour ideology, those who work should also have their rights and interests respected. In Lo-Johansson's stories, however, the dilemma remain unresolved. This is particularly evident in the story "Kreaturstransporten," which I refer to at the end of this essay. Overall, Lo-Johansson's work exposes tensions between different interests and ways of conceptualizing time and history that are often hidden away in academic writing.

### *Anthropocentric and more-than-anthropocentric readings*

While modernization as a general theme in Lo-Johansson's work has been studied rather extensively, the human-animal aspect has not been fully acknowledged. Biographers such as Ragnar Oldberg (1957), Lars Furuland (1976), and Ola Holmberg (1998) do not make any deeper inquiries into the effects of the large presence of farm animals in the author's novels. However, in his dissertation *Den Moderne Ivar Lo-Johansson* (2003), literary scholar Magnus Nilsson does make some interesting observations, in a section concerning the novel *Traktorn* (1944) in particular. This novel revolves around the reformation of an old mansion into a modern model farm; a development sanctioned by the patron and led by the first tractor driver at the farm. The tractor, of course, acts as a metonym for the new, mechanized era.

Nilsson notes that the sorting out and killing of certain animals is a constituent of the modernization process at the farm. Animals that have no evident productive function suddenly do not fit in anymore; for example, it is decided that the farmyard cats should be shot, the much beloved but sick horse, Glory, is sent to slaughter, and the long-legged bull Älgen (The Elk) is doomed to death, but is saved by the old cow man Kadin (Nilsson, 2003, p. 72). Nilsson highlights the animal killings as part of Lo-Johansson's ambivalence toward the modernization project, in this case, expressing critique over its cold-hearted aspects. This, of course, is a most relevant take, but I would like to widen his anthropocentric frame even further.

For Nilsson, the interest in the 'culling' mechanism lies in the fact that if modernity sorts animals, then humans will be next for the same treatment. In this dynamic, the cow man, Kadin, is a figure of interest, alienated and resistant as he is vis-à-vis the modern regime; he even sabotages the new milking machine. In Kadin, several low-ranked aspects intersect; he is not only mean and unlikeable, but also feminine, of foreign ethnicity, and bonds better with animals than with

humans. This makes him the target of multiple stigmas, and in the new organization, his rank is immediately lowered (Nilsson, 2003, p. 72-84).

Kadin, whose character has rightly drawn a lot of scholarly attention (c.f. Landgren, 2011, pp. 162-172), is a human victim of the ‘culling.’ But why should the animals that he allies with be interesting only to explain his traits? Why see the killing of animals only as a threat against people?<sup>2</sup> Nilsson sums up the conflict of the novel as a clash between “the demands of the modern society and the inertia of human development” (Nilsson, 2003, p. 72) and points out Kadin as the typical resister: “a ‘slow’ man, challenging historical progress” (Nilsson, 2003, p. 75). I would like to include the farmed animals in this inertia and slowness, and understand more of its workings and effects, as it is not just men like Kadin who are challenged by the new temporal regime of modernization.

### *Farmed animals in chrononormative modernization*

Modernization could be seen as matter of time: a process of the continuous adjustment of bodies to an anthropocentric time frame. In agriculture, this has meant an untangling of entangled life rhythms. In earlier times, humans had to make severe compromises with their own rhythms and needs to meet the rhythms and needs of the domesticated animals they worked with. They had to move with certain regularity to new pastures, get up before sunrise to milk, and adjust their eating habits to the rhythm of production. Conditions were not equal, since animals were *always* unfree to change their patrons, and humans only sometimes. In regard to the time dimension, humans did not have the power to impose their time frames totally onto their animal (co)workers; having leisure time was a class distinction rather than something constrained by species.

With modernity, humans have consistently created better tools to separate their own time from the farmed animals’ rhythms. This is not to say that conditions are nowadays easy for human farmers or equal between them, but while humans as a species generally get to use the inventions of mechanization to save their own time, for other animals, mechanization has instead meant steadily increasing expectations of bodily productivity and, for many, also a gradual shortening of life itself. The breeding of animals for meat has sped up unimaginably during the modern era. In 1800, it took two to five years for a pig to reach the weight of 60 kilos. Today, a weight of 100 kg is reached before the pig is even six months old. “Ready for slaughter before it has lost its baby teeth,” as Barbara Adam puts it (Adam, 1998, p. 142).

From this angle, the effects of the modern temporal regime that queer theorist Elisabeth Freeman (in a human context) aptly calls “chrononormativity”, has been even harder on animals than humans (c.f. Freeman, 2010, p. 4). If a predetermi-

ned, and therefore pressurized, temporal regulation of human life includes stages such as gaining control over a maturing, functional and rational body, getting a job, getting married, having children, and coping well with seniority, then, for farmed animals, the schedule is more invasive.

Throughout modern history, farmed animals have been alienated from their bodily capacities and rhythms, and deprived of their right to live a full life span. While the uncanny endpoint of the problem of ‘slow’ animal bodies might already be anticipated in such projects as the genetic modification to create animal bodies without brains (or other body parts necessary for feeling pain [c.f. Davis, 2011, p. 35-54]) or to produce timeless *in vitro* meat by using stem cells (Stephens, 2014), Ivar Lo-Johansson is active at a point where the practice of a shared human-animal time at the farm is still a common reality, although becoming increasingly more marginalized. In my reading, the suffering animal bodies of his stories serve as mementos of the presence of chrononormative violence, regardless of what is currently the most popular biopolitical instrument – the whip or the test tube – by which humans make the bodies of others obey in time.

### *In the presence of ghosts*

Magnus Nilsson’s observation concerning the sorting out of certain animals at the model farm in the novel *Traktorn* could easily be interpreted from a temporal perspective. In all of these cases, individuals are removed because they are ‘untimely’ in relation to anthropocentric chrononormativity; they do not meet the productivity goals of the new era. In *Statarna*, further examples of untimeliness among farmed animals can be found. One such case takes place at a neglected farm around the turn of the century, long before the tractor was introduced (replacing Ardenais working horses which by the 1920s–1930s had almost entirely replaced oxen in order to gain working speed [c.f. Cserhalmi, 2004, p. 78]).

In springtime, after a winter of undernourishment, the oxen were sometimes so weak that they collapsed during the tough ploughing sessions (phenomena put on context in Cserhalmi, 2004, pp. 109-189). This is what happens in the story “Oxgraven” (“The Burialplace of the Ox”), and the scenery, set in the middle of a sprouting, green landscape, effectively contrasts two rhythms: the economically motivated rush of the workers and the deadly apathetic stillness of the animal. The entire four pages of the story are devoted to closely observing the workers as they try to get the huge, resisting body of the ox to work. The foreman tells them to use the whip if necessary, and the men do:

The whip drew its lines hither and thither, first, over the legs, then, over the shaggy back, then on to the shoulder and all the way to the head, where the

lash reached the eyes, but the ox still did not stand. (p. 37)  
(Piskan strök ränder i kors och tvärs, först över läggen, sedan över den luggiga ryggen, vidare över bogen och ända fram till huvudet, där snärten nådde ögonen, men oxen reste sig likväl inte.)

The men give up, but when the foreman arrives, he resumes the beatings in vain. Finally, he tells the men to collect brushwood to be laid out in a circle around the ox and then he sets it alight. As expected, the ox jumps up in fear, but only to kneel again outside the burning circle, muzzling into the mud.

The power of the story partly lies in the fact that the foreman's demand for progression and the reader's expectation of development of the storyline coincide, putting the reader in an unsettling position; with the immobility of the ox, the reader is confronted with her own chrononormative impatience. The fruitlessly repeated gesture of the whip – as if the reader is observing the torturers' own special hell in Dante's *Inferno* – arrests the reading rhythm, and the reader wants out to reclaim her command over time.

However, since the ox will not move, the only way out is via the death of the animal, and instead of dying, the ox is kept alive by the foreman, who sees to it that he is fed with luxurious forage right where he lies. For the foreman, to let the animal die would be to lose the fight for his internalized temporal regime, where 'things' must work as expected. The ox refuses it with his body; if he dies, he leaves the time frame all together, instead of adjusting to it. In the end, the ox dies anyway and is released from the story (as is the reader). Instead of ending the story cynically, with a replacement for the ox by another working body, the story ends with contemplation of the ox's grave.

In another story, "Ett Strejkoffer" ('A Victim of the Strike'), the clash between animal, bodily rhythm, and anthropocentric chrononormativity is even more explicitly demonstrated. The scene is set during the striking period of the late 1920s, when farm workers increasingly started to organize. The first party to suffer from the shutdown of the farm labourers work was, unfortunately, not the patrons, but the milk cows with their stretched and heavy udders. Lo-Johansson touches upon this problem from an unexpected angle. The story opens with a train running through a lush and innocent summer night. Suddenly, there is a soft thump; the train has run over a cow who was peacefully grazing along the railway embankment. The cow's hind legs are cut off and, encircled by men, she lies, confusedly trying to lean back to lick her wounds.

Again, instead of letting a butcher (or in the best case scenario a veterinarian) do their work, the dying cow is kept alive. Why? At first, because she is banned, and no one dares to risk being seen as a strike-breaker. Secondly, once he is identified, the owner refuses to kill the cow because the meat might go bad before he



can take care of it. He wants the animal alive to keep its flesh from rotting and tells the men to cover her with scrubs until the morning.

The next morning, the cow is no longer there. She has started walking along the railway on her stumps; the strikers who see her pretend not to – they do not want to get involved. The last page of the story consists of a description of the animal's slow death: how sinews and muscles are stretched and relaxed, how the soft parts around the groin collapse, and how the first crow perforates the skin just there.

In this story, the painful contrast between the strikers' and owner's commodification of the cow and the author's intimate narration about her last hours of life is closely related to a clash between temporalities; just as the owner does not really see the cow, so also the train did not. Both are caught up in the same tunnel vision of linear progression. The unstoppable train is, of course, a metonym for modern times, just as potent as the tractor. Its linear stretch is already a given – it will cut through any living body, any flesh. It is speed itself that cuts off the legs of the far-too-slow cow. The cow is, correspondingly, a metonym for the old times, but more than this, she embodies a temporality based in bodily experience and vulnerability. As in the case of "Oxgraven," Lo-Johansson ensures that the animal's time and the reader's time are synchronized. The 'normal' progress of the story is stopped, and the reading speed is hindered. The author zooms in on each part of the cow's body. He does not move on, but stays – and makes the reader stay – close to the animal until the moment of death.

Both of the previous stories, as well as in other examples, portray farmed animals as resistant victims of modernization and humans as having internalized a ruthless temporal regime.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, in contrast to many other literary works from the modernist 1930s and 1940s, these texts show no sign of body phobia. On the contrary, they put forward and intimately describe animal bodies as abiding-places of alternative temporalities, hindering the expected course of agricultural production, of reading, and of progress.

It is not by chance that the stories include death, since death is the radical break with any temporal regime. They also relate to the return of the undead. "Oxgraven" ends with a comment that the other bovines refuse to eat the grass from their tortured fellow's grave, as if he was still present. Also, in "Ett Strejkoffer," the animal rises from her 'grave' under the pile of branches and walks again. In my reading, they do not only haunt their oppressors in the story, but also the reader in his or her time. The ox and the cow are run over and left behind by modern times, but the stories keep them and their counter talk untimely present. This act of haunting through time is a privilege of literature and other memory apparatuses; it is the task of scholars to read for and listen to the untimely messages of the ghosts (c.f. Lindén, 2012; Lee, 2012).

### *A story with two sides*

By now, we have seen plenty signs of Ivar Lo-Johansson's intuitive notion that modernization involves a struggle between temporalities, with a central locus in the (animal) body. I will move on to a story where the author's dilemma – a common one in the storytelling and historiographies of the modern process – is most evidently expressed. In short, the author wants the modern process to be just and to bring more freedom to all, but the prerequisites of modernization as we know it are, instead, injustice and a pronounced speciesist and racist hierarchization.

In the story "Kreaturstransporten" ("The Cattle Transport"), Lo-Johansson speaks for two sides. On one hand, there is the loyalty to the animals and their bodily time and knowledge, as in the stories above. However, here, the author's urge to conceptualize human and animal farm workers – men and cows – as analogical parties, fighting the same fight, side by side (or even with the cows as the leaders) seems to be stronger. This shared 'escape story' dominates the surface of the text and demands a closer reading to pick up the counter talk relevant to our time and the future.

"Kreaturstransporten" takes place in 1929 (around the same time as "Ett Strejkoffer") at an existing farm in Södra Møre, Småland. Strikes are taking place and the patron has decided that three young dairy cows will be sent to slaughter since the milkers refuse to work until they are paid better. Two men, a former soldier and a young boy, have volunteered to transport the cows by train to a slaughterhouse in Stockholm. Two strikers also take the train to safeguard the interests of the union. Upon arrival, the two strike-breakers realize that word has spread, and workers from other unions sympathize with the striking farm workers. No transport is willing to take the strike-banned cows to the slaughterhouse, and the two strike-breakers eventually have to return the cows to the farm.

The animal-sensitive side of Lo-Johansson notes how the three cows, presented with common Swedish cow names such as Hjärtros, Bella and Korthorna, are anonymized when shoved into the transporter wagon (a scene that foreshadows future terrifying scenes from the Second World War). He also notes that the women milkers who spend time with the cows every day are the ones who mourn their departure, lamenting them as being too young to be butchered and, later, they are the ones who recognize the cows upon their return home.

The anthropocentric Lo-Johansson, in his turn, is loyal to the struggling farm unionists. The cows are obviously battle rams in the economic fight between them and the patron, but Lo-Johansson is hardly ironic in his masculine heroism when he calls the cows on the train the "frontline" of the "passive war" (p. 342) moving through Sweden. He chooses to see the animals as willing soldiers for a good cause rather than as hostages. This time, instead of being run over by a train or by time like in "Ett Strejkoffer," the three cows are depicted as symbiotic with the train

and, thus, indirectly symbiotic in the fight for modernization and reform (paradoxically, this includes the introduction of such things as milking machines and artificial fertilizers, which will eventually lead to the separation of human time from animal/nature time).

The analogy between the fighting workers and the cows is also rhetorically strengthened by their similar behaviour. As Jason Hribal points out and which is previously exemplified, farmed animals have not always accepted bad treatment without protest. Resisting movement and work, as well as simply staring out with a dull gaze are striking methods invented by cattle *against* humans, including farm workers wanting to increase their speed (Hribal, 2007, p. 103).

In the train wagon, the strikers take over these methods in their ‘passive war,’ as if they belonged to the same community as the cattle. Using bovine insistence – Lo-Johansson uses expressions such as *stirra*, *blänga* and *bilda en flock* (“staring,” “glaring,” and “forming a herd”) – the strikers make the breakers extremely uncomfortable. So uncomfortable that they prefer to join the cows in the cattle wagon for the last hours of the journey, and there they stay for, not just one, but *six* days, lacking further transportation from the station to the slaughterhouse.

The storyline follows the path of the train/front line, fearlessly crossing the country in one direction and, after the six days, heading home to the farm. It ends with the triumphant return of the strikers and cows to the farm, where they are warmly greeted, particularly by the women milkers. The men and cows have won the fight, and renewed their pressure on the patron. The last lines focus on the two strikebreakers who have undergone an important change: “The farm workers didn’t follow them anymore. But the day after, the two strike-breakers joined the strike” (p. 348). This ending is the most paradoxical aspect of the story. From a more-than-anthropocentric viewpoint, it is actually where its construction falls apart.

### *The return to what future?*

I see two interconnected problems in the story; firstly, the dishonesty of the analogy model, claiming that the victory belongs both to humans and animals. When the cows who escaped slaughter are lead back to their boxes, Lo-Johansson asserts that “They felt at home in their boxes. The signs with their names were still there, over their heads” (p. 346). What he really is saying is that this is all that a cow could ever want and strive for. While the fight for modernization for humans means a fight for extended freedom over your own time and body, animals should only look forward to more of the same: eternal confinement, eternal productivity demands, and eternal service to humans. At least being in a box is better than being killed (at least for a few more years).

This is a typical modernist standpoint, which Lo-Johansson (not consistently, but here) shares with prominent thinkers from all ideologies that value progression: Christianity, Marxism, capitalism, and liberalism. Humans, it is agreed, have the ability to become political and rise from poor and destructive conditions to build a better future. The animal – within and outside – and all that is slow and dumb, is seen as an obstruction (c.f. Marx, 1995; Arendt, 1998; c.f. Agamben’s bios/zoe discussion in Agamben, 1998). What a cow ‘outside the box’ might become, what her interests might be if she were able to unlearn her learned helplessness, is, within this scope, not even a question – a dairy cow is a dairy cow. As Karen Davis puts it, “Our use becomes their ontology – ‘this is what they are’ and their teleology – ‘this is what they were made for.’” (Davis, 2011, p. 45; c.f. Scholtmeijer, 1995, p. 76).

The second problem is how the story not only fakes analogy between human and animal freedom fights, pretending that modernization is great for both humans and farmed animals, but also denies its own soft inside to protect the progress-oriented storyline. For, what is actually going on in the cattle wagon? How is the change of the strike-breakers constituted? What does the six-day transformative turning point of the story look like?

What happens during the wait at the station in Stockholm is a slow synchronization of human (male) and animal (cow) life rhythms. The two strike-breakers live day and night with the cows. They milk them (this ‘women’s job’) and, as the text states, drink the milk from their hands (p. 344). They are deterritorialized in time and space from their habitual masculine position of active agency and control, which the former soldier who is used to action finds extremely frustrating at first. The boy adjusts more quickly; he sleeps alongside the three cows, “breathing with their bowel smelling indifference to human affairs” (p. 346).

This passage depicts the opposite of human-animal division or progression-focused temporality. For the humans and the animals in the wagon, time is, with every passing day, becoming more detached and directionless in relation to the expectations from the outside world. The boy’s drowsy intimacy with the cows suggests a pre-verbal, womblike existence; instead of moving forward, instead of accomplishing manly tasks and moving toward a future goal, his time travel seems to go inwards to earlier layers of himself, where he was able to be with animals in a different way and feel with their bodies.

It remains a mystery why the experiences of the two strike-breakers results in new solidarity with the strikers rather than with the animals. The only explanation lies in the influence of anthropocentric chrononormativity on the storyteller. In this case, the traditional logic of the historiography of the life of the human working class takes over, perverting the counter talk of bodies, touch, and sympathies in order to conform to this traditional logic.

However, creativity is free. I think about the two men and the cows in the cattle wagon—what futures they could have invented together, what history they could have written. Theorists increasingly try to give contours to potential alternatives to a linear time system, not only as “circular time” which might suggest a return to the same point day by day, but as “queer time” (Freeman, 2010) or “revolutionary time” (Söderbäck, 2012). Philosopher Fanny Söderberg’s writings on “revolutionary time,” based on Julia Kristeva’s theories of temporality, are interesting because she, as literature also tends to do (Ricoeur, 1985, p. 150), weaves together the historical and psychological aspects of time and of time narratives, but declares the body as the (repressed) place of interest. Living creatures, just like texts, are made of layers of time. We have to awake the untimely past within ourselves, as well as listen to untimely voices from the past via historiography and literature to find affinities strong enough to use for the building of unknown futures.

I dream with the boy in the cattle wagon, with my head on the cow’s belly. Tomorrow, back in Södra Möre, we will all three go on strike – not only for the humans, but for human-animal freedom, whatever that will look like when it comes.

Note: all quotes from Lo-Johansson are translated by the article author.

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## *Endnotes*

- <sup>1</sup> In this article I use the term 'animal' as short for non-human animal, well aware that humans belong to the animal category.
- <sup>2</sup> This 'animal turn' of interpretation is central to literary human-animal studies. The idea is that literary animals should be broadly read for what they do in a text, instead of being looked at as figures existing only to promote a human story. Important sources of inspiration in this field are works by Susan McHugh, Philip Armstrong, Cary Wolfe, and Ann-Sofie Lönngren.
- <sup>3</sup> It should be noted that other Lo-Johansson stories, instead, show the friendships that also existed between workers and farmed animals. Just as Niklas Cserhalmi shows in his dissertation on farmers' treatment of and view on farmed animals during the period of agricultural industrialization (Cserhalmi, 2004), there has always been a great complexity in the relationship where, from the human side, both empathy and instrumentalism plays a part.





# HOSTS, GUESTS AND HORSES: TRIADIC RELATIONSHIPS IN HORSE-BASED HOSPITALITY

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Erika Andersson Cederholm

## *Introduction*

The horse-related industry in Sweden comprises a wide variety of businesses, from the large-scale racing industry to the smaller horse farm, and from traditional racing, breeding, and riding to more holistic and therapeutic type services. This article will discuss a common type of horse business in Sweden—the small horse farm – which has emerged from a hobby – based enterprise and its foundation lies in the owner’s personal interest in horses. It is based on an empirical study of self-employed horse farmers in Sweden whose work is motivated by the possibility of creating a lifestyle that benefits themselves and their families. The horse enterprises in focus often provide a combination of services: riding, therapy, livery and accommodation, all situated within the owner’s farm. These home-based enterprises, in which the horse farmers, their families, the horses, and the customers interact on a daily basis comprise the social arena in focus. The horse farmers provide a form of hospitality in the wider meaning of the term, which is either oriented towards customers by offering hospitality in the traditional meaning (farm stays, bed and breakfast, riding camp) or towards the horses (as in livery) in which the horses are the ‘guests’ and the owners come on a daily basis to take care of them.

This type of small-scale, lifestyle-oriented horse farm is academically interesting for several reasons. It is a type of business that blurs conventional boundaries between work and leisure, business and home, and between economic and intimate personal spheres. It is an arena characterized by the intersection between different social spheres, making it illustrative for analyzing the dynamics of social interactions and the possible tensions emerging. This is also of interest in a wider social meaning, since lifestyle-oriented work and the relationship between work and leisure is being constantly negotiated in society today. Further, the boundaries are blurred between what is perceived as intimate social relationships and economic transactions, with humans as well as animals. Services that involve a close relationship between service providers and clients, sometimes with animals involved, are

paving the way for new markets for emotional relationships (Illouz, 2007; Hochschild, 2011; Zelizer, 2013).

The horse farm as an arena for these processes is also interesting for a specific reason. Lifestyle-oriented businesses are common in the tourism and hospitality industry where many people start small and micro enterprises based on a personal dream and the longing for a more nature-based and simple country life (Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; Andersson Cederholm, 2014). For the hosts, socializing with guests is often regarded as a prime value, while simultaneously trying to make a living. Many horse farmers harbor a similar dream of making a living out of their personal interests and lifestyle and combining business with a hobby. However, in horse-based hospitality, not only do two main actors play a role – the business owners and the guests – but also a third actor, the horse. This makes service interactions in this type of social arena particularly complex.

Triadic relationships often call into question the established relationship between two parts, and open up the dynamic of closeness and distance between the three parts involved. Georg Simmel's classic study on the triad as a social form points at the qualitatively different relationships which emerge when a third actor is introduced into a two-part, dyadic relationship (Simmel, 1950). The third actor brings in the notion of the society, the common force beyond the dyadic relationship, thus breaking up the dual bond and introducing a tension between closeness and distance. Depending on the specific social context, the role of the third part may shift; the third actor sometimes takes the role of the mediator, acting as a bridge between the others and, at other times, as a separator. Two parts may become close due to their relationship with the third or their relationship may become more distant; for instance, the horse and the horse farmer may be close, with the horse being considered a part of the family in contrast to the more distant relationship with the customer or guest. However, the horse is primarily considered as a working tool in order to reach the customer. Shifting roles may evoke ambivalence and pave the way for complexities in social situations. It also highlights taken-for-granted norms and images of both how to run a 'proper' business involving animals, and how to understand relationships with people and horses. What is the role of the horse in this type of business? How are the relationships involving three parts—the hosts, the guests, and the horse—scribed meaning in this type of social context? Drawing on Georg Simmel's classic analysis of the triad, the focus is on the three-part relationship between the farmer, the horse, and the client, and the tensions it entails.

The study is based on ethnographic interviews with 18 female business owners involved in horse-based hospitality.<sup>1</sup> This gendered selection was not intentional, but reflects the gendered pattern of small-scale, horse-related industries in Sweden.

Over the past few decades, the horse-industry has been characterized by “feminization”, in which women and girls are a clear majority in most parts of the industry (Forsberg, Westerberg, and Abrahamsson, 2012).

The analysis adopts a social-interactionist perspective with a focus on the narrative practices of horse farmers. It is the horse farmers’ perspective on their relationship with horses, customers, and family members, and what they value as important in their combined life and business that is of interest in this study. The analysis focuses on the tensions and dynamic interplay in this type of lifestyle business and the negotiated boundaries between work and leisure, business and family life, as well as between humans and animals. As will be demonstrated, these interactions highlight multiple and sometimes contradictory views on horses – as family members, working comrades, guests, and working tools.

### *Lifestyle work with and through horses*

The horse farmers in this study can be called ‘lifestyle entrepreneurs’, indicating that their business is a voluntary lifestyle choice based on their personal interests and/or hobbies (Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010; Ateljevic and Doorne, 2000; Di Domenico, 2005). Although many types of work may have lifestyle aspects, and there may be a blurred line between leisure and paid work, the notion of lifestyle enterprising often implies the intentional balancing act between economic and personal motives (Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010; Helgadóttir and Sigurdardóttir, 2008; Andersson Cederholm, 2014).

The urban middle class have a long history of paying custom to rural lifestyle businesses, and they have always been attracted to access to rural areas as an arena for consumption. However, lifestyle businesses today are part of a more general cultural change in the relationship between work and leisure (Rojek, 2010; Bauman, 2007). Leisure, tourism, and recreation have a more prominent place in the rural service industry today (Crouch, 2006; Edensor 2006) and, in Sweden, this is highlighted in the interests of horse-related businesses (Forsberg 2012). Since horse enterprises are often located close to urban areas, they also transform and call into question the distinction between the rural and the urban (see Elgåker, 2011).

The lifestyle-oriented horse farm can be regarded as an arena wherein structural changes in society become visible. On a micro level, this arena is a hybrid between socially defined structures of home and work, leisure and business, intimate family life and commercial relationships with customers. This opens up for a vivid ‘boundary work’ (Nippert-Eng, 1996; Gieryn 1983) wherein the actors involved make efforts to order and reorder relationships and social roles. As a result, this hybrid arena, or intersection between various social spheres, sheds light on conventional

ways of understanding the social order, but also calls them into question in the very process of defining and ordering.

One of the characteristics of hospitality work is that it often involves a large proportion of emotional work or emotional labor wherein the service provider aims to affect their clients in a positive, comfortable, safe, or exciting way. In regard to the horse farmers in this study, emotional work includes the horses as well, which will be further elaborated later in the text. Most literature on emotional work is focused on the role between two parts: a service provider and a client (Hochschild, 1983; Bolton, 2000); however, in this paper, I will elaborate on the role of three-part constellations in this type of service work (Andersson Cederholm and Gyimothy, 2010).

### *Passionate work*

The horse farmers in this study are fairly well-educated, often in other areas than those related to horses; for example, they have backgrounds as teachers, journalists, physiotherapists, and so on, although some do have agricultural backgrounds. Because of this, their lifestyle choice can be seen as clearly voluntary, although many of them emphasize the harsh economic and practical conditions involved in running a horse farm. Several are so-called lifestyle migrants (Hoey, 2005), indicating the simultaneous shift of lifestyle and place of living. Some of these migrants have bought horse farms and moved from the city to the countryside in order to realize an old dream of starting a horse business. Some were brought up on a farm or have a partner with a background in traditional farming and thus will have the facilities of the farm and other resources readily available. Despite separate backgrounds and previous occupational paths, the horse farmers' stories of how it all began and what value they ascribe to this type of life and work are quite similar; all emphasize their passion for horses, and the business is described as a lifestyle choice.

Several of the horse farmers emphasize childcare responsibilities as the main motivator for starting this type of business; starting a business became a means for not only developing a hobby into a business, but to be able to stay at home with their small children after their maternity leave ended. Others with older children talk about the possibility of running the business as a family enterprise and also as a way to keep the family together. They state that running a home-based business provided this opportunity, although they also mention how difficult it can be to juggle all their responsibilities.

Juggling the responsibilities in the daily work which lies at the intersection between household and business is reflected upon by the horse farmers. Gunilla, who is in her early sixties, describes the daily work:

It is a mosaic. I take the laundry basket with me in the morning when I go out to the stable, and on the way, I turn on the washing machine. Then I go to the stable. I feed the horses and then I walk into the barn and fold some cartons for the forage I sell. Then, I go back inside the house and have a cup of coffee and answer some email. Then, I pick up the basket and hang up the laundry. Then, I go back to the horses and take them out. Then, I fill up the mangers. And when that is done, then I discover ‘shit, I don’t have the instructions for...’ so I have to go in and do that. And ‘shit, what are we going to have for lunch?’ So, it is a mosaic...and then, suddenly, a Saturday night when we had planned to go to a party, the damn horses run away. It is not often, but it happens...

Competencies and experiences in handling the various demands from families, horses, and in particular, customers, are described as specific skills. These can be interpreted as skills in both ‘hostmanship’ and ‘horsemanship’, or even ‘having an eye for people’ and ‘having an eye for horses’.

### *Having an eye for people*

When I ask the horse farmer what it takes to run such a business, they all mention their passion for horses, but they also emphasize an interest in and knowledge of people. Linda, who runs a riding school with Icelandic horses, explains: “...and then you really must like horses and feel that you have the knowledge to feel the horse, and then you must be able to immediately scan people.” The importance of an experience-based service attitude is underlined – to have the knowledge to *feel* the horse and *scan* people – and it is presumed that you must have an eye for horses as well as people.

Some horse farmers have an articulated ambition to become emotionally close to their guests, with the horses as the tool or mediator. Marie, who runs a tour-riding company, explains:

Some people who come here are really scared of horses, but they really want to be here. And I am so pleased when they open their hearts and think that ‘this is a great place’, and [especially] when they get to know the horse. When they dare to come close to the horse. There are so many feelings involved with horses, and I think it is very good for people (...) People shall feel really welcome when they are here. They should be cared for. This is part of what I live for.

Not all horse farmers have the ambition of being emotionally close to their guests; nevertheless, favourite guests may become like friends or somewhat like friends, and a form of commercial friendship may develop (Price and Arnould, 1999; Lashley and Morrison, 2003; Andersson Cederholm and Hultman, 2010). This commercial friendship is restricted in time and place, compared to the more conventional meaning of a long-term friendship, characterized by reciprocity. Through the horse as a mediator, the hosts become close to their guests, but this closeness is constrained by the service setting and norms governing workplace behaviour. Although the horse is the third part, or mediator, who makes it possible for the hosts to become closer to their guests, the horse simultaneously marks a distance between them. The horse represents the working tool, and thus frames the situation into a more commercial service setting, not a private home. Marie, for instance, has had thoughts about starting a therapeutic enterprise as well, developing a more-specialized enterprise built on her emotional work.

### *Having an eye for horses*

The horse farmers often emphasize the wellbeing of their horses and how important it is that the horses are well taken care of, which could be interpreted as ‘if the horses are not pleased, there will be no business’. As Linda explains: “They are our working comrades, they must enjoy what they do.” Furthermore, the emotional work is often about matchmaking; it is about finding the right horse for the right rider. This indicates a form of emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983) implying the skills of a leader to be sensitive to the wellbeing of their horse employees, as well as their clients.

The physical and emotional wellbeing of the horses demands a competence in horsemanship that is often described in terms of lifelong experience and tacit knowledge. Catherine, who runs a fairly well-established farm with tour-riding, riding school, horse consultancy and B&B, describes her own competence and the type of skills she thinks all horse farmers should have:

You must be able to *see* (her emphasis) the horses, you must be able to just glance through a flock of animals and instantly see if there is something wrong, if someone limps or...you must have this look (...) You must have an eye for horses. (Andersson Cederholm, 2014, p. 10)

Emotional closeness to horses is not only about emotional labour, that is, a professional, craftsmanlike and experience-based attitude towards the animal. It is also about more personal, emotional work, where the horse is regarded as a family

member. The tension between closeness and distance is highlighted when Gunilla talks about the different relationships which develop between different individuals; individuals who are her working comrades: “I prefer to buy the horses when they are foals, and then they work their whole life for me. You will have stronger emotional ties to some horses, that’s the way it is. Sometimes it just clicks between certain individuals.”

Suddenly, as we are sitting and talking in Gunilla’s kitchen, she becomes very emotional and tears well up in her eyes. She points at a framed photo of a horse on her kitchen wall: “I lost twenty-four years of friendship some time ago...it is hard... I don’t want to talk about it, but still mention it, because this business, it has its ups and downs.”

This business has its ups and downs, Gunilla says. This sentence captures the dilemma that several of the horse farm owners in this study give voice to. Some horses become like family members, but it is also expected from the nature of the business and the social norms governing the idea of professional relationships that a certain amount of distance is preferable. You are often expected to make a distinction between employees and family members, as well as between horses and humans:

You cannot fall in love with all horses. But of course, with my stallion, Hector, I mean...I love that horse. That’s the way it is. And I would be tremendously depressed if anything happened to him. I would be so sad. You never know what happens, but I would be so sad because this horse... I have never felt the same way with any other horse. I have learnt so much from him... So, of course, you develop feeling for horses. But still you have to ask yourself, ‘what do you want to do with the horse, do you want to have it for competition or just riding around in the forest or what?’

The quote indicates a possible emotional dilemma surrounding conflicting demands and expectations. Linda expresses her strong feelings for Hector, but then recaptures her role as a business leader: ‘You must know what you want to do with the horse.’ As a business leader, you are expected to have a more instrumental and thus, distant, relationship to your horse employee. Furthermore, “So, of course, you develop feeling for horses” indicates an assumption of the contrary, that you should not develop the same close feelings for horses as for humans. Conflicting demands such as these are dealt with in various ways, sometimes by making clear distinctions between horses for business and family horses, and working tools and friends. The struggle between social expectations and roles is common among the horse farmers I interviewed. Emotional dilemmas are always lurking and are highlighted when a horse becomes ill or cannot function in the business anymore.

In a business that is, to a large extent, based on caring, personal interests, and emotional values, no specific norms or praxis on how to deal with dilemmas of this kind have emerged. Some horse farmers simply resign to the complexities of the business, as Gunilla does: “it has its ups and downs.”

### *Tensions in the triad*

Being a horse farmer host implies serving horses as well as people. What makes the interaction a bit more complex than in an ‘ordinary’ farm stay or bed and breakfast is that the host is not only serving one of them at a time, but both of them. “You have to please both!” says one of the horse farmers, indicating the implicit challenge involved. The service attitude embodies both horsemanship and hostmanship, and being a professional horse farmer in the hospitality business does not seem to be about assuming one role or the other, but rather to find the balance in a complex triadic relationship between host, guest, and horse.

This is further highlighted when the horse farmers talk about difficulties in finding the right employees, where typically two types of employees are found. As one horse farmer says: “Those who are good with horses are not always good with people, and those who know people do not always know horses”.

One challenge in this work seems to be that not all horses are suitable for all people and the other way around. This concerns tour riding in particular since there are new riders and groups coming in all the time and the horse farmer or instructor does not know anything about their background more than the short information they provide upon arrival. Therefore, as well as the art of making a good match, the art of reading both people and horses is particularly important. Like the hostess of a party, the horse farmer introduces the horses and guests to each other, often by describing the character and personality of the horse.

The ambition of serving both people and horses may, however, entail a dilemma; that which is regarded as the best service to one part will not always coincide with the service ambition for the other. Catherine explains that she now and then has to ‘sacrifice’ a horse, or rather the horse’s potential to become a good riding horse to be used for competition, because her type of business demands other things from the horse. The horse farmer emphasizes that, for beginners, offering a secure and mild-tempered horse is crucial. The horse will not be as stimulated, but on the other hand, it will have a good life and the guests, or customers, will be pleased. Knowing when you can sacrifice a horse is regarded as one aspect of ‘having an eye for horses.’ As Catherine says: “You have to care for the horses, but you must be willing to sacrifice them.” Talking about ‘sacrificing’ in this context seems to indicate that the horse farmers have an instrumental, professional atti-



tude towards their horses. This implies a valuation of the horse as a working tool or employee, suitable for a certain kind of customer.

This trade – off reasoning – horse versus customer – may take another form, indicating the constant dynamic between closeness and distance in the triad. Although the horse farmers say that most customers are nice and behave according to the rules, they have examples of the few that do not. One horse farmer told an anecdote of how she once, in a harsh tone, had told a client to get off the horse and walk. “He (the rider) was not nice,” she said with a laugh. What is notable with this anecdote is not only that a customer is sacrificed for the benefit of the horse, but the pride in the horse farmer’s voice when telling the story. She was proud of her ability to say no to a guest, to set a limit to the notion of customer sovereignty, a mythology so pervasive in service cultures (Korczynski and Ott, 2004).

The boundary work between horsemanship and hostmanship is thus mediated through the horse, and this boundary work is also articulated and reflected upon as a specific competence in knowing where to draw the line, such as knowing when to sacrifice one for the other.

The service attitude which is often displayed by the horse farmers as an important professional asset contains tensions and complexities since the service is not only directed towards guests, but to the horses as well. This tension becomes particularly visible when it is unclear who has the privileged role of being a guest. Is it the human who is a guest or the horse? This is often the case in livery, a common enterprise in which the horse farmer rents out stable space to horse owners, and it often includes services such as feeding and taking the horses in and out, although, in most cases, the horse owner goes there on a daily basis and takes care of the horse. Some horse farmers say that they do not want to run a livery stable, due to the many conflicts with horse owners that may occur, such as those regarding cleaning routines, feeding, and proper care of the horses. This type of social situation reveals uncertainty and ambiguity, and because the horse farmers take care of their guests according to the social norms of hospitality, they often claim that they know what is best for their horse guests, since they have the overall responsibility for the flock, or group, of horses. The owner, on the other hand, often claims that she knows what is best for her particular horse. In this case, the horse owner, or host, has two very different types of guests to provide for. Serving the horse guest and serving the human guest do not always coincide resulting in a clear tension in the triad. From the perspective of the host, the horse farmer often includes the horse in an ‘us’, emphasizing closeness between herself and the horse. By claiming to ‘know what is best for the horse’, a distance towards the owner is marked. Although in other situations, the host and the owner are ‘in it together’, agreeing on what is best for the horse.

## *Concluding discussion*

This study has focused on the negotiation of social interactions and relationships between horse farmers, horses and clients in the home-based horse farm. The meaning ascribed to these relationships and the service work involved has demonstrated that emotional work takes a prominent place and is oriented towards both clients and horses. This highlights ideals concerning service skills in this type of hospitality work, including both hostmanship and horsemanship. It is described here as “having an eye for people” and “having an eye for horses”.

This emotional work takes place in a specific type of workplace arena. The lifestyle business is a hybrid type of setting, a betwixt-and-between social world in the intersection between home and work, leisure and business. These structural conditions provide a framework for the actors involved and for the social interactions embedded by tensions and, at times, unclear social roles. By highlighting the ambivalent role of the horse in the triadic relationship between the horse farmers, their clients, and the horses, various views on horses become discernible. The horse is sometimes regarded as a more active mediator in the relationship between the owners and the clients, while at other times, more like a passive working tool. Sometimes the horse is regarded as a family member and sometimes like a guest who deserves the care expected from good hospitality. These roles are not constant, but shift according to the situation and how the relationship with the clients develops.

The role of the third part is often neglected in studies of service interactions or social interactions in general. Studies of interactions between humans, or human and animals, may benefit from considering a three-part constellation. Since the interactions evoke tensions and ambiguous roles, they may shed light on *how* we categorize and ascribe meaning to various actors, relationships, and social spheres. Dyadic relationships and dual categories, such as host and guest, human and animal, home and business, leisure and work, is an ordering mode that is often called into question by a third part or hybrid categories. Emotional work illustrates this, as well as the breaking up of the epithets ‘horse’ or ‘guest’ into specific individuals, addressed by their personal names. Therefore, by breaking up dyadic categories, and focusing on triads in specific contexts, the roles become more complex, highlighting new forms of power relationships, ambiguities, tensions, and contradictory views in the human-animal relationship.

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### *Endnotes*

- <sup>1</sup> This article is based on empirical data from the research project 'The horse-farm: Between family projects and lifestyle enterprising', financially supported by The Swedish-Norwegian Foundation for Equine Research. For more details on methodology and the characteristics of the interviewees, see the article Lifestyle Enterprising: the 'ambiguity work' of Swedish horse-farmers (Andersson Cederholm, 2014).

# ALLOWED

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Susan McHugh

Who's to say who's allowed? This dog – every dog – loves the beach. She runs to it, gets her claws into it, furiously digging, digging, she wallows, rolls, snorts, rolls, jumps up running for the waves, swims, then hits the sand running again. The routine might be broken by joyful barks, but otherwise it's always the same.

The time of year doesn't matter to her. She can be scorching her pads on the sand, or dodging ice floes. It's the beach! And we're never alone. People surf-fish around the bathers all summer long, and occasionally, as the kindly lifeguard who called me out of the water explained, they spot large sharks swimming around us. In migration seasons, birds and birdwatchers flock here in droves. Winter brings the seals up the estuary, fishing in the warmer river waters, and deer leave tracks in the sand year round. But, for this dog, it's only ever better when other dogs are there with her.



*Photo: Mik Morrissey*

So the signs make no sense. “Dogs not allowed,” they say, and mean during the summer months. That’s when the otherwise empty houses fill up again in this dying – well, no, dead – mill city. That’s when the year-rounders, so many children and grandchildren of Acadians who came to work in the now-defunct mills of The City that Rises Where the River Falls, mothball their Canadian heritage. For one season a year, they suspend that nation’s principle of communal coastal property, otherwise so gloriously extended to us across the Maine shores, to the dogs’ dismay.

This dog is a Labradoodle. Half poodle, half Labrador retriever, like most of the locals she too could claim French-Canadian roots. Either way, I’d like to see this dog like me as “from away,” as they say here of everyone not born of Mainers. I’d like to think she shares my suspicion of the shifting sands of what they say is allowed. Worse, I’ve fast-talked and fast-walked her around the law for too long to stop now. On the beach, beyond the fences, past the markers, we just keep going.

We elude the fish police, who issue tickets and use live – well, no, dead – animal tests for toxic algae to determine whether to close the beaches to shell-fishing. Finding high counts of *e. coli* bacteria, sometimes they also shut down access to swimmers. But this dog and I are not part of the problem. Steering clear of the beach-house owners, I’m careful to carry poo-bags to demonstrate at a distance that there’s no need to worry about our transmission of zoonoses, our complicity in sharing shared microbial life, no, not from this dog and me.

Let them think about how the city’s wastewater overflows from the treatment plant up the river whenever there is a heavy rain, heading directly downstream to mingle with their own septic-system runoff on the beach and out to sea. Let them consider the people who wash their self-soiled toddlers in the waves every warm sunny day. Let them ponder the laws that allow owners of houses of a certain vintage to dump their septic waste directly into the ocean, and owners of cruise ships to do the same within a mile of the coast.

Undaunted, today this dog and I cooled our heels by walking the sandbars that the tides are always shifting between river and ocean. With waves lapping at my ankles while my toes went numb, I thought about how ten-thousand-year-old archaeological evidence around the world locates human-dog cohabitation as a constant across so many continents, and what might remain of these shared histories in the six-thousand-year-old firepits unearthed occasionally at the mouth of the river where we begin our walk to the waves. Heading back up the access path on our way back home, we met a young fox, skinny and with no brush to speak of yet, who stared back at her, clearly recognizing a sister canid before trotting back into the seaside woods. Who’s to say who’s allowed?



*Photo: Mik Morrissey*

## *Biographies*

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Associate professor at the Department of Service Management and Service Studies, Lund University, Sweden. She holds a Ph.D. in Sociology and her research interests embrace the intersection between culture, economy and social interactions, including service encounters and experiences in tourism and hospitality contexts. Her recent research focuses on the commodification and organization of intimacy and emotions in service work; horse-farming and social interactions involving horses; lifestyle enterprising; the boundary work between economic and non-economic life spheres.

Philip Armstrong

Associate professor at the Department of English, University of Canterbury in Christchurch, New Zealand. Armstrong holds a Ph.D. in English literature, and is the co-director of the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies ([www.nzchas.canterbury.ac.nz](http://www.nzchas.canterbury.ac.nz)). His most recent book, co-authored with Annie Potts and Deidre Brown, is *A New Zealand Book of Beasts: Animals in our History, Culture and Everyday Life* (Auckland University Press, 2013). Other publications include *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (Routledge, 2008), *Shakespeare and Psychoanalysis* (Routledge, 2001), *Shakespeare's Visual Regime* (Palgrave, 2000) and, as co-editor, *Knowing Animals* (Brill, 2007).

Amelie Björck

Ph.D. in Comparative Literature, researcher at the Centre of Language and Literature, Lund University, and senior lecturer at Södertörn University, Sweden. Björck's research interests include human-animal cultural studies; literature, theatre and social change; intersectional and post humanist perspectives. She recently finished a post doc project on the relations between apes and humans in Western literature after Darwin. In her new project, she deals with the presence of and ethical negotiations around farm animals in contemporary and mostly Northern European literature, film and theatre. She co-edits the cultural journal *Glänta*, and was one of the coordinators of the "Exploring 'the Animal Turn'" research theme at the Pufendorf Institute.

Elsa Coimbra

Ph.D. in Environmental Sociology, senior lecturer at the Human Geography Department, Lund university, Sweden. General research interests include human-nature relationships; biodiversity and nature conservation; transformative learning



and action-research; transdisciplinarity. Currently, Coimbra's research is concerned with nature conservation, particularly in regard to the relation between humans and certain species, like wolves, and more recently bees and the phenomena of Colony Collapse Disorder in Europe. She has experiences of working within trans-disciplinary environments, and enjoys developing and promoting new models for human-nature relationships, alongside social technologies for transformative learning. She was one of the coordinators of the "Exploring the Animal Turn" research theme at the Pufendorf Institute.

Gary Francione

Board of Governors Distinguished Professor of Law & Nicholas deB. Katzenbach Scholar of Law and Philosophy at Rutgers University School of Law, USA. Professor Francione has been teaching animal rights theory and the law for more than 25 years. He has lectured on the topic throughout the United States, Canada, and Europe, and has been a guest on numerous radio and television shows. He is well known throughout the animal protection movement for his criticism of animal welfare law and the property status of nonhuman animals, and for his theory of animal rights. Moreover, Francione is the author of numerous books and articles on animal rights theory and animals and the law, including *Eat Like You Care: An Examination of the Morality of Eating Animals* (2014) (with Anna Charlton); and *Introduction to Animal Rights: Your Child or the Dog?* (2000).

Elisabeth Friis

Ph.D. in Literature, assistant professor in Comparative Literature, Lund University, Sweden. Her current research concerns anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism; tropology and environmental thinking; eco-criticism and posthumanism; animal encounters in modernist fiction by modern women writers, primarily Virginia Woolf and Clarice Lispector. Friis has published on the subject of greek mythology (the myth of Orpheus), archaic greek poetry (Homer, Archilochos and Sappho) and contemporary danish poetry. Moreover, she is one of the editors of the Danish cultural journal *Kritik*.

Kristina Jennbert

Ph.D. and professor in Archaeology at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, Lund University, Sweden. Her research interests include a long-term perspective on neolithisation; landscape use and environmental attitudes; cosmology and ritualization; human-animal relations and ethics. In her most recent *Animals and Humans. Recurrent symbiosis in archaeology and Old Norse religion* (Nordic Academic Press 2011), Jennbert puts emphasis on a very long historical background to modern attitudes to animals.

### Monica Libell

Ph.D. in History of Science and Ideas at Lund University, Sweden. Since 2007, Libell has been a visiting scholar and instructor at the Center for Science, Technology, Medicine and Society at the University of California, Berkeley, USA. Her research interests include the history of concepts, intellectual history, and animal studies. Libell has written extensively on animal ethics; the history of medicine and bioethics; and the concept of anthropomorphism. She is currently working on a project about the ontology of man and counter-man in the 18th century scientific and political debate.

### EvaMarie Lindahl

Master of Fine Arts at The Malmö Art Academy, Sweden, in 2008. Lindahl lives and works as an artist in Malmö, where she is represented by Stene Projects. Recent solo shows and projects include *About: The Blank Pages* at Malmö Konsthall and the Art Museum in Ystad (duo 2014), *The Human Exhibit* at Stene Projects and Gallery Arnstedt SE (solo 2012), *On Stage* at Gallery Ping Pong SE (solo 2011), and *At The Zoo* at Stene Projects SE (solo 2010). She is represented by several private and public collections and is also frequently engaged as a teacher at several universities and art schools. Through detailed and time-consuming drawings, Lindahl examines the autocratic behavior of humans, and its consequences. The artworks reverberate with violence and oppression, where the subordinate position of animals, as well as racism and sexism, are recurring.

### Julia Lindemalm

Freelance photographer based in Malmö, Sweden. She holds a BA in photojournalism and works with a variety of Scandinavian newspapers and magazines as clients. Parallell with her assignments she works with non commercial art projects, focusing on the relationship between humans and wild animals in captivity. Her projects are personal with a journalistic foundation. She is interested in the power structure and the connection vs. the gap in the relationship between humans and nature. Her project *Zoo World* has become an exhibition touring in Sweden. She has received several grants for her work.

### Tobias Linné

Ph.D. in Sociology, assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Media, Lund University, Sweden. He is a critical animal studies scholar whose research interests are veganism and animals as food, exploring through theories of media and sociology how animals are made accessible for human consumption. Currently, Linné is working on a project concerned with the agency and voices of animals in the Swedish dairy industry's communication, analysing how the norms

of human-animal relations are established and sustained and how the animals are rhetorically disfigured to mirror and model the goals of their exploiters. Linné was one of the coordinators of the “Exploring the Animal Turn” research theme at the Pufendorf Institute.

Ann-Sofie Lönngren

Ph.D. and associate professor in Literature, currently employed as a researcher at the Center for Gender Research, Uppsala University, Sweden. Here, she is part of the Humanimal research group, and her research interests include Nordic 20th century literature, animal studies, interdisciplinarity, new materialism, posthumanism, queer studies and intersectionality. She has published extensively in journals such as *NORA - Nordic Journal for Feminist and Gender Research: lambda nordica – Nordic Journal of LGBTQ-issues*, and *Contagion – Journal of Violence, Mimesis, Culture*. Currently, she works on a project about literary human-animal transformations in modern, northern European literature, and will publish the results in the monography *Following the Animal* in 2015, with Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Susan McHugh

Professor and Chair of English at the University of New England, USA. All of her research and some of her teaching focus on literary, visual, and scientific stories of species. McHugh is the author of *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* (Minnesota, 2011), as well as *Dog* (Reaktion, 2004). She serves as Managing Editor of the Humanities for *Society & Animals*, and she is a member of the editorial boards of *Antennae: The Journal of Nature in Visual Culture; Animal Studies Journal; H-Animal Discussion Network; and Humanimalia: A Journal of Human-Animal Interface Studies*. Along with Garry Marvin, she is co-editor of *The Handbook of Human-Animal Studies* (Routledge, 2014).

Lisa Nyberg

PhD in practice candidate at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna, with a research project that aims to articulate an artistic methodology placed in the intersection of performance and pedagogy. Nyberg is a visual artist based in Malmö, Sweden. Her work has been exhibited at Konsthall C, Trondheim Art Biennial, Signal – Center for Contemporary Art, Röda Sten, Den Frie Udstillingsbygning, Dunkers Kulturhus, Liljevalchs Konsthall, Gothenburg Art Museum, Rooseum, and more.

Jovian Parry

Ph.D. candidate in Science and Technology Studies at York University, Toronto, USA. Parry is an artist and scholar from Aotearoa, New Zealand, and obtained his Masters of Arts with distinction in cultural studies from the University of Canterbury in 2011. The title of his master's thesis was *The New Visibility of Slaughter in Popular Gastronomy*. Parry's research interests span critical animal studies, ecofeminism, queer theory, and science fiction studies. He has published in *Journal of Critical Animal Studies*, *Society & Animals*, and *Feminism & Psychology*.

Helena Pedersen

Associate professor of Education and senior lecturer at the Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University. Her primary research interests include critical animal studies, critical theory, educational philosophy and posthumanism. She is the author of *Animals in Schools: Processes and Strategies in Human-Animal Education* (Purdue University Press, 2010), which received the Critical Animal Studies Book of the Year Award in 2010. Helena Pedersen has published in journals such as *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*; *Emotion, Space and Society*; *Studies in Philosophy and Education*; *Culture, Theory and Critique*; and *Policy Futures in Education*. Pedersen was one of the coordinators of the "Exploring the Animal Turn" research theme at the Pufendorf Institute.

Annie Potts

Associate professor in Cultural Studies at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, and co-director of the New Zealand Centre for Human-Animal Studies. Her current research interests include animal advocacy in disasters; gender, sexuality and ethical consumption; the extension of the New Carnivore Movement into non-gastronomic cultural domains; and anti-speciesism and other transgressive politics in the lyrics and performances of Prince. Potts is the author of *Chicken* (Reaktion, 2012) and *The Science/Fiction of Sex: Feminist Deconstruction and the Vocabularies of Heterosex* (Routledge, 2002). She is also a co-author, along with Philip Armstrong and Deidre Brown, of *A New Zealand Book of Beasts: Animals in Our Art, Literature and Everyday Life* (Auckland University Press, 2013); and along with Donelle Gadenne, of *Caring for Animals in Emergencies: Lessons Learnt from the Christchurch Earthquakes* (Canterbury University Press, forthcoming 2014).

Manuela Rossini

Ph.D. in Early Modern Drama and Culture, independent researcher and currently the Executive Director and Programme Coordinator of the Graduate School at the Institute of Advanced Study in the Humanities and the Social Sciences located at

the University of Bern, Switzerland. Her research interests are mainly in the area of Critical Posthumanism (including Animal Studies, the Environmental Humanities and the Medical Humanities), Literature and Science Studies, with a special focus on new feminist-materialist theories within these fields. Together with Tom Tyler, she edited *Animal Encounters*, and with Bruce Clarke *The Routledge Companion to Literature and Science* and *The Cambridge Companion to Literature and The Posthuman* (in preparation). Rossini acts as the Executive Director of the European Society for Literature, Science and the Arts (SLSAeu).

Erik Sandelin

Interaction designer based in Malmö, Sweden. Sandelin is co-founder of interaction design and innovation studio Unsworn Industries – a group of pioneering designers, engineers, artists, and educators exploring, learning about, and shaping the world through crafting beautiful action spaces. Fresh eyes and dirty hands! Sandelin holds an MA in Interaction Design from K3, Malmö University, Sweden. More info at [www.unsworn.org](http://www.unsworn.org).

Ragnhild Sollund

Professor in Criminology at the University of Oslo. She has published widely within migration research and police racial profiling. Since 2003, Sollund has focused her interests within green criminology, especially animal abuse. She is currently engaged in research about the legal and illegal trafficking and other crimes/harms against free born animals, with data from South America and Norway. This project is also part of EFFACE, Fighting environmental crime in the EU, funded by the European Commission. Sollund has written and edited several books, alone and in coeditorship, e.g.: *Eco-global Crimes: Contemporary problems and Future Challenges* (2012); *Transnational migration, gender and rights* (2012); *Global harms. Ecological crime and speciesism* (2008/2011).



## *Animal Turn Theme Group*

### *Coordinators*

Amelie Björck, researcher at the Centre of Language and Literature, Lund University and senior lecturer at Södertörn University, Sweden.

Elsa Coimbra, senior lecturer at the Department of Human Geography, Lund University, Sweden.

Tobias Linné, assistant professor at the Department of Communication and Media, Lund University, Sweden.

Helena Pedersen, associate professor of Education and senior lecturer at the Department of Child and Youth Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden.

### *Members*

Erika Andersson Cederholm, associate professor at the Department of Service Management and Service Studies, Lund University, Sweden.

Gunnar Broberg, professor emeritus in History of Sciences and Ideas, Lund University, Sweden.

Elisabeth Friis, assistant professor in Comparative Literature, Lund University, Sweden.

Caroline Isaksson, associate professor in Biology at Lund University, Sweden.

Kristina Jennbert, professor in Archaeology at the Department of Archaeology and Ancient history, Lund University, Sweden.

Monika Libell, Ph.D. in History of Science and Ideas at Lund University, visiting scholar and instructor at UC Berkeley, US.

Ann-Sofie Lönnngren, associate professor in Literature, researcher at the Center for Gender Research and the Department of Literature, Uppsala University.

Helena Persson, Ph.D. in Biology, curator and deputy director at Lund University Botanical Garden.

## Pufendorfinstitutets skriftserie

1. Flervetenskaplig ljusforskning, 2011
2. Extrema världar, 2013
3. Tillit i det digitala, 2013
4. Exploring the Animal Turn, 2014



Animals' omnipresence in human society makes them both close to and yet remarkably distant from humans. Human and animal lives have always been entangled, but the way we see and practice the relationships between humans and animals – as close, intertwined, or clearly separate – varies from time to time and between cultures, societies, and even situations.

By putting these complex relationships in focus, this anthology investigates the ways in which human society deals with its co-existence with animals. The volume was produced within the frame of the interdisciplinary “Animal Turn”-research group which during eight months in 2013–2014 was hosted by the Pufendorf Institute for Advanced Studies, Lund university, Sweden. Along with invited scholars and artists, members of this group contribute with different perspectives on the complexities and critical issues evoked when the human-animal relationship is in focus.

The anthology covers a wide range of topics: From discussions on new disciplinary paths and theoretical perspectives, empirical case-studies, and artistic work, towards more explicitly critical approaches to issues of animal welfare. Phenomena such as vegansexuality, anthropomorphism, wildlife crimes, and the death of honey-bees are being discussed. How we gain knowledge of other species and creatures is one important issue in focus. What does, for example, the notion of wonderment play in this production of knowledge? How were species classified in pre-Christian Europe? How is the relationship between domesticated and farmed animals and humans practiced and understood? How is it portrayed in literature, or in contemporary social media?

Many animals are key actors in these discussions, such as dogs, cows, bees, horses, pigeons, the brown bear, just to mention a few, as well as some creatures more difficult to classify as either humans or animals. All of these play a part in the questions that is at the core of the investigations carried out in this volume: How to produce knowledge that creates possibilities for an ethically and environmentally sustainable future.



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