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A Symphonic Discussion of the Animal in Richard Adams' *Watership Down*

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Abstract

The purpose of this essay is to suggest a new reading of Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972) by adopting the recently new discipline of Animal Studies. Adams follows a long tradition of talking animals in literature, which still to this day, is an important part of the English literary canon. Throughout this essay, I shall focus on several aspects of the novel. I will look at the anthropomorphized animals and examine how the animals are portrayed in the text. I will seek to offer a structural analysis of Adams' novel using the structure of the symphony. The essay offers a background discussion of Animal Studies as a theoretical discipline. In addition, the background will provide the reader with a description of how and why the structure of the symphony can function as a method to analyse Adams' novel. The analysis has been divided into five parts where Jakob von Uexküll's and Mario Ortiz-Robles' research will serve as a basis for my discussion as I seek to provide a deeper understanding of how our perception of the animal in literature affects our idea of the animal in our human society.

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Introduction

Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972) is a novel about talking animals: a group of rabbits who go on a journey in search of a new home. The world-wide genre of talking animals is more than 3000 years old. In his article, "Talking Animals", Michael Carte writes about the history of talking animals in literature and for how long the genre has existed. Carte explains that "talking animals are as old as Aesop. Even older, for there is one in the Bible: Balaam's donkey, whose story is found in the book of numbers" (59).

Animal literature continues to play an important part in the English literary canon. Examples of English animal literary texts such as Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland* (1865), Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* (1894), Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1901), Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908) Colin Dann's *The Animals of Farthing Wood* (1979), all play an important role in English literature, specifically children's literature.

Already here, we can see that Adams is continuing the long tradition of talking animals in literature. However, Adams' novel is known for being hard to categorize in terms of the age group for which the story is intended. On the one hand, *Watership Down* is a story about talking animals which, I have established earlier, is familiar in children's literature. On the other hand, the story is fairly in tune with that life in the wild can be harsh, possibly making it a troubling novel for the younger reader.

Gillian Adams classifies *Watership Down* as a double journey by questioning if there are "two readers implied by the text, the college-educated adult and the child, each of whom will respond to a different journey" (Adams, 106). In addition to what age-group the novel is targeted at, scholars have speculated about what the talking rabbits in the novel symbolize. Scholars such as John Pennington and Joan Bridgman analyse the novel as fantasy literature or as a mythic and metaphysical tale, whilst other scholars, like Travis D. Smith, classify it as a Cold War Era example of political allegory.

Considering all that has been written about *Watership Down*, one could question where my research fits in and how I have moved existing research forward? Making the animal the subject of its own world offers a new reading of *Watership Down*. By focusing on the literary animal itself and not on what human aspects the literary animal represents I am putting the animal first. I am discussing Adams' novel from a new perspective and pointing out that a new reading is necessary to see how distancing ourselves from animals and treating undesirable animals as the other is symptomatic of our time and our culture.

Richard Adams' *Watership Down* is by his own account "just a story about rabbits" (*The Guardian*). According to his daughters, Adams received letters from his readers all over the world and each one of them had their own idea of what *Watership Down* was really about. "Is Woundwort an allegory of Stalin? Is Hazel Jesus Christ?" (*The Guardian*).

My essay takes its point of departure in the many speculations regarding the representation of the animal in *Watership Down*. It is clear that many have argued for what the rabbits in the novel represent. However, how does *Watership Down* affect the way we as humans view animals in our own society if one takes Adams' comment into account and tries to read the story, as "just a story about rabbits" (*The Guardian*)? Is it possible to read Adams' novel from the animal's perspective? Does the novel and Adams' depiction of the rabbit impact the relation we have with animals in the real world? In his book, *Literature and Animal Studies*, Mario Ortiz-Robles writes:

While literature is [not] a natural habitat for animals (...) it has [nonetheless], had more to say about our relation to animals over time than any other discourse. But literature also has had more to say about our relation to animals because in literature anything can be said, including aspects of our relation to animals that science, economics, and politics would rather not say. (x)

It is therefore crucial that we, as readers, take into account for what reasons the animal in literature is presented. I will therefore use the relatively new discipline of animal studies in an attempt to clarify in what way the animal is presented in *Watership Down*.

Considering both the novel and the symphony are divided into four parts and an epilogue, I have chosen to divide my analysis in the same manner to offer a structural analysis of Adams' representation of the animal. In this essay, the structure of music will serve as a useful entrance into my analysis of *Watership Down* whilst Animal Studies as a theoretical discipline will serve as the main criticism for my analysis. Throughout the first part of my analysis I will refer to Jakob von Uexküll's theory where he discusses the animal as a subject in its own world. In the second part, Ortiz-Robles's research on literature and animal studies, will continue serving as a basis when discussing the animal in *Watership Down*. When analysing the animal in my discussion, I will identify several different aspects of the novel in connection to Animal Studies. Robles asks four questions which my analysis will answer: "What kind of characters do animals play in literature? What sorts of narratives do they inhabit? What is their figurative status? Why, how, to whom, and for whom do animals speak?" (1).

Background

Hazel, the novel's protagonist, decides to leave with a few others from his warren as they go on a journey in search of a new home. During their travel they stumble upon obstacles such as crossing dangerous rivers and fleeing from natural predators. When they finally find their new home, Watership Down, Hazel realizes that they need does (female rabbits) to survive. They decide to bring back does from the nearby warren, Efrafa. However, in view of the fact that the Efrafa warren is militaristic and dangerous, their journey is far from over when they must defeat the warren's leader, General Woundwort, who is all but nice.

In Adams' autobiography *The Day Gone By* we learn how much of an impact his early encounter with nature as a child had on him for the rest of his life. Apart from his love for nature and wildlife, music was also something that was significantly important to him. Therefore, one could suggest that the structure of music may have been in Adams' mind when mapping out the overall structure of the novel.

Throughout this essay, I have chosen to use the terms "non-human animal" and "human-animal". Non-human animal refers to what today's society would call an "animal" and "human-animal" refers to us human beings. Seeing that I argue for both human beings and animals to be equally important and that we all in fact are animals it seems essential to refer to both groups as "animals". The difference therefore being that there are non-human animals and human-animals.

Animal studies is, as already stated, a relatively new discipline. Peter Singer, professor of Bioethics once said in an interview,

"Think of racism, think of sexism, they're both examples where a dominant powerful group has claimed to have some entitlement to enslave people of different races and to use them as tools for the hands of the white people who are enslaving them". (Singer)

This is how he explained the term speciesism. By raising political questions when it comes to the "use and treatment of non-human animals", speciesism has worked as a "foundational concept for more critical approaches in Animal Studies". Animal studies has further "emerged as a diverse and expanding transdisciplinary field (19, Taylor).

Animal Studies, which has also developed from feminist, gender and post-humanist studies, is often discussed when concerning societal issues. However, the impact Animal Studies has had on history, the arts, philosophy, literature and film has also grown

throughout the past century (Taylor, 19). Within this broad field I will not be focusing on the non-human animal in our real world and I will not be discussing the non-human animal as an object in the meat industry or in animal testing. Instead, I will focus my thesis on the portrayal of non-human animals in literature, specifically *Watership Down*. In addition, I will also discuss in what way the portrayal of the non-human animal in Adams' novel affects our view of the non-human animal in our human society.

In her book *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?*, Kari Weil states a reason behind the importance of Animal Studies compared to other studies. Weil states that “for centuries non-human animals have been locked in representation authored by humans, representations that moreover have justified the use and abuse of non-human animals by humans” (Weil 4) Further, she explains that “those who constitute the objects” of woman’s studies and ethnic studies can speak for themselves with the help of the verbal language but “those who constitute the objects of animal studies cannot speak for self-representation” (4). In other words, animals’ communication and language is non-verbal making it hard for them to speak up for themselves when being objectified by us humans.

As stated in the introduction, Jacob von Uexküll’s and Mario Ortiz Robles’ works will be the two main theoretical sources I will draw on throughout my analysis. Compared to René Descartes who believed that animals were machines who were unable to think and feel, Biologist Jacob von Uexküll argues for a new method of studying animals. Descartes’ theory encouraged the idea amongst human beings of there being a significant difference between animals and humans. However, Uexküll argues in his book *A Foray into the Worlds of Animals and Humans* that animals are not objects in the eyes of the human but instead the animal is the subject in its own world.

He compares this world with a bubble which embraces the organism (animal). The animal’s own world alone is inside this bubble and the animal therefore becomes the subject of its own world. Furthermore, outside of these subjective worlds is the objective surrounding. In other words, when looking at the animal, and interpreting the animal’s feelings and actions, the human must be aware that he or she never can hear, see or feel what the animal feels and its surrounding world (Uexküll, 29).

In his book *Literature and Animal Studies*, Mario Ortiz Robles, professor of English, focuses on the relation between literature and animal studies. Robles tries to map out a common ground for the two disciplines and asks the same set of questions that are familiar to students of literature, such as: “how humanity defines itself and to whether or not this definition has something to do with the animal world?”, “what kind of characters do animals play in

literature?”, “What sorts of narratives do they inhabit?”, “What is their figurative status?”, “Why, how, to whom and for whom do animals speak?” (1).

From his autobiography, we learn that Adams was constantly surrounded by classical music and poetry (34). During his difficult years at boarding school, he writes that out of all the things taken away from him, he still had his creative imagination (166). He also states how the only positive thing to happen during his time at boarding school was his weekly lesson with his music-master (166). Music also served as the “principal releasing agent and catalysator to bring upon ecstasy and trance” during the intensive Oxford years and in the army (228). It could therefore be fair to suggest that the structure of the symphony could have been a starting-point for Adams when mapping out his novel.

If we then go further and consider the traditional elements of the movements both in tempo and style, we can further understand how Adams may have been inspired by the symphony in evoking memories and imagination. *Watership Down* is a story about a journey or a quest in search of a new home. I would suggest that the symphony functions as a parallel to Adams’ novel in terms that it also has the form of a journey. It could be suggested that literary genres such as epic, bildungsroman and fairytale use exactly the same structure, so why compare it to the symphony? What would this comparison add to the analysis?

Firstly, the already mentioned atmospheric perspective that is implied in the different parts of a symphony, lyrical, pastoral, a scherzo (joke), are equally visible in Adams’ novel. Secondly, the structure of a symphony would be a fruitful gateway into the analysis if one uses the so-called vertical storyline. The different layers that are specific for the structure of a symphony is a way for me to analyse the similar layers I detect in Adams’ novel. In music, the journey would be by traveling through the keys or, in other words, tonalities. The norm would be to start in the home key and then move away. Momentarily, the music would rest in the home key similar to how the rabbits land in a momentarily safe place before something new happens in the form of different motives or themes.

Furthermore, there is a similarity between Adams’ novel and music in the way that these themes and motives are explored and developed. The trickster figure could be compared to the boisterous scherzo (“joke”) part of the fourth movement and the presentation of the characters that we follow through the whole story could be compared to the sonata form in the first movement. However, it is the overall structure and form of Adams’ novel that strikes a resemblance to the structure of a symphony.

In the First Movement – The Journey I will analyse the two themes in Part One using Uexküll’s method. There is no evidence that Adams knew about Uexküll’s method, but

knowing about his keen interest in naturalist Ronald Lockley, this might have been the case. The question I will answer is whether Adams lets his rabbits be subjects in their own world or if they rather function as objects for us humans.

In the second movement I will make use of Mario Ortiz Robles questions to try to listen to the inaudible animals. Robles means that it is the speaking animal that makes literature literary and suggests that to make animals count in the same way as human beings, we need to perceive literature anew, learning to listen to the mute speech of literary animals. (145).

In the third movement, I will continue by discussing the undesirable animals who do not count. And by understanding which animals are undesirable, I will therefore also explain why General Woundwort as a rabbit becomes uncountable.

In the fourth movement I have chosen to analyse the trickster figure in Adams' novel. I will compare Adams' trickster figure to the traditional trickster myth drawing on research from both Campbell and Baker. The trickster comparison will then further continue into the epilogue, where totality of the animal will be discussed.

First Movement – The Journey

Theme one – “Nature/rabbit”

If we compare *Watership Down* to the structure of a symphony, and particularly the first movement of a symphony, “Part 1: The Journey” would be the first part in what is called the sonata form. The sonata form is a three-part structure: exposition, development and recapitulation. The exposition starts with a theme, or, more specifically, with theme one, which in music would be written in the home key, or the tonic (Rosen, 30). The first theme in Adams' novel is, in my opinion, “nature/rabbit”. Adams sets the scene by describing nature and the rabbit in its natural habitat without any intrusion of danger:

The primroses were over. (...) The May sunset was red in clouds, and there was still half an hour to twilight. The dry slope was dotted with rabbits - some nibbling at the thin grass near their holes, others pushing forward down to look for dandelions or perhaps a cowslip that the rest had missed. Here and there one sat upright on an ant heap and looked about, with ears erect and nose in the wind. But a blackbird, singing undisturbed on the outskirts of the wood, showed that there was nothing alarming there, and in the other direction, along the brook, all was plain to be seen, empty and quiet. The warren was at peace. (Adams, 3-4)

The subject matter, which in this case is “nature/rabbit”, is presented and the travel or journey can begin. The way one depicts the journey in music would be by modulating, meaning that one travels through the keys, or tonalities.

After the first theme has been presented, the second theme of the exposition is introduced. In contrast to theme one, “nature/rabbit”, theme two could be the human. However, before presenting theme two, the human, Adams prepares us by introducing the character of Fiver, the seer. Fiver senses that something is not right: although the warren is clearly at peace, he knows that something is wrong (Adams 4). Adams helps the reader through using intertextuality to understand Fiver. Adams opens the novel with a quote from Aeschylus’ drama *Agamemnon* (458 B.C.) about Cassandra, the seer, who can see into the future but is condemned to never be believed. In his description of Fiver, Adams imitates Aeschylus’ character but invests the rabbit with new characteristics. Fiver is a seer like Cassandra, but unlike her, Fiver is believed and acts upon his premonitions.

Theme Two – The Human

Additionally, Adams prepares the reader for the second theme/the human with the actual title of the chapter: “The Notice Board”. In the structure of music, the second theme would be introduced mainly with the help of modulations (key changes), by creating other small motifs, other layers of a melody, or by bringing in other instruments and dynamics (Rosen 30). Upon introducing the second theme, we are on our way to something else, moving away. That something else in music, would be to go or travel to the dominant, the fifth tone, or chord in the home key. This is not the same, it is something new, but the dominant still lies in the same area of tonality (Rosen 30).

Adams describes this “something else” by using the presence of a noticeboard. The noticeboard stands in the same area as the rabbits’ warren and is a sign of what is to come to their warren although no other rabbit than Fiver is aware of it yet. The notice board states: “This ideally situated estate, comprising six acres of excellent building land, is to be developed with high class modern residences by Sutch and Martin, limited, of Newbury, Berks” (Adams 8). I would suggest that the subject/the human is presented by the object/noticeboard. The noticeboard is therefore the opening to “theme two/the human” in Adams’ novel. The subject/human is mostly absent throughout part 1. However, it is still very much present through the words on the notice board.

It is in the development section and the recapitulation section of the sonata form that the subject matter, or the two themes, are developed and explored (Rosen 30). The development and the recapitulation are a development from the earlier binary form of the suite, and therefore it is fruitful to analyse the two sections simultaneously. Rosen states that the exposition is followed by the development where “the different themes are fragmented and combined in various keys” (30). He further explains that the development ends “with a return to the tonic and a recapitulation of the exposition” (Rosen 30). In Adams’ novel, theme one and theme two are similarly combined and fragmented and the different keys can be compared to the journey the rabbits in the novel have embarked on. He explores the first theme, nature/rabbit and the second theme, the human, by letting the rabbits explore and face different problems and obstacles. They experience danger and fear, but also hospitality and victory as they embark on a journey in search for a new home.

The second theme that is in the dominant key in the exposition is later the tonic in the recapitulation. In “The Shining Wire”, the last chapter of “The Journey”, there are connections to this underlying structure of the recapitulation. Bigwig, who is a part of theme one, wins his battle against a human object and frees himself from a snare, whilst theme two/the human yields for now (Adams 128). If we compare this to music, when the second theme (the human) yields, the second theme would be played in the first theme’s (“nature/rabbit”) key, the tonic.

The Rabbit as a Subject

Throughout the development section of Part One/The Journey, the animal is portrayed and looked upon in several different ways. The way in which both themes are developed, explored and interact with each other, leads us to Jakob von Uexküll’s method for how to study the animal. It could be suggested that Adams echoes Uexküll’s method of studying the animal, not as an object, but as a subject in its own world. Uexküll argues that one should be studying the animal’s relations to its environment and the objects that appear in the animal’s own world. This way of looking at the animal is in total opposition to the Cartesian way of seeing the animal as a machine without feelings and as an object in the eye of the human.

At the end of chapter four, “The Departure”, there is a fight between Bigwig and Holly, captain of the Owsla. “[Holly] crouched on his haunches, scuffling his front paws and growling, as rabbits will when angry” (Adams, 23). If we closely examine how Adams writes about Holly, we can see him as being the subject of his own world. In his research, Uexküll explains that all living organisms have their own world and how the world around them embraces the

organism similar to a soap bubble. This signifies that all organisms become subjects of their own bubble or world. “The bubble represents each animal’s environment [*Umwelt*] and contains all the features accessible to the subject” (Uexküll, quoted in Pollman, 777).

Uexküll’s thought stems from Kant’s philosophy and his claim that all reality is subjective in appearance. This might be an oversimplified analysis of Kant’s thinking, although what truly links the ideas of Uexküll and Kant is the animal as a subject and the significance and consideration of the other (Uexküll, 231). By using Uexküll’s theory, scientists can develop a vague idea of how the surrounding world appears to the animal without questioning the animal’s inner life and mental ability and therefore without projecting human aspects, thoughts and feelings onto the animal.

Instead of projecting his human aspects or feelings onto the fictional rabbit, Adams, in some respects, develops an idea of how the surrounding world appears to Holly by describing his natural actions and signals as he breaks free from Bigwig. In *Animal Signals* (2003), Maynard Smith and Harper define a signal as “an act or structure which alters the behavior of other organisms, which evolved because of that effect, and which is effective because the receiver’s response has also evolved” (3). In the novel, Holly has acted in a certain way to alter Bigwig’s behaviour, which has later provoked Bigwig’s evolved response, leading them to fight. Lockley’s research on rabbit behaviour shows that the strongest rabbit in a fight is likely to knock his opponent down. The fighting rabbit would easily bite the head or neck of its opponent or even “disembowel him altogether, unless his opponent turns away in time” (50). I would therefore agree with Leatherland who acknowledges how Adams’ novel regularly shows “factual description of the wild rabbit’s behaviour and its perspective of its surrounding world [which] embodies the qualities of a wildlife documentary” (208).

Just as the rabbit in Adams’ story, the human is also a subject in its own world or soap bubble. However, in comparison to “nature/rabbit”, throughout the development section of the novel, the human is present without being there physically, meaning that the human subject is absent but the human’s objects are there. In chapter ten, “The Road and the Common”, we read about things that are typically acknowledged as human objects. It is possible to analyse the human-animal as a theme similar to the way Uexküll looks at each non-human animal. Similar to “nature/rabbit”, the human also has its own bubble and the human also has signals in this bubble. We read about a farm, fields of barley, a road made of tarmac, a shaggy looking dog with the jaws grinning and muzzle close to the ground and as mentioned earlier, the noticeboard (4,33). These human inventions are signals showing that the human is the

subject of its own bubble. These signals or inventions may also become objects in the rabbit's bubble.

Uexküll illustrates how “the subject and object are interconnected with each other and form an orderly whole” and that subjects can be further linked to the same object (49). Just as the rabbit does not understand what these unfamiliar objects are, similarly the human cannot claim to understand the rabbit and the objects that it interacts with or reacts to.

The two themes, “nature/rabbit” and “the human” become clear in the text as they are combined and fragmented in the novel. I would suggest that theme one and two live side by side but simultaneously do not interact with each other. The themes form a structure, and if put into music, the bubbles create a counterpoint and melodies which are for now, not combined into the same objective world. Below is an example from Beethoven's Pastoral Symphony Op. 68. To the left one sees the different instruments played. Horizontally we can see how each instrument exists in its own colourful bubble (green, orange, purple) making it a subject of its own world. These instruments/themes/subjects live side by side but at the same time live in their own bubble. In addition, there are two blue vertical markings, indicating when these individual instruments/themes/subjects interact with each other in their objective world.

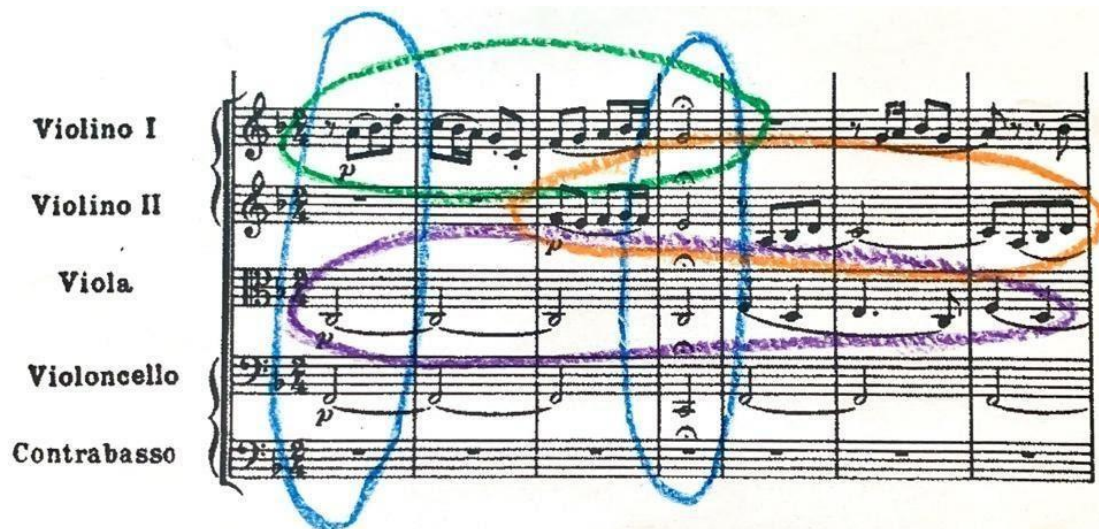


Figure 1. An example of how Uexküll's subjective worlds can be compared to themes and motifs in music.

Above is an attempt to show how Uexküll's thoughts can be compared to different parts and themes in a symphony. The different coloured bubbles or, in terms of Uexküll's research, worlds, are interconnected with each other.

By using the structure of the symphony, it is possible to see a similarity between Adams' narration and Uexküll's findings. Adams lets the “nature/rabbit” exist in its own world

as the subject in its own bubble. The theme is explored in fragments during the development, but at all times the subject is the rabbit. There is a plan, or harmony in Adams depiction of “nature/rabbit” which makes it similar to a part of the symphony, being one voice or an independent voice in a counterpoint.

The Rabbit as a Container

I will now continue to analyse Adams’ development and exploration of the “nature/rabbit” and “human” themes. I claim that Adams’ approach to these two themes differs in comparison to Uexküll’s idea of each animal being a subject of its own world. I would suggest that Adams combines “nature/rabbit” and “the human”, making it hard for the reader to understand whether the animal or the human is the subject in the world that is presented. Leatherland suggests that the rabbits in Adams’ novel are both human and animal, a “Humanimal” (166). However, I would disagree with Leatherland’s claim. As seen in previous examples, Adams occasionally writes about the animal and the human in line with Uexküll’s theory of each living organism being a subject in its own bubble. However, in contrast, Adams also writes about the subject, which in this case is “nature/rabbit”, as if he is bursting the Uexküll bubble.

I would argue that Hazel and Fiver begin as subjects in their own bubble. However, Hazel and Fiver indirectly become objects to illustrate human emotions and purposes as they discuss a possible danger creeping closer and closer to their warren:

The two rabbits went up to the board at a hopping run and crouched in a patch of nettles in the far side, wrinkling their noses at a smell of a dead cigarette-end somewhere in the grass. Suddenly Fiver shivered and cowered down. “Oh, Hazel! This is where it comes from! I know now – something very bad! Some terrible thing – coming closer and closer.” He began to whimper with fear. “What sort of thing – what do you mean? I thought you said there was no danger?” “I don’t know what it is,” answered Fiver wretchedly. “There isn’t any danger here, at this moment. But it’s coming – it’s coming. Oh, Hazel, look! The field! It’s covered with blood!” (7)

The first sentence shows clear indications of the wild rabbit. The two rabbits, Hazel and Fiver, are hopping, crouching and wrinkling their noses as wild rabbits would naturally do. One could suggest that Adams writes of the rabbit as Uexküll suggests. The rabbit is a subject in its own world and acts naturally in its own environment. The cigarette in this case is a human invention that acts as an object in the rabbit’s world. However, I would like to start by analysing the reason behind the “dead cigarette-end” which the two rabbits smell. I would argue that the use

of the cigarette is to convey an underlying moral story for us readers. By putting a dead cigarette-end that smells unnatural to the rabbit, Adams attacks the rabbit's bubble. He takes advantage of the natural rabbit's vulnerability to convey a moral message about humans littering in nature.

Adams may have reason to convey the growing issue of our actions against nature. However, I would argue that Adams' way of depicting the rabbits as subjects of their own world starts to shift. In addition to using a rabbit's vulnerability as the objective for his story, Adams also provides a misleading and ambiguous image of how a rabbit reacts when in fear. In the short space of two sentences, Fiver goes from being a natural rabbit to acting in an unnatural manner. Fiver starts to shiver and crouch down in fear which is a natural emotion amongst rabbits. However, it is of importance to consider the reason behind Fiver's fear. Animals do not get scared and feel fear if it is not necessary (Lockley, 20).

If we use our knowledge of the natural wild animal to consider Fiver, his behaviour as a wild rabbit differs from the biological facts. Fiver says specifically to Hazel, that even if there is presently no danger, he can feel it coming closer and that something terrible is going to happen. According to Lockley, the rabbit reacts in a similar manner to us humans. When the human hears an unexpected noise or gets a silent surprise from an enemy her instinctive fear kicks in. The human can react in many ways. Three examples that Lockley presents are to become "rigid, ready to escape or to flee" (20). He further explains: "much the same reaction, the same instinctive fear, alarms the senses of the wild animal" (20). All its waking hours, the rabbit is the "subject to these alarms in its world" (20). Nonetheless, just as we humans become used to the sound of traffic or the ticking of a clock, the rabbit "becomes used to and ignores those sounds and sights which do not harm it" (20). Lockley gives examples such as "the wind in the leaves" or "the whirring of insects" (20). However, I would like to give the example of the human objects in Hazel's and Fiver's surroundings and bubble.

The foreign objects that are present in Hazel's and Fiver's bubbles are essentially unthreatening and no more than inanimate objects. I would argue that the rabbits should become used to sounds of people building near their warren or that humans leave cigarette-butts, considering that the human is not harming them when doing so. This reveals how Adams in his narration bursts the rabbit's bubble and invades it, and by doing so, the human theme uses the body of the rabbit as an empty container to project human emotions and thoughts. Uexküll's idea allows each living organism to be a subject in its own world. If one reads Adams' narration through the lens of Uexküll's ideas, it seems as if the human theme can only act as the subject in Adams' narrative if it invades the nature/rabbit's world.

So far we have seen how Part One: “The Journey” follows the structure of the sonata form. We know from his autobiography *The Day Gone By* (1990) that classical music was of great importance to Adams, and he describes how his music teacher Mr. Alde introduced him to the world of classical music as a young boy. By connecting Adams’ themes, “nature/rabbit” and “the human”, to the structure of the sonata form, and simultaneously reading the novel according to Uexküll’s ideas about animals as subjects in their own world or bubble, we can see how it is possible to read the novel as having an underlying musical structure. The different bubbles create a natural order in the text, similar to the natural order in mother nature. This natural order is like the harmony of a symphony as the bubbles create different voices similar to counterpoint in music.

Second Movement – On Watership Down

Slow and Lyrical

In his analysis “Six great early symphonists”, Michael Spitzer writes that the second movement of the symphony is “the concept of a slow movement as an enclave of subjectivity” (140). The second movement is different in comparison to the three other movements in terms of being slow and lyrical. In my interpretation of the structure of the second part of *Watership Down*, I will make use of Emily Petermann’s definition of the concept of a musical novel as related to form rather than content (3).

Like the second movement of a symphony, part two of *Watership Down* is slow, lyrical and conveys a sense of serenity. Hazel and the other rabbits have journeyed far to find a new home. Finally, they find Watership Down where they choose to settle after Fiver’s visions have assured them that they will be safe. The slower pace indicates that theme one, “nature/rabbit”, is home.

Part two begins with a description of the surroundings at Watership Down. I would like to draw on Mario Ortiz-Robles’ book *Literature and Animal Studies*, where he describes nature as being a constant reference for the Romantics. Although Adams may not be a Romantic writer, he writes in a Romantic mode. As Peter Otto puts it, “It is because we still belong to the era opened by Romanticism that our modernity continues to reinvent and reshape itself in Romanticism’s forms.” (385). Adams creates an ambience of natural serenity where the setting is pastoral in the opening of part two in his novel:

The light, full and smooth, lay like a gold rind over the turf (...) [t]he insects buzzed, shined, hummed stridulated and droned as the air grew warmer in the sunset (...) [t]he larks went up, twittering in the scented air above the down.
(Adams 131)

This is what Ortiz-Robles would call the echo of a Romantic memory (4).

What might they say?

By way of approaching the second part of Adams' novel and its similarities with the second movement of a symphony, I will make use of Ortiz-Robles' research and attempt to listen to the rabbits in the novel. By "listening", one means that animals have been a part of literary history for more than 3000 years. However, literature has not been speaking for them. Is it possible to read literature in a way that speaks for the animal? Throughout this paper, the term "listen" will mean that I will try to understand what the animal is saying or portraying through its actions or verbal communication. Furthermore, by listening to the animal I will discuss if Adams' novel speaks for the animal or not.

The slow and lyrical qualities of the second movement provide an entrance to an understanding of what the rabbits in *Watership Down* convey through their verbal communication, giving me the opportunity to question the matter of talking animals in literature. Are there any positive aspects that come from anthropomorphism? Rather than trying to argue against anthropomorphism in *Watership Down*, I will discuss the common ground between animal studies and literature studies.

Leatherland claims that "rabbits are probably the most anthropomorphized animals in English literature" (168). He further writes that Adams, like Lewis Carrol, Joel Chandler Harris and Beatrix Potter, follows a literary tradition in which rabbits play central characters. Important manifestations of the rabbit in literature would be the trickster-rabbit, the typical cute and furry rabbit, the righteous rabbit and the rabbit that brings luck. Ortiz-Robles tries to find common ground regarding the relation between literature studies and animal studies. To find common ground he asks, "how (...) do animals speak?" (1). He further attempts to "imagine what it is like to listen to animals as they speak in literature through the verbal inventions of humans" (2).

An opening would be to learn about the language of the real rabbit and not the fictional one. The real rabbit has two ways of using vocal sounds. One is a nasal grunt used in sexual contact and the other is a high treble scream like a squealing little pig or a young child in

distress. The latter sound is uttered when the rabbit is terrified: “[A]s when its life is in danger, in a trap, or when attacked by an enemy” (Lockley 23). Rabbits communicate with the help of their sight, smell and hearing. It can be by hearing a movement, or even by the thudding stamp of their hind feet to alert another rabbit of possible danger (23). It is from this starting point of biological facts that I will attempt to imagine what it is like to listen to the fictional rabbits as they speak in Adams’ novel through the verbal inventions of humans (Ortiz-Robles 2).

In Chapter 18, “Watership Down”, Fiver, Acorn and Hazel are nibbling at a patch of sainfoin. Hazel decides to question Fiver’s plan to climb up a hill to find shelter. Hazel expresses his concern about the size of the hill and how open and cold it will be up there. Fiver answers that the soil up the hill is light, meaning that they will easily be able to scratch some shelter underground. However, despite Fiver’s answers, Hazel is still hesitant about the plan:

“It’s getting started that bothers me. Here we are, all tired out. I’m sure it’s dangerous to stay here. We’ve nowhere to run to. We don’t know the country and we can’t get underground. But it seems out of the question for everybody to climb up there tonight. We should be even less safe”. (134)

Acorn considers their options if they were to stay at the bottom of the hill: “This place is almost as open as that heather we crossed, and the trees won’t hide us from anything hunting on four feet” (134). He further pushes the fact that they need holes and that the bottom of the hill is a bad place to be if they cannot hide underground. After contemplating what they should do, Hazel volunteers to climb up himself and find out what it’s like up there. He says: “‘I’ll be as quick as I can and you’ll have to hope for the best until I get back.’ ‘You’re not going alone,’ said Fiver firmly” (134).

In his book, Ortiz-Robles writes about the songbird population in poetry and further attempts to listen to what the songbird says. Ortiz-Robles claims that the songbird population is swiftly disappearing due to rapid deforestation, excessive pesticide use and global warming. The rabbits in the novel may not be endangered in the same measure as the songbird. However, it is nonetheless useful as a comparison when analysing Adams’ use of anthropomorphism.

When Robles listens to the songbirds he questions what affects the songbird population. According to Ortiz-Robles, the environmental degradation at their southern wintering grounds. However, this is not the only reason for their rapid decline. Robles explains that the amount of sun-dried coffee that is consumed in the north “accounts for much of the deforestation of Central American biomes, and the wind farms and electric towers (...) of the

landscape in developed countries kill large numbers of migrating songbirds” (87). In addition to humans’ dramatic degradation of the songbird population, natural predators such as cats, squirrels, and cowbirds also contribute to the many deaths.

If one tries to listen to Hazel, Acorn and Fiver through the invention of verbal communication, what do they say? First and foremost, they convey a sense of vulnerability through their speech which subconsciously forces us readers to have empathy for them. Additionally, Adams is telling us readers to care for their natural habitat, through the speech of the rabbit. For the rabbit to feel safe it needs open fields and soil that is soft enough to dig holes for shelter, in which they can rest. Perhaps Adams is singing a song in protest where he uses rabbits to influence us humans to maintain the rabbit’s natural habitat and not turn it all to stone by building roads, houses and factories. It is clear that Hazel, Fiver and Acorn have a hard time deciding whether to risk getting killed by natural predators whilst going up the hill to find shelter or whether it is better to stay at the bottom of the hill where the ground is too hard for digging holes.

Perhaps, through the rabbit’s verbal communication Adams is urging us to not destroy the rabbit’s natural habitat and instead give to it a chance to live in peace. However, if Adams is using the rabbit to communicate to us humans, then I question whether this is a way to manipulate us readers to subconsciously embrace an environmental awareness. If so, I question whether it is acceptable to use animals as the message-bearer? As I have established above, I claim that one feels empathy for Hazel and the rabbits when they are in a vulnerable position. If so, Adams has once again diverged from Uexküll’s idea of seeing the animal as a subject in its own world and instead used it as an empty container to convey a message for our human world.

The rabbit now is no longer portrayed as its natural self, only as an object to address our human thoughts and political issues. However, the rabbits in Adams’ novel do convey an important message. It may be that humans will, through their conscience, learn to take care of wildlife when reading of the rabbit’s vulnerability and the animal-trope. Ortiz-Robles states that the songbird is prominent in both poetry and music. He further emphasizes that poetry and music may also be the reason for the birds’ potential survival. Ortiz-Robles expresses that “Poetry is one way in which songbirds speak to us, and it is to poetry that we must turn to save them” (88). However, it is on account of this quote by Ortiz -Robles and how he acknowledges the importance of songbirds in poetry and music that I would argue for the importance of Adams’ literary rabbits in his novel. Although the rabbits in *Watership Down* may not be endangered to the same degree as the songbird, the message is equally important.

Third Movement – Efrafa

Does Woundwort count?

Throughout Part 3, General Woundwort, the warlord in the novel is introduced. Woundwort who is leader of the Efrafa warren is at war with Hazel. Woundwort is known to kill anything that comes in his way, anything except a fox or a human. The human and the fox are the two reasons behind the deaths of Woundwort's parents. Welch writes:

General Woundwort was a very effective leader but not a good one, since he benefited neither the commonwealth nor the individual growth of his subjects. To be sure, he gave them protection and long lives, but their lives were without freedom, excitement, or fulfillment and on the whole seemed without purpose (Welch, 48).

It is safe to say that Woundwort is portrayed as the villain in the novel.

In comparison to the other parts of Adams' novel, I claim that the correlation between Part 3, Efrafa, and the third movement of the symphony is not so pronounced. Considering that Woundwort is a General leading a militaristic warren and considering that the third movement of a symphony is traditionally a dance, I came to compare the discipline, choreography and physical strength that it takes to perform a dance with the same abilities of a soldier or a General performing their military march. This is by no means a solid comparison. However, the comparison between a dance and the military does give me the opportunity to analyse General Woundwort's character through the discipline of Animal Studies.

When General Woundwort was just a kitten, his "happy-go-lucky" father frequently foraged the cottager's garden by spoiling lettuces and nibbling on cabbage plants (Adams 322). As a consequence, Woundwort's father was shot and killed, making it clear that rabbits were not welcome to the cottager's garden. It is likely that Woundwort and his family were seen as vermin by the cottager. Additionally, I would go as far as saying that Woundwort, consciously or subconsciously, was also seen as vermin by Adams himself.

It is clear that already as a young kitten, General Woundwort is portrayed as a rabbit who was never wanted and is still, even as an adult buck, not wanted. For this reason, it is necessary to ask why specifically Woundwort is portrayed as the one who does not count in Adams' novel? Is Adams possibly trying to convey a political message through his depiction

of Woundwort? Adams portrays him as a strong and controlling leader. However, by depicting him as a rat he calls on the symbolism of being undesirable and unwanted. Woundwort becomes a character and an animal that does not count and is therefore not worthy in Adams' novel.

As stated in the introduction, many have speculated between similarities between General Woundwort and historical figures. In their article, Rothen and Langston study the many similarities between *Watership Down* and *The Odyssey*. The article mentions a significant parallel between General Woundwort and Odysseus' "negative qualities as he leads his followers to total destruction" (Rothen, 57). However, instead I will attempt a new reading of General Woundwort by questioning Woundwort's countability in the novel. How important is Woundwort as an individual character and animal?

I would suggest that he is seen as vermin by the human in the novel which subconsciously affects the reader's view of the rabbit as vermin. Ortiz-Robles offers a reading of Frank Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* where he claims the vermin is an undesirable animal. He further states that "the vermin tend to be individualised as figures of abjection excluded from political calculation" (145). I suggest that Adams individualises Woundwort as a figure of abjection and excludes him by simply portraying him as a big, dominant rabbit who controls his warren with aggression and fear.

However, to see Woundwort as an individual character and animal that counts I will focus on two questions. What is the mute speech of General Woundwort and does General Woundwort count? "[I]f the speaking animal is that which makes literature literary, then perhaps in order to make animals count we must perceive literature anew, learning to listen to the mute speech of literary animals" (Robles 145) General Woundwort is a leader who is feared by most rabbits and who fights anything that gets in his way. The narration describes Woundwort as a rabbit with "great, pale eyes", "great claws" and "long teeth (...) bared like the fangs of a rat" (357, 379). Adams' has used these terms as a tool to describe Woundwort as scary and unwanted. By symbolizing the other, in this case General Woundwort, as vermin I argue that Adams distances the reader from the character. Woundwort is not countable as an animal until he is dead. However, when Robles suggests that we need to see literature anew, he proposes a reading where one tries to see beyond the symbolism of specific animals being vermin. Instead of distancing the reader by creating us and them or the other (the barbarian, the foreigner), he suggests a reading where one listens to what the literary animal has to say. He suggests that we should try to break the fixed ideas and symbolism that characterizes certain animals in literature (147). Who is Woundwort if one tries to break the fixed idea of him being vermin?

Firstly, Woundwort's "great, pale eyes" and "great claws" are merely eyes and claws that are different compared to the cute and fluffy rabbit most people associate with. With Woundwort's teeth, Adams makes use of the qualities of the rat traditionally seen as vermin, to emphasise Woundwort's unpleasantness and spine-chilling looks. However, the look of an animal should not determine the character of the animal. The rat-trope is used to emphasise a skulking, despising and despicable character in Woundwort. In addition, Woundwort as a rabbit, becomes invaluable for the reader and for the other characters in the novel because of his contrasting appearance. Therefore, it could be argued that we are subconsciously taught in Adams' novel that both the rat and Woundwort are equally objectionable because of their different looks. Therefore, the two animals both become invaluable and uncountable as characters.

Secondly, Woundwort is constantly portrayed in the dark. In her article "The Significance of Myth in "Watership Down", Joan Bridgman states that there is a basic symbolism of light and dark throughout the novel and that the rabbits who are portrayed as heroes always "perform courageous feats in the light", while Woundwort and his militaristic warren always operate in the dark, making it a "naïve, even primitive, presentation of good and evil" (9). Evil, hate, fear and death are a few examples of what humans can associate darkness with. The constant darkness Woundwort is surrounded by emphasises the fact that he is seen as vermin, a low and devious character, and therefore uncountable.

Thirdly, although General Woundwort has human-like qualities, he is one of the rabbits in the novel who acts relatively similar to how a dominant buck would act in the wild. Woundwort is described as big and strong; he patrols his warren and forces the weak rabbits to live as outcasts at a distance from Efrafa. Woundwort leads with aggression and the rabbits who live at Efrafa are in constant fear of making a wrong move towards their leader (323-325). According to Lockley, the natural king-buck patrols the plain with authority by "hopping towards each rabbit near him which he [can] smell or see" (39). The king-buck also requires each rabbit to move out of his way when approaching. However, if the approached rabbit does not obey the king-buck can immediately take action. The king-buck can choose to "attack by running towards [the rabbit] rapidly", graze and slowly move forwards to "form a threat", try to intimidate the rabbit by "hop[ping] with a curious stiff-legged gait", "scratch at the ground with its forepaws" or "squirt urine" (40). Although Woundwort, as a fictional rabbit, does not act exactly the same as a natural rabbit in the wild, he acts very similar.

However, what I find most surprising, is that although Woundwort is so similar to the natural rabbit, he is portrayed as vermin and therefore undesirable. In a sense, Woundwort

represents what is natural for the rabbit. We, as readers, in turn subconsciously learn that the natural instincts and the animalistic characteristics of the rabbit are unpalatable or wrong from a civilised human perspective. By portraying Woundwort with these characteristics, I would argue, Adams therefore manipulates the reader into thinking that Woundwort is the vermin, emphasising him as the villain of the novel and making him uncountable for everyone who does not listen to what Woundwort is saying through his muted language.

In addition, Woundwort does not count until he is eliminated. I would suggest that Adams is possibly trying to convey a message concerning the elimination of those societies in our human world that control their population with fear and aggression. By portraying Woundwort as comparable to a rat, not only does Woundwort become vermin, he becomes the animal that everybody wishes to be rid of. For as Ortiz-Robles states, “The rats infect the text, but like the disease they transmit, they only count once they are eliminated” (156).

Fourth Movement - Hazel-Rah

Now I will compare the fourth movement of the symphony, which is often in either rondo-form or sonata-form, to “Hazel-Rah”, part four of Adams’ novel. Compared to the sonata form in the symphony where the main theme or first theme is contrasted with only the second theme, the rondo form can be contrasted with several themes. It is on account of theme one, “nature/rabbit”, which persistently reoccurs throughout the whole of the novel and is contrasted with several other themes, that I have chosen to make use of the rondo form when analysing part four of *Watership Down*.

In addition to the rondo form, the fourth movement in the structure of the symphony is often a piece with a brisk speed, or in musical terms, an allegro movement. It is because of this brisk speed that the rondo form gave me an entrance into my analysis of the rabbit and the trickster.

According to an interview with Campbell, the rabbit as a trickster is known to be destructive. However, they are also smart, quick thinking and clever animals. The trickster is often portrayed as several different animals. Three common animals are the rabbit, hare or coyote (Campbell).

The trickster has a totality. It can act anyhow and can be anything. The trickster hero is both a devil, a fool and the creator of the world (Campbell). In the traditional myth it is all of these things. However, in this part of my analysis I will try to show how the trickster in Adams’ novel is portrayed in contrast to the traditional mythological trickster. The mythological

trickster has a complex character. But I argue that Adams simplifies the trickster's totality instead of taking advantage of the whole complexity of the mythological character. The trickster is scattered into several different themes rather than possessing its own complex totality. I therefore suggest that, when Adams divides the trickster-character into several parts, the animal in *Watership Down* also becomes divided. Thus, the rabbit is also portrayed as only part of itself and is therefore not being recognized as its full potential self.

The Deconstruction of the Trickster

Baker notes that it is not only common people that are fascinated by the trickster; analysts such as Jung and Levi-Strauss have also acknowledged the trickster's significance within cultures, cross-culturally, and in archetypes (149). Many of the trickster stories are from ancient times and handed down from preliterate cultures. Further, Campbell states that the complex character of the trickster figure in mythology was puzzling for Christians to understand. The original trickster-figure had a complex character. It was both the creator of the world and, at the same time, also a kind of devil and, in addition, a fool. Adams' depiction of the trickster is different to the ancient mythology. We can detect the trickster as a saviour further on in the epilogue but here in movement four we encounter the trickster that creates havoc and enjoys tricking others.

In ancient mythology, the trickster hero is an upsetting factor amongst many other things. He breaks through and causes havoc and makes us question what deity is. In Part Four of the novel, Dandelion tells a story about Rowsby Woof and the Fairy Wogdog in El-ahrairah. Every day and every night if the weather is tolerable, the dog Rowsby Woof guards his owner's vegetable garden. However, when his owner has gone for the day, the rabbit El-ahrairah decides to trick Rowsby Woof by dressing up as a spirit sent from the Queen of Dogs and tricking him into thinking that the queen is sick from the plague. Rowsby Woof learns that the only way the queen can be saved is if he runs around the house four times and barks as loud as he can. This lets El-ahrairah and his friends have enough time to successfully steal some of the crops.

It is interesting to note that the trickster-rabbit itself could possibly be its own theme. However, I would argue that the trickster in Adams' novel lacks totality and is further separated into several different motifs. To better understand Adams' trickster-figure, I will turn to Michael Bells' book *Primitivism*, where he describes how the primitive man did not divide human and animal in the same way as the modern human now does. It seems that human, animal and nature were connected as a whole and not divided into different parts. There was a mythic

consciousness between animal and human making them similar in the sense that spirituality, magic, aggression, fear, jokes, mischief, kindness, empathy and sexuality were all in the mix of one, a totality. Bell writes,

Primitive man apparently felt in all aspects of the natural world, such as weather, animals and vegetation, the manifestation of a will and a mentality somehow comparable to his own (...) Primitive man none the less felt his relation to [the animal and nature] as a continuous rather than radically transcendent or alien. (9)

The mythological trickster-figure, according to Campbell, is a very important figure in American Indian mythology. It is possible therefore that, before man became civilized, the trickster figure had its own totality whilst civilized man, in this case Adams, has now divided the trickster's totality making the trickster no longer its whole self.

When portraying the rabbit-trickster in his novel, Adams is following a long tradition of folktales at the same time as he divides the trickster's totality. Certain aspects of Adams' novel are similar to the folktale. In his article "Watership Down: Tale and Myth", Rodriguez states that the novel started as an oral narrative for his two daughters. Adams presents the reader with familiar objects and situations although in an unfamiliar way, so called defamiliarization. Therefore, Adams draws his reader close and involves his audience which Rodriguez implies is a clear link between *Watership Down* and the folktale.

Although I agree with Rodrigues, I would further argue that Adams, at the same time, does not follow the long tradition of folk-tales when portraying the trickster-rabbit in his novel. In Dandelion's tale about Rowsby Woof, El-ahrairah acts as the trickster by fooling Rowsby Woof and by stealing food from the garden. However, if one is to follow the traditional tale of the mythical character, then the rabbit El-ahrairah, should have several other qualities about him. Adams seems to have divided the trickster character's totality. Therefore the totality of the trickster-rabbit becomes scattered. Baker implies that Adams creates a formal version of mythology. The El-ahrairah stories, she means have the flavour of folktales but are in fact designated to accomplish societal and "authorial purposes and are literary creations" (150).

Animals as tropes

In addition, I claim that the observed differences between Adams' trickster-figure and the traditional mythological figure indicate that the rabbit portrayed as a trickster becomes merely

a container for Adams' story. As stated above, the trickster figure was a figure with totality. (Campbell) However, I would suggest that Adams goes against the myth and skips the complex, and deeper understanding of the character. For this reason, the trickster rabbit becomes merely a trickster and the rabbit which is the body for this trickster character becomes merely a trope. As already established, El-ahrairah merely becomes the rabbit who tricks and steals. Likewise, the rabbit and the dog become tropes.

I would suggest that Rowsby Woof possesses two characteristics which would be: "man's best friend" and "the dumb dog". In the story, Rowsby Woof is immensely loyal to his owner and guards the crops with his life. Ortiz-Robles writes that: "[t]he familiar trope of the dog as "man's best friend" expresses the close ties that [bind] dogs to humans" (57). However, the dog in the story is hungry for the reason that his owner wants him to be more alert when trying to guard and catch intruders. "[Rowsby Woof] ate a lot of raw meat (but not in the evening, because he was left hungry at night to keep active)" (416). I find it surprising that, without any hesitation, Adams writes about how the owner of Rowsby Woof basically chooses to starve his dog for the sake of his garden. If Rowsby Woof is portrayed as man's best friend, then surely, the man should be as loyal and respectful to Rowsby Woof as Rowsby Woof is to his owner?

Simultaneously, the familiar trope of the dog as "the dumb dog" is presented in the story. Rowsby Woof is hesitant at first when he is called for by El-ahrairah in disguise. However, it does not take long until he does as the trickster-rabbit says. Rowsby Woof is so loyal to his owner and his "pretend queen" that he seems dumb. During my first reading of Rowsby Woof, it did not take long for me to compare him to Mickey Mouse's dog, Pluto, in the animated television Christmas special, "From all of Us to All of You". When Pluto realises that there are two small squirrels living in his and Mickey's Christmas tree, he tries to help the clueless Mickey Mouse to get them out. The squirrels tease and trick Pluto as he tries to get rid of them, resulting in Mickey's home becoming ruined. What is important to point out is that both Pluto and the two squirrels are the reason for the wrecking of Mickey's home. However, Pluto is the one who gets the blame and is seen as the dumb dog whilst the two cute and fluffy squirrels get away with everything. This indicates that Adams is not alone in portraying animals in this way. Both Rowsby Woof and Pluto are portrayed as loyal dogs who are both "man's best friend". However, in turn, that is also the reason why they are seen as the dumb dog.

Here, once again, we see how Adams divides and distances himself from the other. Here, the other is the dumb dog. I would suggest that perhaps Adams, subconsciously makes use of different animals to emphasize a division between us and them. However, this division has not

started with Adams' novel. This is clear in other literature. It becomes so normal, that we as readers accept this sort of portrayal and division of animals without hesitating. This somewhat one dimensional storytelling is common. I am by no means criticizing Adams' ability as a writer. However, I am criticizing the ability of recognizing the whole totality of the mythological trickster-figure and non-human animal. If Adams had possibly followed the traditional portrayal of the trickster, then the dog and rabbit would have possibly been portrayed as the versatile species that they are.

If one looks at how the different animals are portrayed in Part Four of the novel, I would suggest that Adams' trickster tale is not funny, but sad and confusing. What is the mute language of the animals in this tale? As Rodriguez would put it, the trickster figure is scattered throughout the novel so we connect to the loveable trickster that steals and is mischievous, but underneath we read a tale about us and them, good and bad. We are reading what is right and wrong through the depiction of animals in the novel. Similar to the portrayal of General Woundwort in Part Three, there is a problem in Adams' depiction of who is worthy of our empathy and how he manipulates and persuades us into his conception of what is right or wrong and good or bad.

I would argue that this manipulation is a problem. How are we as human-animals going to be able to face the division and distancing between non-human animals in the real world if we cannot even see it in literature or film? Just as other groups have been objectified in text, so have animals. I do not believe that this means that animals should be banned for being written about. However, we do need to start recognizing how animals are portrayed to be able to improve how we see animals in our society.

Epilogue

In a symphony, the last section often ends with a coda or an epilogue where the home key is firmly re-established (Wright 128-129). Here, we can again see a parallel between the structure of a symphony and the structure of *Watership Down*. “Nature/rabbit”, the first theme or the main theme in the novel has come home and there is a sense of calm and rest amongst the rabbits. Adams gives the reader an ending to Hazel’s story by letting us know that all is well at their warren which now is divided “half Watership and half Efrafa”:

“And what happened in the end?” asks the reader who has followed Hazel and his comrades in all their adventures and returned with them at last to the warren where Fiver brought them from the fields of Sandleford. The wise Mr Lockley has told us that wild rabbits live for two or three years. He knows everything about rabbits: but all the same, Hazel lived longer than that. He lived a tide few summers - (498)

The rabbit still remains the main theme in the epilogue just as it has been throughout the whole of *Watership Down*.

The warren is now at peace. However, Hazel has lived longer than usual for a rabbit in the wild. One morning in spring, Hazel wakes from a dream and sees a rabbit lying beside him. The rabbit with ears that shone a “faint silver light” invites Hazel to join his Owsla (500). However, “It seemed to Hazel that he would not be needing his body anymore, so he left it lying on the edge of the ditch, but stopped for a moment to watch his rabbits” (Adams 498). In part four of this essay, I mentioned that the mythological trickster is present throughout the whole of Adams’ novel. Likewise in the epilogue, the rabbit trickster is present until the very end helping Hazel cross over. Here we see the trickster-figure as a saviour or God. Again we can see how Adams divides the rabbit/trickster-character into parts.

The Trickster as a Saviour

Hazel’s spirit separates from his body in the presence of the rabbit/trickster-saviour. The Christian Creation Myth serves as a basis for Adams’ mythical story which once again highlights Adams splitting the totality of the trickster and therefore also the animal in his novel. Baker writes that Adams abandons the traditional trickster myth and creates his own mythology (150). What is the reason behind Adams’ own creation and depiction of the trickster? I

mentioned it briefly in part four of my analysis. However, to go into more depth, I will quote what Bell suggests in his book, *Primitivism*:

[t]he mistranslation of the North American Indian term Manitou as 'Great Spirit' is a classic exemplification of civilized man's distortion of the mythic sense by the imposition of what seems the nearest available term. Where the modern term 'spirit' generally implies a transcendent supernatural dimension, mythic consciousness appears not to have known our long-standing dichotomy of spiritual and material. To the animistic mentality the external world is pervaded by spirits or powers, sometimes known collectively as 'mana'; the projection from our point of view of human desires and fears. All attempts to describe this mode of consciousness are bedeviled by the necessity of using modern terminology for a mental world which did not know the distinctions or share the assumptions that such terminology inevitably tends to imply. (9)

Adams' appears to be writing according to the mistranslation of the term 'Great Spirit'. We will therefore end up with two conflating belief-systems. Hazel's spirit separates from his body and transcends according to the Christian creation myth. However, before civilized man, there was no division between the spirit and body. If Hazel and the rabbit/trickster-saviour had been written according to the traditional mythical tale or animistic mentality, their spirits and bodies would have remained whole and there would have been no need for transcendence. However, I would suggest that Adams on the other hand writes about transcendence because he writes about Christianity underneath the cloak of the traditional mythical tale.

According to Bell, spirits or powers were afflicted as something bad by the modern world which could be a reason for why Hazel and the rabbit-saviour are both written in this way. Once again, I would agree with Baker that Adams creates his own version of mythology. One can compare the god-like trickster in the epilogue to the trickster rabbit, El-ahrairah in Part four. The trickster-rabbit is successful because, as Baker suggests, that was Adams' purpose (157). El-ahrairah is a saviour and a creator who provides them with safeguards for governing society and who even offers his own life in the end for the rabbits' protection. Baker means that here, the trickster stops being a trickster and instead becomes a central figure in rabbit mythology (157). Even here, one can see striking similarities between El-ahrairah and Christianity.

It is also interesting that, yet again, the rabbit becomes a container for our human thoughts and desires. Here, the trickster-rabbit's totality is divided once more and is portrayed as a rabbit God, similar to how the God in Christianity is portrayed. Not only does the rabbit have a God similar to the Christian religion, the rabbit is also seen as having its own religion.

It seems as though Adams tries to find the eternal breath or memory in his narration by making use of the traditional trickster myth. However, as he tries to write about the traditional myth, he nonetheless divides the myth from what is significant from his life and his time.

One could question why this is seen as a problem and what this has to do with animal studies. To begin with, I would like to quote Robles once again as he states: “literature [...] has had more to say about our relation to animals because in literature anything can be said” (x). Similarly to how one could, for example, study Charlotte P. Gillman’s *The Yellow Wallpaper* from a feminist perspective or Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* from a post-colonial perspective, I would argue that it is equally important to read texts concerning animals from an animal’s perspective or with the use of Animal Studies.

As established, the trickster figure in the epilogue is both a trickster and a God in the shape of a rabbit. However, considering that the trickster/God-figure lacks totality, the rabbit figure also lacks totality. How does this form our idea of the natural animal if we read a text which is claimed to be “a story about rabbits” but with rabbits that lack their whole selves? I would suggest that our ideas of the natural non-human animal in our real world would be more realistic and understandable if one read stories of the animal with its whole totality. If we continue to read about animals who only are portrayed with certain parts of its whole totality, then it will always be hard for us humans to fully be able to understand the animal as its whole self and as its natural self.

The Necessity of Animals in Literature

One could question the necessity of the animal in literature for our human needs and our moral stories. It helps people to deal with the paradox and irony of life and to gather strength for coping with life (Baker 158). Although Adams divides the trickster’s totality and the connection to the historical figure is lessened, one could say that it helps us humans to deal with whatever life throws at us - which, here in the epilogue, is death. On the other hand, one should consider that it is because of our need for animal stories that the animal still becomes an object in the eyes of humans.

Adams makes his own tale for his own purpose. He omits critical parts and decides to write off other specific parts as bad, dark or weak. He manipulates his audience by connecting with them and engaging them in what they think is a true story but lets aggression, sexuality, stupidity and gluttony only be aspects of the characters he does not want us to like. If we would not distance ourselves from our animalistic side but instead allowed totality within

ourselves and non-human animals, I question whether animal studies would be as necessary as it is today.

We think we are reading about a myth but most of the myth is absent or ordered into nice behaviour. Who is the trickster here: is it Adams? He tricks the reader but not in the way of fun and games but by manipulating us to deny the part of the human that is anima. It becomes confusing because the primitive man, as Bell explains, “in effect, projects the needs and desires of his own nature as objective qualities of the external world.” (8). Adams uses the trickster figure for his own purpose to tell a story about good and bad, light and dark, smart and stupid.

Conclusion

In this essay I have analysed how the animal is represented in Richard Adams’ novel, *Watership Down*. By using the musical structure of the symphony and Animal Studies as a discipline, I have found useful entrances into understanding Adams’ depiction of animals. Adams writes in a Romantic style, although he lived in the modern time of industrialisation and realism. He is, I would suggest, influenced by classical music which he consciously or subconsciously used in the structure of his novel.

When it comes to animals in literature, Adams is also influenced by the oral tradition of the folktale and mythology and draws on this tradition when creating his story about rabbits. However, I would suggest that he does not make use of the totality of his characters that is explained and found in animal tales in ancient times. Instead, he manipulates his audience into thinking that he does, by blurring our vision and scattering the natural rabbit’s character into different personas. By doing so, the animal is divided into anima and intellect.

For this reason, Adams’ fictive rabbit conveys the message about what is good or bad or dark and light. The animal which suppresses the animal within itself, becomes depicted as the good and as the hero surrounded by light. Here one can see how Adams, instead of incorporating magic and spirituality into the animal, only gives this ability to a few selected characters. Compared to Hazel or El-ahriarah, both Woundwort and “the dumb dog” become the other in Adams’ story as they live in darkness and represent evil and stupidity. By doing this, Adams divides and creates the binary form, us and them.

Additionally, I have made an attempt to listen to the rabbit and imagine what it may be saying through the verbal language of the human. I have come to the conclusion that it is possible to see that the rabbits’ figurative status tells us about our own humanity and the

countability of certain animal tropes if one reads *Watership Down* with fresh eyes, beyond the narrative of a story about rabbits for children.

I would suggest that Adams confuses the reader by implying that he depicts the real rabbit, although instead, Adams jumps back and forth in his narrative. The rabbit is sometimes depicted as the subject of its own world. However, the rabbit also acts as an empty container for the human's thoughts and feelings which further makes a reading of *Watership Down* complex.

Lastly, Adams sends a political message by creating a division between us and them as he fills the rabbit container with human aspects or writes of an animal as a certain trope. What is important to remember is, as Robles states, that "in literature anything can be said" (x). Therefore, I would argue that if animals in literature were portrayed less like us humans and more like themselves, then perhaps the division between animal and human would become smaller.

As of today, it is clear that animals become objects of our human world and containers for our literature. However, what do we know about how an animal thinks? Once again, I would like to quote Robles as he states, "Animals as we know them are a literary invention" (2). By reading animal literature anew, perhaps we as humans can learn to understand the animal and its totality, and maybe even our own totality?

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