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Issue Introduction: Critiques and Reimaginings of Anthropocentrism

Nathan Poirier and Amber E. George

Anthropocentrism refers to the centering of humans within epistemology. Humans measure the worth of nonhumans (and other humans) by “our” construction of the term “human.” Under an anthropocentric paradigm, humans are at the center of ethics and practices, laws, and politics. Others are included by their virtue of their proximity to the human center of thought and existence. Anthropocentrism contrasts with biocentrism, which extends inherent value to all living beings. This can further be contrasted with many indigenous cosmologies which perceive nonliving objects as being alive or having a living essence (what might be referred to in the West as ecocentrism). Thus, anthropocentrism, even when pushed towards its extremes, is a rather limited outlook. Anthropocentrism, and more pointedly, *critiques* of anthropocentrism, is one common theme amongst all of the entries in this issue.

Anthropocentrism has led the earth into a geological period tentatively (and somewhat controversially) the Anthropocene, or “the age of humans.” There are two over-arching interpretations of this term (however, as M. Shadee Malaklou discusses in her essay in this issue, other interpretations also exist and possess their own terminology). One is geological, with the Anthropocene referring to the scenario in which the presence and influence of humans is reflected as a dominant feature of the Earth’s crust (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000). Others, such as so-called conservation scientists (Kareiva & Marvier, 2012), tend to view the Anthropocene as an epoch in which humans have attained—and should exercise—the ability to manage the earth in a way that is conducive primarily to human interests. Although these two versions of the Anthropocene are not entirely different, nor are they exactly the same. Critiques from the social sciences tend to somewhat conflate the two interpretations, rather uncritically. Regardless, what does seem to be true is that humanity’s collective presence through industrial Capitalism and technological

capabilities has become a planetary force, interacting with and co-creating global processes (Clark & Szerszynski, 2020).

As it may not be hard to imagine, the contributors to this issue find many ways to analyze the implications of this anthropocentric global scenario. While human presence of the earth does not have to be a negative, it certainly has become that way through the activities of various overlapping groups, mostly white, Christian males who tend to be affluent and live in industrialized “Western” countries. It becomes evident, then, that anthropocentrism does not simply refer to human centeredness (Kidner, 2014) and that the term “human” is perhaps more accurately interpreted as “whiteness” (Ko, 2017).

In addition to having anthropocentrism as a common thread between all contributions in the present issue, the three included essays center on cultural works as case studies. Two essays contain analyses of popular films while the third considers an epic poem to disrupt and decenter anthropocentric viewpoints.

The first essay is Ciannait Khan’s, “Anthropocentric Paradoxes in Cinema,” which uses three films as case studies to problematize anthropocentrism of nonhuman animals. While the films Khan chooses may appear on the surface to positively portray nonhuman animals and their relations with humans, ultimately, due to “anthropocentric paradoxes,” each fails to foster transformative change. This essay helps to clearly articulate some limitations of anthropocentrism.

Abiodun Oluseye’s essay, “Mapping Parallel Ecological Constructs in Fish and Humans,” provides an excellent counter inquiry of the Eurocentrism in critical animal studies. Analyzing the message of the work *We’re Fish* (written in English) by Nigerian poet Ahmed Maiwada, Oluseye creates commentary on the likening of humans to fish as being especially offensive to humans, and those in the West in particular. In line with CAS, Oluseye critiques the violence and the human-nonhuman hierarchy that constructs such a comparison as offensive. The author frequently targets capitalism as a spatial and economic invention of the West that prevents harmonious non/human relations. This essay is a pertinent reminder that many other cultures live much more peacefully with the more-than-human world, even when violence persists.

Also recognizing the white privilege present in even some of the most critical veins of animal studies, M. Shadee Malaklou uses the

horror/suspense films by Jordan Peele, *Get Out* and *Us*, to illustrate how notions of blackness and animality are intertwined. In her essay, “Surviving the Ends of Man: On the Animal and/as Black Gaze in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* and *Us*,” Malaklou reinvigorates the maxim that no group can be liberated until Black women are liberated. Malaklou argues that the notion of animality is always already raced and that notions of race are always and already animalized. Malaklou frequently employs the anagrammatical phrase “and/as” to refer to the co-occurring Black and animal gaze. In so doing, Malaklou makes and keeps clear that animality and race are not just linked or intersect, but always exist simultaneously together. This essay illustrates how anthropocentrism is not simply reducible to a generalized human supremacy.

The next essay in this issue, written by Tamar Diana Wilson, explores how Louis Althusser’s concepts of the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus are applied to the current rationalizations and institutionalization of the use and abuse of experiments on animals. Her essay, “Hegemonic, Quasi-Counterhegemonic and Counterhegemonic Approaches to the Exploitation of Animals in Laboratories” presents readers with perspectives that run against traditional human-animal welfarist positions to highlight that arguments in support of the 3Rs and the Animal Welfare Act, for instance, are morally wrong.

This issue concludes with a pair of creative works about coyotes. The first is a poem by Solomon Davis, titled “Coyotes.” Davis muses on how anthropocentrism, an intangible cognitive concept, physically crowds out other animals from our lives and outdoor spaces. Hopefully this poem can inspire us to (re)think how we humans, as individuals and as a collective, live within—and as part of—the natural world. This poem is then supplemented by a photograph entitled “Coyote” by Talitha May. May’s photo complements Davis’s essay by showing a coyote in their natural habitat, a visual reminder of what (the environment/habitat) and who (the coyote and other wildlife) gets crowded out—disappears—when anthropocentrism runs rampant. In the photo, no humans are visible—decentering humans.

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Anthropocentric Paradoxes in Cinema

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Abstract

Anthropocentric paradoxes refer, broadly speaking, to the difficulties that people have conceptualizing nonhuman animals in new ways. Despite the recent surge of scholarly interest in nonhuman animals and, consequently, an increased appetite for breaking free of historical anthropocentrism, many theorists have engaged with contradictory approaches to thinking about animals that end up reinforcing anthropocentric systems. This paper explores how these so-called “anthropocentric paradoxes” are reflected and reproduced in cinema, specifically in three popular animal films: *Watership Down* (1978), *Babe* (1995), and *Okja* (2017). On the surface, all three films encourage the audience to think in new ways about animals, employing messages that advocate for greater ethical and political consideration of animals. While the films succeed in their aims on many levels, they concurrently make use of strategies and work within frameworks that are inherently anthropocentric. These strategies include catering to a human gaze, the anthropomorphism of animals, the employment of problematic and reductive animal/human dichotomies, the portrayal of animal activism as villainous, and the dependence upon a carnophallogocentric paradigm for narrative coherence. This paper demonstrates that anthropocentric paradoxes are endemic and that if films truly wish to contribute to a reconceptualization of animals, filmmakers will need to develop a new imaginative apparatus to represent animals.

Keywords: anthropocentrism; anthropomorphism; film studies; nonhuman animals

“No other source of imagery can begin to compete with that of animals” writes art critic John Berger in his influential 1980 essay “Why Look at Animals?” (1989, p. 22). In his discussion, Berger laments the “disappearance” of animals from modernity, acknowledging at the same time the veritable explosion of animal images in popular visual culture. Film exemplifies this like no other medium, with animals long having been a powerful force in cinema.

Animals were central to the development of early film technology, a notable example being Eadweard Muybridge’s invention of the zoopraxiscope in the nineteenth century (Burt, 2002, pp. 101-112). Even today, the desire to depict animals in new ways is constantly driving advances in computer-generated imagery, which we can see in recent films featuring hyper-realistic animals such as *Avatar* (Cameron, 2009), *Life of Pi* (Lee, 2012), and *The Lion King* (Favreau, 2019). Since Muybridge’s early studies, films about animals have remained unrelentingly popular. The figures clearly reflect this: in 2016, four of the world’s ten biggest box-office earners were films centered around animals (Guerrasio, 2016).

Despite their omnipresence in film, animals have been largely absent from film scholarship. In his book on the subject, animal studies writer Jonathan Burt states that the “small number of scholarly studies on issues relating to animals in film seems to me the product of a willful blindness” (2002, p. 17). This oversight reflects a long history of Western anthropocentrism, the cultural system that prioritizes what we call “human” and in which nonhuman animals are ascribed comparatively little value. Matthew Calarco, writing within the philosophical tradition, defines anthropocentrism as “a set of relations and systems of power that are in the service of those who are considered by the dominant culture to be fully and properly human.” (2015, p. 26)

This anthropocentrism is slowly being confronted. Since the latter half of the twentieth century, there has been a proliferation of scholarship dedicated to animals, in a movement sometimes referred to as the “animal turn.” Since the onset of the animal turn, many thinkers have shown heightened interest in not only questions surrounding animal welfare and rights, but in broader ontological issues relating to animals. The evolution of new fields of study, such as animal studies, critical animal studies, and anthrozoology also reflects this.

In light of this shifting paradigm, I wish to explore the concept of “anthropocentric paradoxes” in film. By anthropocentric paradoxes, I refer to the difficulties that accompany conceptualizing animals in new ways. These paradoxes are manifold in scholarship. Because anthropocentrism has dominated Western thought for so long, writers often unintentionally go round in circles, or inadvertently undermine their own objectives, by employing an anthropocentric logic in the course of attempting to advance less anthropocentric approaches. This runs parallel with trends in film. This is particularly interesting in the cases of films that, at the outset, are concerned with effecting change in ethical and political attitudes towards animals.

In the first half of this article, I will examine in greater depth the concept of anthropocentric paradoxes and how they most commonly manifest in film. I will be expanding upon these ideas in tandem with the increased theoretical emphasis on animals, addressing key thinkers who have been instrumental in enabling us to conceptualize animals in new ways.

In the latter half of the article, I will focus the discussion on examining particular examples of anthropocentric paradoxes in relation to three films: *Watership Down* (Rosen, 1978), *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), and *Okja* (Joon-ho, 2017). I strive to demonstrate that these films are, in many ways, “pro-animal” – but, concurrently, their representation of animals in many ways implicitly contradicts their intended messaging, built as it is upon a deeply anthropocentric culture.

These paradoxes point to many learnings. They reflect the difficulty of escaping anthropocentrism, despite an appetite for change in attitudes towards and treatment of animals. Film is not only a reflection of a society that is highly contradictory in its treatment of nonhuman animals and engages with great amounts of cognitive dissonance when it comes to ethical issues surrounding them; it is an active producer of these contradictions, and in many ways inadvertently undercuts the task of non-anthropocentrism. Such paradoxes raise questions about the possibilities and limits of the non-anthropocentric project, as well as about the ethics of how we represent animals.

What are “Anthropocentric Paradoxes”?

Damning evidence suggests that the history of Western thought is profoundly anthropocentric. In addition to a general dearth of scholarship

around animals – due, presumably, to their perceived lack of importance – the majority of theorists who have addressed animals have done so while working within an anthropocentric framework. While thinkers such as Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant devoted considerable attention to animals, they did so while operating under highly questionable anthropocentric suppositions. Aristotle situated animals within a natural hierarchy in which animals fell between plants and humans, a schema that ultimately placed them into the service of humans (Calarco, 2015, p. 8). Centuries later, Descartes designated nonhuman animals as “automata” (Allen & Trestman, 2016) – complex machines that could react to stimuli, but which lacked the human capacity to be self-reflexive.

Like Descartes, Kant also denied that animals possessed rationality, and while he disavowed violence towards animals (Gruen, 2017), he did so out of concern for other human beings. He believed that cultivating “tender feelings towards dumb animals” (Calarco, 2015, p. 10) would assist in the project of being more compassionate towards humans. The idea of extending ethical consideration to animals because of the positive outcomes for human behavior is one that has continued to impart influence in film and media. As Amy Ratalle points out in her study of children’s media, this “pro-animal” – but overtly anthropocentric – tendency, advocated by Enlightenment figures such as Kant and Rousseau, spurred the publication of many children’s stories about nonhuman animals that encouraged children to treat other animals well (2015, p. 7). With so many films about animals still geared towards children today, nonhuman animals have certainly retained this didactic role. Many children’s films encourage the extension of kindness and compassion to animals, but often it seems that the animals are largely a tool used to arouse empathy in the child viewer, rather than being addressed for their own sake.

The work of thinkers such as Aristotle, Descartes, and Kant has paved the way for a long and deeply rooted anthropocentric tradition, one in which animals are afforded little worth in their own right. Despite unmistakable points of rupture to these simplistic understandings of nonhuman animal ontology – Darwin’s theories in the nineteenth century, for example, essentially confirmed close biological continuity between humans and all other animals – this anthropocentrism has continued to linger into the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, dominating Continental philosophical discourse as well as mainstream culture at large.

Anthropocentrism, it seems, is a difficult hole to climb out of. Matthew Calarco, in his study of “the animal” throughout twentieth century philosophy, notes that even contemporary figures such as Martin Heidegger and Emmanuel Levinas, who in many ways offer progressive alternatives to questions surrounding “the human” and ethics, continued to advocate for human exceptionalism, thereby reinforcing the anthropocentric status quo (Calarco, 2015, p. 34). More frustratingly, even theorists who, on the surface, do advocate for animals and explicitly seek to advance animal welfare and rights, regularly demonstrate many hallmarks of anthropocentrism in their approach. Even when criticizing philosophical predecessors and making a case for animals, many have fallen back upon the anthropocentric ideas that have served to separate humans from other animals in the first place. In the seminal text *Animal Liberation*, for example, Peter Singer argues for the extension of ethical consideration to animals, but his arguments are founded upon human systems of ethics (Singer, 1975). Similarly, in Tom Regan’s *The Case for Animal Rights*, Regan argues for the extension of rights to animals. Regan’s conception of rights is heavily based upon a human rights framework (1983). Both Singer and Regan, like many others, use humans and human systems as a jumping-off point when attempting to change attitudes towards nonhuman animals. This is something that numerous animal studies scholars have found troubling.

What is immediately clear is that attitudes towards animals, including the attitudes of those who proclaim to seek changes in how we conceptualize animals, are fraught with sticky paradoxes that regularly hinder the overall project of decentering anthropocentrism.

I call these contradictions “anthropocentric paradoxes.” I want to look at how these paradoxes are reflected and reproduced in film. It will be useful to examine how, like scholars before them, filmmakers engage with the contradictions that are so common in the project of deconstructing anthropocentrism, and how the same patterns recur across mediums. These paradoxes present in particular ways in the context of film which, as noted above, is a core way that humans engage with questions around animals in modernity.

Anthropocentric Paradoxes in Film

Film is not just a mirror of anthropocentrism at large: its specific strategies of representing animals in turn reproduce anthropocentrism, even

when the larger project of filmmakers is evidently one that is sympathetic to animals and seems to be advocating for improved human-animal relations.

Filmmakers have long used film as a tool for critiquing and exploring human attitudes towards animals. Many films featuring animals have deeply political undertones. In many ways, film plays a privileged role in influencing attitudes towards nonhuman animals due to its predominance in mainstream culture. The tangible consequences of this can be observed over time, with Molloy pointing out that film has historically served as an impetus for improvements in animal welfare by making visible cruelty towards or exploitation of animals (2011, p. 22).

An early and notable example of a political animal film is *Bambi* (Algar et al., 1942), which vilifies “man” as the unseen hunter whose presence brings death and destruction to an otherwise peaceful, utopian forest. At the time of its release, *Bambi* was accused of being anti-hunting propaganda (Burt, 2002, p. 9). The film has since been highly influential and has become iconic, and, in December 2011, it was among a number of films selected for preservation in the Library of Congress' National Film Registry, with the Registry claiming that it had come to be "recognized for its eloquent message of nature conservation" (2011).

In the eighty or so years that have followed *Bambi*, pro-conservation and pro-animal messaging have endured in film, and there have been numerous works that are thematically and tonally similar. While animals are also regularly vilified, such as in *Jaws* (Spielberg, 1975), just as often the tables are turned, and it is humans who are positioned as the villains in opposition to animal protagonists. Advocating for animals through the vilification of humans, or human civilization at large, is a common way that films comment critically on human treatment of animals and communicate ecological and pro-animal welfare messaging. Even when animal films portray animals and humans as companions and as cooperating with one another to achieve shared interests, it is often the case that the antagonists and catalysts for violence are humans. Examples of films imbued with such a “pro-animal” agenda include *Bambi* (Algar et al., 1942), *One Hundred and One Dalmatians* (Geronimi et al., 1961), *Charlotte’s Web* (Nichols & Takamoto, 1973), *Watership Down* (Rosen, 1978), *The Fox and the Hound* (Berman et al., 1981), *The Plague Dogs* (Rosen, 1982), *Free Willy* (Wincer, 1993), *The Silver Brumby* (Tatoulis, 1993), *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), *101 Dalmatians* (Herek, 1996), *Tarzan* (Lima & Buck, 1999), *Chicken Run* (Lord

& Park, 2000), *Spirit: Stallion of the Cimarron* (Asbury & Cook, 2003), *Brother Bear* (Blaise & Walker, 2003), *Charlotte's Web* (Winick, 2006), and *Okja* (Joon-ho, 2017).

In each of these films, animal characters seek to escape the destructive influence or threat of humans, who aim to exploit them through hunting, farming, testing, domestication, or environmental destruction. They are, on the surface, sympathetic to nonhuman animals and point to deficiencies in humans' treatment of them. They also regularly question the distinction between humans and other animals, and the perceived superiority of humans that has often been taken for granted. Yet while making this "case" for animal welfare, filmmakers often reinforce the very assumptions that have long separated humans from animals, and that humans have used as a basis for marginalizing and exploiting them.

It is the above family of films that is of particular interest here. Many other films featuring nonhuman animals only address animals in the most superficial of ways. Disney's *Zootopia* (Howard & Moore, 2016), for example, portrays many species of animals living in cities, standing upright, wearing clothes, and having human professions: the entire film is an exercise in anthropomorphism and a blatant allegory for contemporary human racial politics. While the messaging may be understood as attempting to erase lines between species, *Zootopia* is unconcerned with trying to represent animals as animals. Animals function as an allegorical tool rather than as a means to engage with any serious questions surrounding animality, animal-human relations, or animal ethics. The same can be said of the film adaptation of Orwell's novel *Animal Farm* (Halas & Batchelor, 1954), which on the surface concerns animals, but is generally read as an allegory for Russian politics.

More relevant to the discussion here are prominent films where nonhuman animals themselves are indeed foregrounded and themes relating to nonhuman animals are actively engaged with. The three films I have chosen to look at in depth are *Watership Down* (Rosen, 1978), *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), and *Okja* (Joon-ho, 2017). These films were released roughly twenty years apart, but they share many common themes and strategies. All three films comment on humans' treatment of animals. They all feature animal protagonists and encourage the viewer to identify with the animal protagonist. But somewhat contradictorily, they cannot resist certain troubling assumptions and strategies when it comes to representing animals

that reinforce age-old anthropocentric ideas. Their representation of animals is informed by an anthropocentric Western tradition that propagates these ideas in unique, film-specific ways.

Animal Liberation and Rights vs. Radical Deconstruction

The “animal turn” refers to the recent surge of scholarly interest in nonhuman animals. This scholarship comprises many strands, but I will outline two broad approaches that are particularly pertinent to my purposes here. The contrast between these two approaches will be useful for understanding anthropocentric paradoxes in film, as it is often the case that these paradoxes manifest in parallel with the corresponding theoretical approaches.

The first strand of work, which I will summarize only very briefly, is associated with writers such as Singer and Regan, who have both argued for the extension of ethical and political consideration to animals. Singer’s *Animal Liberation* is a supremely influential text in the animal rights movement. Following in the footsteps of Jeremy Bentham and his seminal account of animal suffering (Gruen, 2017), Singer (1975) popularized the term “speciesism,” which denotes prejudice towards animals based on arbitrary and ethically irrelevant characteristics, and runs parallel to sexism and racism. As the preface to *Animal Liberation* reads, “This book is about the tyranny of human over nonhuman animals” (1975, p. 17). While most animal studies theorists would not contest the oppression of animals by humans, this approach, which emphasizes animals’ suffering and oppression, is considered by some, including many critical animal studies scholars, to be insufficient. Singer’s work fails to tackle the anthropocentric underpinnings that have long pervaded Western thought structures, including the deeply ingrained but questionable distinctions between “human” and “animal.” It also masks attitudes towards animals that may not appear on the surface to be violent – such as the representation of animals in film – but that ultimately feedback into a system of power relations that is arguably damaging for other species. Singer calls for changes in humans’ “habits” in terms of diet and language towards animals (1975, p. 25). However, even if one agrees that this is an admirable aim, focusing simply on changing “habits” fails to address the fundamentally structural nature of anthropocentrism.

Similarly, Regan (1983), in his well-known text *The Case for Animal Rights*, seeks to extend a rights framework to animals. Regan’s rights-based

approach is based on living things satisfying certain criteria such as possessing “beliefs and desires; perception, memory, and a sense of the future” (1983, p. 243). Not only does this use anthropocentric concepts such as “personhood” as a jumping-off point, it is also inherently exclusionary (Regan states that some nonhuman animals would not satisfy these criteria (1983), thereby reinstalling another human-imposed hierarchy that places some at the top and others at the bottom). Calarco sums up some of the problems with these kinds of approaches when he notes that “much of animal rights discourse labors under the tacit (and contentious) assumption that the fundamental channels of change regarding animals are to be found in existing legal and political institutions” (2008, p. 7).

While the work of these animal liberation and rights advocates has been central to inspiring an influx of discourses around animals, the contradictions inherent in their approaches have been repeatedly noted by those wishing to undertake a more radical deconstruction of attitudes towards animals. Cary Wolfe puts this paradoxical trend in succinct terms:

... one of the central ironies of animal rights philosophy ... is that its philosophical frame remains an essentially humanist one in its most important philosophers (utilitarianism in Peter Singer, neo-Kantianism in Tom Regan), thus effacing the very difference of the animal other that animal rights sought to respect in the first place. (2003, p. xii)

Thinkers like Wolfe and Calarco have convincingly argued that a more radical approach is needed. These theorists have focused their attention on challenging the human-animal distinction, and reworking narrow definitions of “animality” (Calarco, 2008, p. 3). Wolfe argues that the humanities are:

... struggling to catch up with a radical reevaluation of the status of nonhuman animals that has taken place in society at large. A veritable explosion of work in areas such as cognitive ethology and field ecology has called into question our ability to use the old saws of anthropocentrism (language, tool use, the inheritance of cultural behaviors, and so on) to separate ourselves once and for all from animals, as experiments in language and cognition with great apes

and marine mammals, and field studies of extremely complex social and cultural behaviors in wild animals such as apes, wolves, and elephants, have more or less permanently eroded the tidy divisions between human and nonhuman. (2003, p. xi)

Jacques Derrida, a key figure in the interdisciplinary field of animal studies, has also sought to employ a more thorough approach to rethinking animals. In his 1997 address, translated to *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida claims that his work, despite not making explicit reference to such, has always been focused on the animal (2008). Derrida follows Bentham, Singer, and other thinkers in that he wishes to extend compassion and ethical consideration to animals. But Derrida also emphasizes that the project of rethinking animals is much larger than this, and involves tackling the roots of anthropocentrism in our culture. Derrida problematizes the reductive human-animal distinction that is so often taken for granted. He does not deny that there exist differences between humans and nonhuman animals: indeed, he is at pains to point out that there are so many differences not only between humans and other animals, but among all living creatures, that we cannot possibly reduce life to binary oppositions. As Derrida himself states, there is “an immense multiplicity of other living things that cannot in any way be homogenized” (2008, p. 48). Derrida seeks, as Calarco puts it, to rethink these differences in “a nonbinary and nonhierarchical way” (2008, p. 105). Derrida is keen to emphasize that the absence of capacities such as human language, often used to elevate human beings above other species, should not necessarily be considered as lacks or privations (2008, p. 48). We do not need to seek equivalent rational capacities in nonhuman animals in order to affirm their worth: indeed, this in itself is anthropocentric and, as Derrida puts it, logocentric. Derrida calls into question whether humans are even in a position to make definitive decisions about the ontology of other animals, whose subjectivity is in so many ways off-limits to us (2008, p. 48). Derrida’s deconstructive approach has been influential in ushering in a new wave of discourse that challenges anthropocentrism more rigorously and radically than many previous animal studies scholars, and his work has been highly influential within critical animal studies.

The two contrasting discourses outlined above reflect the difficulties inherent in the task of reconfiguring how we think about animals. The overarching argument I wish to make is that a large catalog of mainstream

nonhuman animal films, including the three being focused on in the discussion here, align closely with the animal liberation/rights approach, and struggle to radically rethink attitudes towards nonhuman animals. *Babe* (Noonan, 1995), for example, is keenly interested in the idea of speciesism. The film consistently attempts to break down barriers between species on the farm, while remaining deeply anthropocentric in its approach. The plot centers around protagonist Babe, a pig, who must prove his worth on the farm in order to avoid being eaten. At the beginning of the film, the sheepdog puppies ask their mother, Fly, if the farmer will eat them one day, to which Fly replies: “Good heavens, no! The bosses only eat stupid animals like sheep and ducks and chickens.” The film satirizes this speciesist logic that, while simplified, reflects the questionable ways in which humans have categorized nonhuman animals – in this case, into edible and non-edible. Later in the film, when Babe wishes to come inside the house, Fly explains that only dogs and cats are allowed, because “that’s just the way things are.” The narrative trajectory of the film seeks to undermine these arbitrary prejudices and differences (as the film states in its opening narration, “This is the tale of an unprejudiced heart”). Babe manages to transgress the boundaries of his species by excelling at sheepherding, thereby moving up the species hierarchy – specifically, to the level of the sheepdogs, who outrank edible animals, but are still subservient to their human “masters.” This outcome can be classified as a “happy ending,” but only by highly anthropocentric standards. Babe remains in the service of humans, who hold ultimate power to decide his fate. While Babe proves that there is a degree of mobility to move between nonhuman species, the film operates under the tacit assumption that the binary distinction between humans and other animals is rigid and unmovable. Rather than challenging the legitimacy of the extant species hierarchy, Babe simply moves within it. While Babe’s actions successfully challenge the other characters’ speciesist notions of what a pig is and is not capable of, the systematic anthropocentrism that renders him powerless remains firmly in place.

In the following sections, I will discuss further examples of how this inadequate anti-speciesist, or pro-animal liberation/rights, messaging predominates in *Watership Down*, *Babe*, and *Okja*.

The Human Gaze

In 1975, Laura Mulvey's essay "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" drew attention to what we now commonly term the "male gaze": the way in which cinema prioritizes a male spectator, reflecting unconscious patriarchal structures and the power asymmetry between genders in society (Mulvey, 1975, pp. 6-18). A similar pattern can be observed in the way film assumes a human spectator and is undergirded by anthropocentric systems of thought, with a number of theorists already having coined the human counterpart the "human gaze." According to Randy Malamud, it is "a smooth extrapolation to reconfigure Mulvey's male gaze (upon the filmed female object) as a human gaze (upon the filmed animal object)" (Malamud, 2010, pp. 6-7). While the suggestion that the gaze can be so easily transposed to animals raises questions – the specificities of anthropocentrism should not be overlooked – there is certainly significant overlap between the male gaze and the human one, particularly in terms of power relations. Just as feminist scholars have struggled to build non-patriarchal systems using languages and institutions built upon female oppression, filmmakers make use of a cultural apparatus, consisting of various techniques, strategies, and motifs, that are anthropocentric in origin and prioritize the human viewer.

Catherine Russell, when speaking about the "zoo gaze," argues that:

...the exoticism of animals lies somewhere between the excitement of the sexual spectacle and the otherness of the ethnographic subject. The zoo is an intermediary zone that lies between the pornographic and the ethnographic gazes, in triangular relation with them. (Russell, 1999, p. 122)

While it does not seem apt to consider the filmic animal as an erotic object, there is certainly a gaze at play that resembles this dynamic on some level, which can be said to have a strong "othering" effect. But, as Burt notes, there may need to be "a more specific description for the construction of the visual animal, one that takes better account of the particular positionings of the animal in relation to the human" (Burt, 2002, p. 44).

Animals are constantly positioned as to-be-looked-at, as evidenced by the vast number of films, documentaries, television shows, video games, art, and online videos that either romanticize or fetishize their appearances, variously portraying them as, amongst other things, cute, beautiful, or terrifying. In many films that place emphasis on creating hyper-realistic

computer-generated animations of animals, such as the richly visual *The Jungle Book* (Favreau, 2016) and the *Planet of the Apes* reboots, the fetishized appearances of the animals become core to the films' commercial appeal and entertainment value. Through this rendering of nonhuman animals into aesthetic spectacles, they are exoticized, made "other," and become objects for the human gaze.

Derrida's neologism "carnophallogocentrism," which builds upon the concepts of phallogocentrism and Derrida's own supplementary term phallologocentrism, provides us with a way to interpret the symbolic order of society that is inclusive of an anthropocentric dimension (Derrida, 2002). The privileging of not only the male, but the meat-eating and rational, is a structuring force can be used to extend Mulvey's original male gaze. Mainstream film can be said to be built upon carnophallogocentrism by routinely constructing itself around not only the masculine and rational, but around meat-eating and animal sacrifice. Mulvey claims that the "paradox of phallogocentrism is that it depends on woman (as lack) to provide meaning and order" (1975, p. 6). Similarly, the "animal" acts as a signifier of the human "other" through its own alleged privations and subordinations. What we see onscreen regularly reflects what Derrida calls the "sacrificial structure" of society's meat consumption (2002), with nonhuman animals co-opted into the human service for purposes such as food or entertainment. Importantly, animals can also be justifiably killed within this paradigm. This subjection of the animal reaffirms the superiority of the human spectator. As Malamud notes, animals in film "are celebrated for their subservience, their entertainment value, and the extent to which they affirm an anthropocentric ethos" (2010, pp. 7-8). In Mulvey's essay, she states that:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female form which is styled accordingly. (1975, p. 10)

Similarly, in a world ordered by species imbalance, the human subject is made active and the nonhuman animal object passive, with the nonhuman animal styled according to the carnophallogocentric phantasy.

Derrida is deeply interested in problematizing the human gaze. In *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, Derrida famously delves into an encounter with

a cat who catches him naked (2008). Derrida wishes to stress his experience of being under the gaze of this cat, a perspective that is consistently overlooked in favor of a human gaze. There are people, including philosophers, who, according to Derrida, have “no doubt seen, observed, analyzed, reflected on the animal, but who have not been *seen seen* by the animal” (2008, p. 13). Derrida explains that they “neither wanted nor had the capacity to draw any systematic consequence from the fact that an animal could, facing them, look at them, clothed or naked, and in a word, without a word, address them” (2008, p. 13). Derrida inverts the traditional human gaze by pointing out, once again, that our dismissal of the animal gaze is not necessarily a privation on the animal’s part. In fact, it is humans that have long lacked the capacity to be disrupted by the gaze of animals. Humans are perennially concerned with what they can gain from interaction with nonhuman animals, and, as Derrida interrogates in depth, consider the failure of the nonhuman animal to “respond” as pointing to a lack on the animal’s part. This unidirectional human gaze underpins anthropocentric logic. Film only serves to reinforce this by prioritizing, once again, the human gaze and rendering nonhuman animals ever more “passive.” As Akira Lippit (2000) theorizes in his book *Electric Animal*, the animal in modernity can be conceptualized, in parallel with machines, as “passive” transmitters. Lippit states that “animals are incapable of determining or regulating the discourse they put forth: they simply transmit” (2011, p. 21). In film, the nonhuman animals’ alleged lack of “response” and “passivity” is thrown into sharp relief. As always, it is the gaze of the human that predominates, that determines, and that is active. As Berger states in reference to animals at large, “animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all meaning” (1980, p. 16).

The human gaze, therefore, constructs nonhuman animals in accordance with anthropocentric order; reinforces nonhuman animals as “other”; plays into the carnophallogocentric phantasy; and renders nonhuman animals as passive objects. Further sections will examine specific examples of the human gaze in operation in film.

Anthropomorphism

“The cinema satisfies a primordial wish for pleasurable looking, but it also goes further, developing scopophilia in its narcissistic aspect. The conventions of mainstream film focus attention on the human

form. Scale, space, stories are all anthropomorphic. Here, curiosity and the wish to look intermingle with a fascination with likeness and recognition: the human face, the human body, the relationship between the human form and its surroundings, the visible presence of the person in the world.” (Mulvey, 1975, p. 8)

The above quote from Mulvey highlights the predominance of anthropomorphism in cinema. When animals feature centrally in film, they are more often than not anthropomorphized to some extent, enabling easier identification with the characters by the human spectator and reinforcement of the ego. Anthropomorphism takes many forms. Often, animals are pigeonholed into human narratives. They are assigned human values and emotions, and are cognizant of human concepts. They possess a capacity for human language and speak with moving mouths. More subtle anthropomorphism is employed through the animation of facial expressions and gestures. Film presents an optimal medium for anthropomorphism: while anthropomorphic animals have been present in fables and literature for centuries, the walking and talking animals visible in cinema take anthropomorphism to exponentially greater levels, further enabled by the ongoing development of animation and computer-generated imagery. Even documentaries are subject to anthropomorphizing, with animals regularly placed into formulaic narratives that erase aspects of their behavior that a human audience might find incomprehensible, alienating, or uninteresting. As Malamud points out, “Animals are disguised perhaps because the authentic animal would be too depressing, or too scary, or too boring, for the viewer to endure” (2010, p. 4). If Berger’s thesis about animals in modernity is true – that animals are increasingly disappearing from real life and being replaced only by their appearance in visual culture – then the anthropomorphic animal has a profound influence on our perceptions of nonhuman animals today. It is difficult to say how much anthropomorphizing of animals spills over to real life a result of exposure to cinema. Deer are regularly called “Bambi” and rough collies “Lassie,” suggesting that the anthropomorphized fictional character becomes inextricable from the real-life species in the collective imagination.

The concept of anthropomorphism is itself challenging and fraught with paradoxes. The deconstruction of rigid boundaries between humans and animals along Darwinian lines suggests greater continuity between humans

and nonhuman animals than was assumed in the past. With no possibility of precisely locating the multiplicity of differences and similarities between humans and other animals, it is impossible to say where anthropomorphism begins and ends. In many ways, anthropomorphism is, under the human gaze, an attempt to negotiate and construct what we call “human” and what we call “animal. Thus the very concept is dependent upon this binary. The rabbits in *Watership Down* are highly anthropomorphic: they are given human language, mythology, and religion. Despite this, commentators repeatedly note that one of the distinguishing features of the film (and the novel upon which it is based) is that it presents rabbits *as* rabbits. That we accept these anthropomorphized characters *as* animals is telling. Anthropomorphism helps the audience to find the point at which they stop, and start to consider subjects as “same” and “other.” This caters to the omnipresent human gaze by helping the human spectator to determine what constitutes the self. As Malamud observes about animals in film:

...what we see most clearly with the human gaze, is, unsurprisingly, ourselves. Laura Mulvey makes a similar point about the objectified woman: “What counts is what the heroine provokes,” she writes. “In herself the woman has not the slightest importance.” (2010, p. 8)

Similarly, in explicating the male gaze, Mulvey notes that the woman:

...stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his phantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (1975, p. 6)

The same is applicable to animals in film, standing in, as they often do in wider culture, as the antithesis of “human,” carrying with them a multiplicity of meanings that points back to the same. Even films concerned with addressing nonhuman animals *as* animals are guilty of this charge.

Wolfe, referring to Wittgenstein’s famous example of the talking lion, points to the possibility that “our tendency to see the reticence of Wittgenstein’s lion as a lack of subjectivity is symptomatic of nothing so much as ‘our skeptical terror about the independent existence of other

minds” (2003, p. 2). This “terror” is reflected by the overwhelming urge towards anthropomorphism in film. Part of learning to rethink animals necessitates acceptance that there may be limits to how much knowledge we can obtain about the content of animal consciousness. Through anthropomorphism, film consistently obfuscates this, purporting to know the interiors of animal subjectivity by attributing to them human language, values, and emotions. Film inadvertently lays bare just how little we know about animal consciousness.

Anthropomorphism, then, is laden with anthropocentric paradoxes, and is another facet of the inescapable human gaze. Even in the three films under discussion here, in which the filmmakers are seeking to portray animals *as* animals, they cannot avoid various degrees of anthropomorphism.

Binaries

It is difficult to imagine representing animals in non-anthropocentric ways. Deconstructing anthropocentric frameworks is central to the task of rethinking nonhuman animals. As Calarco notes, “There is no doubt that we need to think unheard-of thoughts about animals, that we need new languages, new artworks, new histories, even new sciences and philosophies” (2008, p. 6). Similarly, filmmakers require a new conceptual toolbox if they are to produce films that do not play into anthropocentric tropes.

In many ways, the binary of animal/human forms the foundation upon which anthropocentrism is built, and is one upon which cinema consistently builds. *Watership Down*, *Babe*, and *Okja* employ a variety of complex strategies to negotiate this dichotomy. It is through the exploration of this and related oppositional concepts, which serve to underscore the separation of humans and animals, that these films often derive their narrative impact. The films construct binaries that are corollaries of or closely related to the original animal/human distinction, with these including nature/civilization, purity/corruption, and pastoralism/modernity, and utopia/dystopia.

As Calarco notes, it is this binary mode of thinking that has led to the project of non-anthropocentrism to be regularly compared with racism, sexism, and other denominations:

Much like the critique of essentialism in feminism, queer theory, and race studies, theorists in animal studies seek to track the ways in which the concept of “animality” functions to demarcate humans

clearly from animals and establish homogeneities among what appear to be radically different forms of animal life. (2008, pp. 2-3)

While the concept of speciesism may be inadequate for the dismantling of anthropocentrism at large, the representation of nonhuman animals in this essentialist fashion mirrors that of other minorities in cinema and therefore reinforces the “violent hierarchy,” as Calarco puts it (2015, p. 35), that situates humans at the top and nonhuman animals below them. It also serves to uphold the fundamental animal/human distinction that demarcates animals from humans in questionable ways.

Central to Derrida’s aim in his project of non-anthropocentrism is to demolish this reductive animal/human binary. Derrida refuses to accede to the singular terms “human” and the “animal,” believing that they misrepresent the fundamentally non-essentialist character of the categories they purport to describe, as well as underplaying the diversity inherent within and between both. As Foucault argues, man is only a recent invention (1966), meaning that these stringently opposed concepts are very much malleable and, in many ways, in need of reform.

In Donna Haraway’s famous essay “A Cyborg Manifesto,” she argues for a move away from the traditional boundaries that demarcate human/animal (1985). Haraway advocates an embracing of the “cyborg,” which involves the transgression of these boundaries in favor of hybridity, something she believes is an inescapable feature of today’s world. Haraway’s endeavor falls in line with the project of breaching the human-animal distinction, which has long depended on such rigid demarcation. Haraway argues that:

The theoretical and practical struggle against unity-through-domination or unity-through-incorporation ironically undermines not only the justifications for patriarchy, colonialism, humanism, positivism, essentialism, scientism, and other unlamented -isms, but all claims for an organic or natural standpoint. (1985, p. 20)

Anthropocentrism is one such “unlamented -ism,” constantly argued for on the basis of a “natural standpoint.” As Heise notes, “Haraway’s objective in this seminal essay was to break the persistent associations of the feminine with the natural, and to turn the potential of technology (typically

linked to masculinity) and fusions of the organic and the technological into imaginative tools for redefining femininity” (2003, pp. 77-78). This might also apply to animals and the project of non-anthropocentrism.

In the second part of this article, I will provide examples of how *Watership Down*, *Babe*, and *Okja* make use of these problematic binary oppositions in ways that simultaneously reinforce them and highlight their contradictory nature.

Patriarchy

Animals in film are regularly anthropomorphized through the projection of human ideology and replication of human social structures – generally a more disguised form of anthropomorphism than animals simply wearing clothes or speaking human languages. The hidden nature of this anthropomorphism means that animals themselves are often implicated in the reproduction of anthropocentrism, as well as in the reproduction of other social inequalities, such as the oppression of women.

How this occurs in film is cyclical. Animals are often portrayed – and perceived – as embodying more of what is “natural” rather than what is constructed. As Haraway observes, “Animals have continued to have a special status as natural objects that can show people their origin, and therefore their pre-rational, pre-management, pre-cultural essence” (1985, p. 11). When elements of human society are reflected in nonhuman animal films, it regularly has the effect of naturalizing these behaviors. One particularly pervasive assumption is that patriarchal systems are close to being universal in the “natural world,” which is inhabited by animals. As many scholars have observed in recent decades, however, the reality is that, even where there are recognizable elements of male-dominated social structures in nonhuman animal societies, how this manifests in various species differs phenomenally, and projecting a Western patriarchal system onto animals in film is a human construction, rather than an accurate reflection of what is, or what is “natural.”

This is tied up with intersectionality theory, indicating as it does the intersection of pathways of power and oppression. The techniques outlined above are used to further objectify and “other” the nonhuman characters along familiar lines. There are many instances of crossover between the male gaze and the human gaze: Stephanie Ernst (2010), for example, notes in *Avatar* (2009) that a scene of the male protagonist dominating an animal is

“chillingly reminiscent of a rape scene,” pointing to the overlapping ways in which both women and animals are subjected. Similarly, in a harrowing sequence in *Okja*, Okja – a genetically modified superpig – is raped. The domination of Okja in this scene by a human male epitomizes her femininity, passivity, and forfeiting of agency to patriarchal forces. I will further discuss this sequence later in terms of its relation to the carnophallogocentric paradigm.

Patriarchy is a prevailing force in *Watership Down*, where all rabbit societies portrayed are patriarchal to varying degrees. All four warrens we see in the film – Sandleford warren; Cowslip’s warren; Watership Down; and Efrafa – are led by a male “chief rabbit” and their male “owslas” (the rabbit council). In addition to this, the vast majority of characters are male. The group of rabbit protagonists who set off from Sandleford warren at the beginning of the film are male apart from one doe rabbit, Violet, who becomes the first casualty of the film when she is killed by a bird of prey.

Later, when the rabbits reach Watership Down, a safe destination for founding a new warren, the need for doe rabbits to continue the rabbits’ genetic line serves as the main catalyst for forwarding the plot. This is what spurs protagonist Hazel to visit the local farm in an attempt to release the domesticated female rabbits there, resulting in him being shot and wounded. The search for female rabbits also leads to the protagonists infiltrating Efrafa, the overcrowded totalitarian warren led by the despotic General Woundwort. The story has been criticized for its portrayal of gender roles, with reviewer Selma G. Lanes noting that the doe rabbits in *Watership Down* are merely “instruments of reproduction” (1974). It is notable that this does not reflect the reality of rabbit societies. The novel upon which the film is based on was largely inspired by R.M. Lockley’s book *The Private Life of the Rabbit* (1964), which details the behavioral and social structures of rabbits. In this text, rabbit societies are largely matriarchal – something that author Richard Adams did not reflect in his novel and, subsequently, was not evident in the film, even though Adams openly stated that he read Lockley’s book closely. In addition to the overriding patriarchalism of *Watership Down* and the general sidelining of female characters, treatment of doe rabbits is used by the filmmakers to signal fundamental moral character to the audience. The barbarism of the rabbits in Efrafa, for example, is illustrated by the way the senior rabbits speak derogatorily about females. For example, when Efrafan leader General Woundwort first meets Bigwig, one of the protagonists,

Woundwort overtly objectifies the female rabbits and aligns leadership in the warren with female subordination (“If you want a doe, you have your choice here. You're not an officer for nothing”).

In *Babe*, similar reproduction of patriarchal structures is evident. At Hoggett’s farm, the dogs sit atop the social ladder (due to their closeness to the human “masters” and their status as non-edible) with Rex, the male sheepdog, embodying a familiar hegemonic masculinity. His leadership style is authoritarian, and he is resistant to the threat posed by the feminized Babe, who challenges the pre-existing order. Rex is fixated on his personal and familial legacy, descending as he does from a long line of shepherding champions. Babe eventually supersedes Rex as a shepherd, an emasculating event that causes Rex to act out violently. In contrast with Rex, his partner Fly, the female sheepdog, is maternal and caring, and becomes Babe’s surrogate mother.

Okja, *Watership Down*, and *Babe* feed into gendered tropes through the domination of female animals through sexual subjection, positing rabbit societies as patriarchal, and portraying sheepdog families as nuclear and male-dominated. Through this, the films implicate animals and animal “nature” in human systems of oppression, anthropomorphizing them in a way that molds them to culturally specific human social structures which, in turn, helps to naturalize these structures. This cyclical anthropomorphism feeds back into anthropocentrism, underplaying the specificities of animal societies and co-opting them into human systems of oppression.

Nature vs. Civilization

One key offshoot of the central animal/human dichotomy is that of nature/civilization. *Watership Down*, *Babe*, and *Okja* all pit nature and civilization against each other, reflecting a common mourning for what is “natural” in modernity. Lippit, speaking about Jung’s lamenting of animals’ “disappearance” from the world, notes that Jung argues “the dislocation of animal being lessens the fullness of our world and not the animal's. The absence of animal being weakens the humanity of the human world” (2000, p. 17). This familiar form of lament for nonhuman animals feels like an oversimplified and anthropocentric nostalgia that in no way acknowledges the many ways animals are exponentially present, and often exploited, in human society, such as in slaughterhouses and laboratories. Instead,

however, film often focuses on the supposed utopia represented by the “natural world” inhabited by nonhuman animals.

In all three films under discussion, the animals’ vision of utopia is the place with the least human concentration. All three films share in common a privileging of pastoralism, with the nonhuman animals aligned with what is natural and pure.

Watership Down is exemplary in its employment of paradoxical binaries. The film’s messaging vilifies human beings and human civilizations, contrasting it in opposition to the pure and natural lifestyle of the rabbit protagonists. Despite this, the rabbits are anthropomorphized and used allegorically to reflect various human political ideologies. This confused messaging represents the contradictions inherent in these classical dichotomies, and points towards the inescapable reality of this conflation. The rabbits’ journey to escape urbanization and retreat to the idyllic British countryside echoes common anxieties about ecological degradation and unstoppable urban expansion. Watership Down, the hill where the rabbits settle when their original home is destroyed by human beings, itself represents this utopia. It is safe and free from the influence of humans. Of course, the rabbits can never truly escape humans. Protagonist Hazel is shot by a man when he visits the local farm – something which he cannot resist doing, because they possess a “resource” he needs (in this case, female rabbits). They also make use of human tools, such as a boat, to achieve their aims of rescuing rabbits from the totalitarian Efrafa. While disavowing humans and their connections with them, and portraying their utopia as separate from humans, the interconnectedness of humans and nature, as in Haraway’s cyborg thesis, is writ large.

One of the core values of the group of rabbit protagonists is to maintain the “purity” of their essential rabbit-ness and rabbit culture, and this “purity” largely involves maintaining distance from humans. When they are travelling and Hazel suggests that they rest in a shed, the rabbits are, at first, affronted (“Can’t rest there. That’s a man-place”). When they visit a warren, run by the strange Cowslip, they intuitively sense that something is not quite right. The clairvoyant Fiver claims: “There’s something unnatural and evil and twisted about this place. It feels like mist. Like being deceived, and losing our way.” It turns out eventually that the issue with this warren is its proximity to humans. The rabbits at Cowslip’s warren have, very interestingly, disavowed aspects of “traditional” rabbit culture. They have no

time for the older myths of El-Ahrrairah, the rabbit prophet, seeming to believe it is below them. Instead they have turned to higher art, namely poetry, which, rather than being composed of mythic and religious elements, encourages the rabbits to accept their fate and place in the world. Cowslip has long limbs and a drawn face, depicted as eerie, unnatural, and almost diseased in appearance. His long forearms allow more anthropomorphic movement than the rabbit protagonists, and he gesticulates and uses these more often than the other characters. The message is that developing relationships with human beings, even if it appears mutually beneficial, is dangerous. In the eyes of the protagonists, a preference for “high” art, taking a more secular and humanistic approach to mythology and culture, and interspecies cooperation with humans all point to a way of living that is unnatural and corruptive. This is proved unequivocally to be the case when Bigwig, one of the protagonists, is caught in a snare near Cowslip’s warren, which makes tangible the suspected threats posed by human presence. The rabbits quickly depart the warren and the dangers inherent to this lifestyle.

Anxieties about human-driven ecological destruction and displacement of animal populations are also prominent in *Watership Down*. It is the creation of a construction site that serves as the catalyst for the plot. The rabbits must leave Sandleford Warren as a consequence of human interference and destruction of the natural environment. Moreover, when Holly, one of the rabbits who chose not to leave Sandleford Warren, eventually finds the group, the scenes he describes, and which is depicted on-screen, resemble something out of a horror film. It is these memorable scenes, in what is allegedly a family film, that many commentators recall vividly from childhood and have described as having a traumatizing effect on them. The ghost-like, red-eyed appearances of the dead rabbits in this nightmarish fantasy sequence are indeed highly disturbing, and the fact that this was initiated by humans implies this was a cruel and gratuitous mass murder. “Men have always hated us,” says Fiver. Holly, who has witnessed the terror, responds: “They just destroyed the warren because we were in their way. They’ll never rest until they’ve spoiled the earth.”

Through this vilification of human society and culture, *Watership Down* is interested in depicting purity and ascribes great moral value to that which is supposedly “natural.” While this can be read in many ways as pro-animal and is a reasonable criticism of humans’ treatment of animals and the environment, it also serves to reinforce the binaries and essentialism that

tidily separate humans from animals, re-installing the same value hierarchy on which anthropocentrism depends, albeit reversing it.

In *Okja*, a hyper-commercial model of human society is contrasted starkly with the pastoralism of the Korean countryside. The film utilizes Orientalist tropes to portray the idyllic and pastoral Korean countryside where *Okja*, a genetically modified “superpig” and her young human companion, Mija (An Seo Hyun), live. At the beginning of the film, *Okja* and Mija live in peaceful rurality. Mija’s grandfather is a small-scale farmer who takes care of chickens and goats in the mountains, far away from urbanity.

This is juxtaposed with the scenes set in New York City, headquarters of the Mirando Corporation. The film opens with a shot of the corporation’s empire from the window of a skyscraper, with various dystopian-sounding Mirando subsidiaries such as “Mirando Organic Harvesting,” “Mirando Peachy Delight Baking Company,” “Mirando Chemicals,” “Mirando Biotech” and “Mirando Happy Pups Good Boy! Treats” lining the streets. These opening shots are followed by an ostentatious press conference lauding the environmental benefits of the corporation’s newly created “superpig.” From this point on, the will of the greedy and profit-driven Mirando workers impels the narrative forward. Mirando removes *Okja* from her countryside home to participate in the “best superpig competition” and to ultimately be killed for food. Mija’s task throughout the film is to rescue *Okja* and return her to the utopian mountains, which she eventually does.

Okja juxtaposes the possibility of genetically engineered animals with common fears about the disappearance of nature. *Okja*, like *Watership Down*, symbolizes anxieties about the inescapability of urbanity. While technology is a threat to animals such as *Okja* through mass factory farming, it is also technology that has indeed created *Okja* to begin with. Yet it is living in the rural Korean mountains alongside Mija on a small family farm, disconnected from so many forms of everyday technology, including that which created her, that *Okja* is happy and at home. In many ways, *Okja* embodies Haraway’s cyborg, but she also points to the contradictions inherent in these films’ equation of utopia and purity with the appearance of naturality. As Heise notes, this captures “something that is indeed essential about the human relationship to nature in the late twentieth century: the fact that for the majority of the population of industrialized nations (and of an increasing number of developing ones), the experience of nature is heavily mediated by technology” (2003, p. 75).

Happy Endings - but for Who?

Watership Down, *Babe*, and *Okja* respectively highlight the plights of various nonhuman animals and, in all three cases, provide the nonhuman animal protagonists with a conventional “happy ending.” This raises the question as to who these optimistic conclusions actually serve, with these endings seeming to reflect a human gaze rather than the unpalatable reality of animal suffering. This trend has a historical dimension, with Burt noting that animals’ portrayal in film has long been a sensitive issue in terms of welfare. Audiences and regulatory bodies respond strongly to witnessing violence against animals, with the treatment of animals on-screen considered to serve as “a barometer for the moral health of the nation” (Burt, 2002, p. 36).

In *Watership Down*, human-driven ecological destruction forces the rabbits out of their home. The band of protagonists later find the film’s eponymous utopia on the hills and, after overcoming several hurdles, settle happily. The film ends with the aged protagonist Hazel being called by El-Ahrairah, the rabbit prophet, to an afterlife in which he will be offered a place on the “owsla,” the rabbit council. El-Ahrairah assures Hazel that the rabbits at the new warren he leaves behind will prosper without him. Hazel’s end is peaceful, and we see his spirit voluntarily leave his body as he passes away. The reality of constant urban expansion and continued degradation of animal habitats is not reflected by this prosperous ending for the new warren, nor is other negative human influence, such as the large-scale spread of diseases like myxomatosis, which have long threatened rabbit populations.

In *Babe*, Babe manages to win the approval of Farmer Hoggett (James Cromwell) and escape slaughter by taking on the role of a sheepdog on the farm. In the ultimate scene, Babe publicly demonstrates this in a sheepherding competition. Finding his place on the farm was Babe’s aim throughout the film, and through this accomplishment, he finally does so. The film concludes with Babe and Farmer Hoggett standing side by side victoriously. Of course, while the farmer’s eyes may have been opened to the usefulness of pigs as sheepherding animals, pigs will continue to be eaten. Babe’s family have still been killed for meat, and other animals on Hoggett’s farm who do not prove themselves so useful will meet the same end. Babe proves that he – and potentially all pigs – are actually intelligent, but most importantly, intelligent in a way that serves human needs. Any other

intelligence he demonstrates that does not serve the interest of his human masters is irrelevant. Even though Babe and Farmer Hoggett are implied to have reached a certain parity by the final shot, this could not be further from the truth. Babe's existence is vindicated only when Farmer Hoggett deems it so, and their relationship will continue to be severely imbalanced. Despite this, cheery music heralds the end of the movie and the accomplishment of Babe's aims.

In *Okja*, the penultimate scene occurs in an abattoir, where superpigs, like the titular character Okja, are being systematically slaughtered. Mija successfully saves Okja's life at the final moment by trading it for a golden pig figurine with Nancy, the CEO of the Mirando Corporation. Okja changes hands from one human proprietor to another, albeit a far more benevolent one who treats her with love and respect. As Mija and Okja leave, they pass by hundreds of superpigs miserably queuing up for their turn to be killed. The pair manage to rescue another young superpig, and the three return to the idyllic Korean mountains. The closing shots show them basking in their new peaceful lives. However, nothing has changed systematically, something that the penultimate sequence has made stark.

Despite pointing to the human-inflicted destruction and killing wrought upon many different species of animal and highlighting the suffering of those animals in question, all three films end with the animal protagonists surmounting these obstacles and, it is implied, living happily thereafter. These standards of happiness accord with a human gaze. What is the best outcome from a human perspective, in line with human values and narratives, is not necessarily the best one for animals. In *Babe* and *Okja*, happy endings are achieved through decisions made by humans: Farmer Hoggett decides not to kill Babe because he is useful, while the Mirando Corporation decide not to kill Okja in exchange for financial gain. Both of these choices are largely just good business decisions, rather than signaling any larger shifts towards the animals at large.

While these optimistic endings signal much-needed hope for a relationship with animals and nature that is in many ways fraught and destitute, they also function to absolve the human spectator of guilt and responsibility for the actions instigated by human populations which, in all three cases, acted as the catalyst for the animal characters' problems to begin with. While drawing attention to the poor treatment of animals by humans, they also reinforce with these conclusions that everything is okay, thereby

impelling the audience into complacency rather than action or reevaluation. In each case, the non-human protagonists – Hazel, Babe, and Okja – have proven themselves to the audience to be subjects akin to human heroes who are worthy of survival through their likeable anthropomorphized character. These exceptional individuals’ supposed success does nothing to change the reality of treatment for species as a whole, but a conclusion that more accurately reflected a gruesome reality would perhaps lose much of its appeal, particularly given that these films are often geared towards family audiences. This soft moralizing and reluctance of pro-animal films to allow audiences to leave with a worse taste in their mouth is evidence of a human gaze that vindicates the human viewer of complicity, rendering the ethical issues easier to swallow at the cost of realism. While on the surface these films may have had admirable intentions in drawing attention to the difficulties faced by animals, these “happy endings” serve the human viewer more than they do the fictionalized characters and the real-life species.

Farming Processes

In *Babe* and *Okja*, the farm and the abattoir are two key spaces where paradoxes are enacted. In his “genealogical” study of the prison, Foucault traces the institution’s development of the centuries (1977). Reforms in the prison system have popularly been attributed to a greater humanitarian drive, something that Foucault strongly contests. Foucault argues that the modern prison structure only serves to exert greater control over its inhabitants than previously. In parallel with this, changes in the structures of animal institutions, such as farms and slaughterhouses, have often been deemed improvements in conditions for the benefit of the animals that live there. Ratalle notes that “humanitarian efforts on behalf of animals were often framed in a way that benefited the human as well as the animal” (2015, p. 71). The mechanization of farming and the turn away from small-scale agriculture has, in fact, led to decreased visibility of the act of killing, and an unprecedented undermining of animal subjectivity. More animals are slaughtered than ever, and this now happens behind enormous metal doors. The efficiency of the system renders animals as cogs in a machine, rather than as subjects. This is reflected by films featuring farm animals. As Burt points out:

The fetishization of animal death as part of an industrial process renders visible that which we rarely, if ever, see. Few films, however, actually explore the relationship between this revelatory imagery and other aspects of culture, preferring instead to reinforce its sense of separateness. (2002, pp. 174-175)

In *Babe*, the opening scene in the piggery cuts abruptly to the overconsumption and colorful distractions of a fairground, where children and adults indulge themselves. Throughout the film, the family farm is contrasted with the factory farm. The factory farm is dark, foreboding, and leads to the mass slaughter of Babe's family. On the other hand, the family farm, while filled with obstacles, is ultimately the site of overcoming and victory for Babe. As Ratalle puts it:

Babe borrows many of the plot devices from *Charlotte's Web*, including the use of the romanticized rural farm as a veneer over the ugly reality of eating animals. "If," as Plumwood contends further, "there is a moral difference between the smaller scale farm and the animal gulag, however, there is also normally a lot more continuity than Babe makes visible" (2012, p. 63). More simply, the family farm merely changes the scale of animal consumption; it does not erase that consumption completely. (2015, p. 85)

In *Okja*, the opening presentation by the Mirando Corporation introducing the superpig in no way reflects the reality of the cruelty being undertaken. The creation of the superpig is pitched as a positive development for humanity, one that is both environmentally friendly and ethical, with any dubious questions concealed by shiny capitalist veneer. These PR efforts, while deceptive in the context of the film, also fall in line with our own attitudes: we are aware of the cruelty, but accept the happy facade provided.

This is contrasted with the penultimate scene in the abattoir, where we can clearly discern a modern day "machine animal" made possible by factory farming. Thousands of superpigs line up barely distinguishable from another one. In *Babe*, the camera also roves over hundreds of nursing pigs in a dark factory farm. The factory farm is often reminiscent of a concentration camp, an apt mirroring – as Lippit notes, "The atrocities of World War II

derive from the anthropological foundation that separates humanity from animals” (2000, p.10).

As Mija and two members of the Animal Liberation Front, K and J, search for Okja throughout the abattoir, calling her name, the audience is struck by the fact that amid the boundless numbers of superpigs present, Okja could be any of them, and any of them her. Both *Okja* and *Babe* make plainly visible the scale of the factory farms – in both, we see shots of hundreds or thousands of pigs – which is jarring when considered against the happy outcome that occurs for the two protagonists, who manage to demonstrate their subjectivity. The other pigs, however, remain part and parcel of the machine.

Both films portray the abattoir as dark, cold and endless. When Mija enters, the atmosphere has echoes of a horror film. At one point, she stumbles upon a room in which a worker sweeps rather fruitlessly through a huge pool of blood. The walls are cold and mechanical and the shots are ominously shrouded in mist, adding to its surreality. When Mija looks up, she sees corpses lining the ceiling. While observing the factory, Mija is hit over the head by a dead corpse, running parallel with the viewer’s sudden exposure to this reality behind the shiny facade that the film has shown so far. Just before Mija finds Okja ready to be slaughtered, she witnesses another superpig being stunned and killed. This moment represents a pivotal moment and Mija’s final loss of innocence. At this point, she realizes that the only way to get what she wants – to return to the mountains with Okja – is to work within the system, rather than outside of it. She begins speaking English for the first time, and bargains for Okja’s life using the golden pig her grandfather has given her. This is a symbolic concession on Mija’s part that she cannot make structural change or even necessarily subvert it. Getting Okja back is, ultimately, a business transaction. But, as Ratalle points out “Accounting for the ethical implications involved in acknowledging the subjectivity of the meat animal by necessity must implicate not just exceptional individual animals, but entire species” (2015, p. 14). This is something that both *Okja* and *Babe*, despite making visible the mass cruelty of factory farming, fail to do.

Portrayal of Animal Care and Activism

Singer notes in *Animal Liberation* that “The portrayal of those who protest against cruelty to animals as sentimental, emotional ‘animal-lovers’

has had the effect of excluding the entire issue of our treatment of nonhumans from serious political and moral discussion” (1975, p. 21). Animal care, it has been noted, has often been aligned with femininity. This notion has a long history: the anti-vivisection campaign was undermined by its association with the feminist movement, with some suggesting that “female opposition to animal experimentation was motivated by emotion, hysteria, sentimentalism or ignorance, all of which were opposed to the rational scientific acquisition of knowledge” (Molloy, 2011, p. 28). This association of animal care with the feminine, in opposition to rationality, upholds the carnophallogocentric paradigm. In *Okja*, Mija and Okja have a close bond. While Okja protects Mija, Mija remains Okja’s “owner.” Despite Mija being a child, she has a maternal role towards Okja, caring for her, cleaning her and brushing her teeth.

When caring about animals’ interest is not being feminized, it is often vilified instead. When the Mirando Corporation take Okja away to the “best superpig competition,” they are intercepted by a group of balaclava-clad members of the “Animal Liberation Front” (ALF). The ALF are portrayed as “terrorists,” though ones that ostensibly disavow violence. The ALF members, while dedicated to their cause, are portrayed as self-aggrandizing and hypocritical, and at several points they rescind purported values. J (Paul Dano), their Messianic leader, claims that the ALF is a group of “animal lovers.” However, the film strongly suggests that there are two very different kinds of animal lovers: Mija, who has a genuine bond and personal interest in Okja, and the ALF members, who are highly ideological and fight for political “liberation” of nonhuman animals. There is a sharp divide between “loving” animals on an individual level, and seeking systematic or large-scale change. The message is that actually campaigning for animal welfare or rights is literally a terrorist action, and that the people who engage with this seek only to advance their own political agenda. Like the members of the Mirando Corporation, the ALF’s concern for Mija’s interests are mostly a facade. The ALF’s convictions are also ridiculed, with one member refusing to eat anything because “all food production is exploitative.” When offered a tomato, he responds: “Ripened with ethylene gas. Transported in trucks.”

Apart from poking fun at their moral standpoint, the ALF are also portrayed as morally gray. When speaking with Mija, ALF member K mistranslates her words, pretending to the other members of the movement that Mija has consented to their mission to expose the Mirando Corporation

(when, in fact, Mija has only asked that Okja be returned to the mountains). When it is revealed that K lied, ALF leader J brutally pushes him to the ground and kicks him, then expels him from the movement. This is despite their “credo” that bans violence. At this point, the ALF crosses the line from being young, idealistic and hypocritical to concerningly deviant. Molloy notes this pattern is recurrent, claiming that “animal rights” activists in the media are stereotyped as follows:

...young, misinformed, angry, aggressive, sometimes insane, social deviants. In most cases the programmes tend to avoid dealing with the suffering of animals and instead focus on the illegal activities, thereby reducing animal advocates to a stereotype of criminality and destructive behaviours. (2011, p. 38)

By implying that those who wish to “liberate” Okja are in many ways just as bad as those who are oppressing her, *Okja* explicitly disavows animal rights activism. While the ALF’s guerilla tactics may be contentious and questionable, they are also the only group visible in the film that have any interest in subverting the unethical and cruel system being enforced by the Mirando Corporation. It also feeds into the stereotype outlined above that those who advocate for nonhuman animals are not worth taking seriously. This feels highly paradoxical in a film like *Okja*, which simultaneously shines a light on extensive violence by humans towards other animals. Through this portrayal of the ALF, the human spectator is once again absolved of any urgency towards action. Passively caring for animals and loving one’s own pet is sufficient to bring about a positive outcome; seeking systematic change, on the other hand, is morally suspect.

Carnophallogocentrism

Carnophallogocentrism is manifest in both *Babe* and *Okja*, both being led by pig (in *Okja*’s case, genetically modified “superpig”) protagonists who must overcome their subjugated positions in the sacrificial economy.

In *Babe*, protagonist Babe is both infantilized and feminized. He is portrayed as a piglet from beginning to end. Despite the film taking place over several months, he does not grow older in appearance. To signify the passage of time, he is eventually depicted with a small hair tuft between his ears, further anthropomorphizing him. There is an obvious explanation for

this infantilization: piglets are cuter than adult pigs, who might be less sympathetic to a human audience. The pigs that portrayed Babe were also female, as it was believed male genitalia would be less visually appealing. In addition to this, Babe is voiced by a female voice actor. This is despite the fact he is indeed a male character, with the pronoun “he” used throughout the film.

An early title card in the film states: “Pigs are definitely stupid.” This is reiterated by Fly the sheepdog when she first encounters Babe. This alleged stupidity alludes to Babe’s perceived lack of rationality, which justifies his place at the bottom of the food chain. Being constructed as feminine, edible, and irrational, Babe is an ideal object within the carnophallogocentric paradigm, with the natural narrative trajectory being for him to break free of this and earn his subjectivity. Throughout the film, Babe subverts the carnophallogocentric order. He proves himself to be surprisingly intelligent and supersedes the patriarchal Rex in sheepherding. This leads to him not being eaten and considered “non-edible.”

Farmer Hoggett’s inner conflict throughout the film also tests the limits of the carnophallogocentric paradigm. From their first meeting, Hoggett feels a special connection to Babe, something that he himself is reluctant to accept. Hoggett is the male overseer of the farm and all of the nonhuman animals that live there. Hoggett barely speaks throughout the film. His communication with Babe is non-verbal, though they establish a bond regardless. The narrator describes their first meeting as follows: “the pig and the farmer regarded each other, and for a fleeting moment, something passed between them, a faint sense of common destiny.”

Farmer Hoggett’s affinity with nature and his telepathic connection with Babe is contrasted with the modernity of the environment that otherwise surrounds them. His son attempts to get him to “modernize” his systems, complaining that his profits are lacking as a result (“You need to modernize, get some sort of cash flow going. You’re still using a horse and cart, for god’s sakes”). This is in sharp contrast with the excessive consumption demonstrated by the rest of his family: his wife who is constantly preoccupied with rich and lavish meals, his grandchildren who cry about receiving for Christmas a gift that is the wrong color. Hoggett’s alternative ideology runs side by side with the film’s messaging that if humans simply “regress” or cut down on their consumption, reverting to a more pastoral life, they can live in harmony with animals, in contrast with the excessive

lifestyles and mass slaughter of animals today. But the reality is that Hoggett is still master of the animals and has complete dominion over them: through this, *Babe* advocates for Hoggett's "soft" power, rather than a genuine restructuring of animal-human relations. Hoggett's behavior within the filmic universe is a challenge to the carnophallogocentric order, and this makes room for Babe's subversion of it. But, while Babe succeeds within the carnophallogocentric paradigm, he succeeds only within this framework, rendering the film's logic inherently anthropocentric. While Babe symbolically elevates himself to a higher status, the film still operates within this same paradigm. As Ratalle (2015, p. 142) puts it, Babe is "bogged down in the rhetorical structures that deny subjectivity to the meat animal and enable their mass consumption by humans."

In *Okja*, the carnophallogocentric paradigm is epitomized by a sequence where Okja is taken to a laboratory in New Jersey. As Okja enters, her point of view is foregrounded as she observes the innumerable other superpigs around her. This makes visible the ugly reality of the superpig machinery. The pigs who are behind bars are less attractive in appearance, their hides diseased and covered in lumps. This shreds the happy veneer of the environmentally-friendly superpig that had previously been in place. Dr. Johnny Wilcox (Jake Gyllenhaal) appears, holding a bottle of beer and behaving in his usual maniacal fashion. Wilcox is a celebrity veterinarian, a cartoonish Steve Irwin-inspired character who ostensibly loves animals, but is also massively exploitative and self-interested, reflecting a tension between genuinely loving animals, and the commercial interests of those who publicly do so.

In this scene, Wilcox desperately attempts to reassert his position within the carnophallogocentric order by facilitating the rape of Okja by another superpig. His actions and violence towards Okja occur as a result of his fall from grace in his career; he has gone from being a well-loved celebrity to being obsolete, and has been supplanted by Mija as the face of the Mirando Corporation. Subsequent to this facilitation of rape, Wilcox uses a cylindrical and phallic tool to extract a sliver of meat from the live Okja. As he does this, Wilcox is visibly upset, claiming he "shouldn't be here" and that he is an "animal lover." Despite this, he proceeds anyway. This represents, as Burt (2002, p. 29) puts it, how our attitudes towards animals constantly oscillate "between veneration and exploitation." Wilcox's reluctance to harm Okja but continuance to show the necessity of his

dominating her in order to reaffirm his place within the hierarchy. Like *Babe*, *Okja* depends on the paradigm of carnophallogocentrism for narrative coherence, deriving narrative impact from the exploration of this symbolic order.

Conclusion

Anthropocentric paradoxes are endemic in cinema. Even films that have attempted to encourage viewers to consider animals in new lights fall victim to the many traps posed by anthropocentrism, which underpins so many of our institutions. Following in the footsteps of prominent animal studies scholars, who have encountered difficulties in their attempts to radically rethink animals, filmmakers find themselves inadvertently reinforcing the various foundations upon which an oppressive anthropocentric system rests.

It is this problematic representation that has led many to have concerns about whether it is ethical to represent nonhuman animals at all, when power is so imbalanced. But these films have also had a tangibly positive impact in terms of treatments: *Babe*, for example, notoriously inspired many people to become vegetarians, including actor James Cromwell (Nobis, 2009). This practical impact is important and should not be understated. But the symbolic chains of anthropocentrism must also be taken seriously, given how deeply entrenched this system is in our way of perceiving the world. Ultimately, if we are to break out of anthropocentrism, we must find new ways to reimagine nonhuman animals in cinema.

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Mapping Parallel Ecological Constructs in Fish and Humans

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Abstract

Though animals have gained representations in human narratives in the past, such portrayal was often anthropocentric dependent. Though animals have been objects of studies in the natural sciences, it was not until ecocriticism beyond traditional signification, anchored a fair knowledge representation between human and the non-human elements that greater consideration was extended to the non-human elements including animals. Human animal studies (HAS) yielded an extensive dragging of animals from the periphery to actual literary presences as subjects of narratives. Hitherto, a major challenge to animal representation is the issue of voice but since the birth of ecocriticism and human animal studies, eco-critical writers have evolved a way of voicing the non-human concerns. Ahmed Maiwada's *We're Fish* (2017) represents such attempt to give voice to the fish as well as draw parallel relations between fish and human ecologies to bring to the fore animal suffering and draw sympathy to them. The paper, beyond examining the portrayal of animal as subject also attempts an eco-critical reading of the text to project hazardous environmental practices of humans with a view to inducing a change in them.

Keywords: *animals; human; fish; ecocriticism; ecologies; Ahmed Maiwada*

Introduction

Ecocriticism, the relationship between literature and environment, has become the convenient intersection where two seemingly strange bedfellows, that is, poetry and nature, intermix. Through ecocriticism, a new horizon and a new vista of balance between humans and nature including animals have emerged. Humans tender nature and nature in turn regenerates humans in an endless complimentary routine. Though African and Nigerian Literature has substantial presence of animal stories in its corpus, these animals are often represented based on hitherto prevailing anthropocentric mode of knowledge. Animals then and even now are most of the time represented as objects only in the service of humans. In some cases however, there is the ethical angle to animal treatment and portrayal. Fables, allegories and fairy tales among others, in African oral literature are replete with different animal stories relating with humans in different dimensions and sometimes coming to human aids in time of need. Many examples of this are found in D. O. Fagunwa's novels. Hitherto, it is only in oral literature that stories are entirely told about animals and there they end up being subjects. But there seems to be a conscious and remarkable shift in animal representation among some Nigerian writers. Ahmed Maiwada's *We're Fish* (2017) is one of such experimentation where fish is the subject of a whole collection.

Though ecocriticism is the wholesale concept of concerns for the non-human other, there are however many variants of these non-other group. The animal component is one of it and stories about animals especially in African literature as earlier mentioned are deployed as fables, parables, myths, allegories and legends among others to teach morals and also used in pedagogy as well as for entertainment. Animal representations take different shapes. Sometimes they are anthropomorphically represented and at other times they may be anthropocentrically portrayed. In this paper, the demand of ecocriticism for ethical representation of all things human and the non-human alike shall be our guide. This paper shall be supplanted in Critical Animal Studies (CAS) Also, some other eco-critical concepts aside the ones already mentioned above, especially where they serve the focus of this paper shall form the background for the analysis of the collection under review. Ahmed Maiwada is a lawyer, an environmental activist, a writer and a poet whose drive for experimentation is boundless and charming. Maiwada's major preoccupation in *We're fish* is to challenge anthropocentric positions

such that he creates a parallel and a juxtaposition that humans and fish are the same in quite a number of regards especially that humans have descended into inhuman conducts. The notion of perceiving all living elements as members of the same ecological community is an eco-centric one that finds reception in deep ecology a term coined by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess in 1973. The doctrine postulates biospheric egalitarianism that is all living things have the same right to live and flourish. (Naess & Sessions, 1996). William Grey sheds more light on the philosophy of deep ecology when he says:

a central doctrine of deep ecology is that all living things are members of larger biotic or ecological communities and the well-being of these communities is not just a question of prudential concern for human well-being but a matter of moral concern. This conception of the essential interconnectedness and interdependence of life forms is derived from an understanding of the biological science ecology and is often characterized as “ecocentric,” in contrast to the anthropocentrism of traditional views. (2000, p. 45)

Hitherto deep ecology, anthropocentric considerations have often guided human thought and actions. Anthropocentric ethics privileges human beings as the only morally considerable agent that is also imbued with unfettered authority over nature. But since deep ecology, other evaluations of the traditional anthropocentric posturing of humans have also sprung up challenging the hitherto monolithic construct that favors humans as the only agentic force. Some of the new concepts include ecofeminism, eco justice, and eco-liberalism among others. It is in line with this inclusive consideration of the 'other' that Maiwada's collection should be read, viewed and analyzed.

This uncommon portrayal of animals as an agentic force in the mold of humans finds an especial expression in Critical Animal Studies otherwise known as CAS in many ways especially as evinced by Best when he suggests that to achieve beyond the rhetoric of animal liberation, human efforts at saving animals from extinction and the holocaust they presently face, there must be a convergence of thought and action (Best, 2020, p. 2). Rappelling down on Mainstream Animal Studies (MAS), Best opines that Mainstream, Animal Studies has been “neutralized, stripped of political relevance, co-opted, and contained by the hegemonic norms of the academic-industrial

complex” (Best 2020, p. 2). Best argues for a more productive concern in animal studies, one that does not dislodge political activism and the actuation of theories. He derided MAS for being irretrievably mired in theory for theory’s sake. In his words, he asserts that “Animal studies has been confined within the cage of theory-for-theory’s sake, severed from practical and activist concerns, and sundered from the pressing demands of global social and ecological crisis” (Best, 2009, p. 2).

Maiwada’s portrayal of the humans as fish stems from a radical point of view to deflate human ego and provoke a feeling of sympathy akin to that of vegetarians for humans to have pity on the fish and such other natural elements that humans have had to look down on especially animals. Elizabeth Grosz opines that “the relegation of the animal to man’s utter other, is an ‘other’ bereft of humanity” (2011, p. 44). In a similar vein, Alaimo quoted in Vera Coleman contends that “physical similarity between humans and other organisms may in fact provoke a rich ethical sense of kinship” (2016, p. 694). While as Coleman claims, “the hybrid beings that abound in oral and literary traditions of Latin America largely pose a challenge to Western culture’s propensity to subjugate the human ‘others’” (2016, p. 44). Same can be said of African Literature which thrives primarily on the oral tradition that is replete with stories of animals and such other hybrid beings. The Yoruba moral fables are rich in animal characters from which moral lessons are educed. Some of the animals in these fables include tortoise, dogs, horses and birds among others. There are also stories around “Yemoja” or mermaid and even gnomes as the Yorubas acknowledge the presence and the inter-border crossing of these elements as links in the interstitial space of humans and other organisms.

Maiwada’s fish leitmotif is also akin to anthropomorphism that is an attribution of a human form or personality to god, animal, or thing. Beyond this, it is in consonance with Best’s desire for a thorough animal studies practice. Best (2009) asserts that “the goal of CAS... is to dismantle false oppositions between facts and values, theory and practice, campus and community, and scholarship and citizenship” (p. 3). Similarly, Eileen Crist in *Images of Animals* defends anthropomorphism “as a genuine source of understanding: in the hands of impeccable observers of animals” (1999, p. 7). She further opines that “the anthropomorphic perspective deserves serious attention, for it discloses the nature of animal life with the power and internal cohesion that real worlds possess” (1999, p. 7). Also, Alaimo, quoted in

Coleman asserts that “Alaimo’s theory of trans-corporeality rejects the dubious separation between human and non-human and on the contrary, emphasizes their mutual entanglement through the spatial temporal permeability of corporeal boundaries” (Coleman, 2016, p. 698). Maiwada uses the fish metaphor to draw a parallel between humans and the fish. He argues that fish just like humans are subjected to different hardships, inclement weathers, oppression, exploitation, environmental disasters and so on.

In an *avant garde* mode, yet in tandem with animal studies’ dictates, Maiwada shocks the reader’s sensibilities in many ways: first, by dedicating a whole collection to fish, second, by drawing a parallel between humans and the fish, and third, by equating humans and fish as sharing the same agentic force, attitude and lifestyle semblances. If one has to make a pun of Thomas Nagel’s *What Is It like to be to a Bat?*, the title of the Collection would have been *What Is It like to be a Fish?* To the anthropocentric mind, this kind of treatment is not only shocking and deriding, but it may also be considered as faux pas as it violates the basic understanding and relational convention between humans and animals. It is this mode of thought that Maiwada seeks to question, retrofit and supplant with a new, strange and probably preposterous but factual mode through an unswerving insistence that fish and humans share a lot of similarities and to that extent equal in nature. But this is the kind of thinking that Critical Animal Studies (CAS) promotes and encourages. Best says:

CAS calls on radical writers, academics, teachers, and intellectuals to apply their critical thinking, research, and communicative skills – mining the rich theoretical insights and political potency of the animal standpoint -- to promote systemic social transformation. CAS demands a break from positivism and the bogus “neutrality” that favors the dominator culture in order to openly ally with the oppressed (human and nonhuman animals) and establish themselves as “organic intellectuals” in the tradition of Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire. (2020, p. 5)

Maiwada’s radical posture goes beyond the portrayal of fish as human’s coequal in the collection; it actually extends to other elements that add to the creative and the deep-seated fervor of the collection. He for instance introduces the idea of remix which hitherto was common in songs

and music. The poet elastically expands the rhythmical and musical attribute of poetry to create a remix of some of the poems in the collection helping to produce different effects with the same poem and thereby reinforcing the theme of the collection in the minds of the reader. This innovation is fascinating and helps to forge meanings left unnoticed in the original poem to be feasible in the remix with the use of emphasis and the strategic placing of some words in the remix.

In a similar vein, Maiwada introduces concrete poetry into his craft and recent poetry in Nigeria. This is to ensure that he engages almost all the senses of the reader especially that of sight and sound which are core parts of a rigorous poetry. Concrete poetry helps Maiwada to achieve a heightening of the fish experience encountered in the collection by the reader. It really is part of the poet's design to bring the fish into the consciousness of human sympathy and to draw in the people pity and reconsideration of their relationship with the non-human elements.

Yet another innovation to the collection is the one structure poetry which makes *We're Fish* a collection as well as a book of just one poem, an experiment that the poet started in *Saint of a Woman* (2004), his first collection. Maiwada continued the experimentation in *Fossils* (2008) and *Eye Rhymes* (2013) and it finally matures in *We're Fish*. The one structure poetry technique offers the collection to be received in a linear denotation. The whole poem can be read as a book that presents not only a thematic unity but one that also achieves organicity. The poet frowns at the idea of a collection containing different poems that present diverse themes. In an interview with *The Sun* Newspaper of 24th June 2017, Maiwada says

I started the paradigm shift from a poetry book of straggled poems in *Fossils*, My second poetry book, which contains what is arguably a redesigned epic poem. My next poetry book, *Eye Rhymes*, continues the journey with the title poem itself running through the entire book, though different individual poems are sandwiched in-between the stanzas.

The collection, *We're Fish*, therefore, is about the fish and it is therefore not surprising that the fish motif runs through the whole book though in different shapes and nuances. The collection attracts attention to the fish evoking sympathy and empathy in the reader by the sensuous

portrayal of all manner of conditions of the fish that are similar to humans. The collection has seventy-one poems mostly untitled save for the remixes. Untitled poems are only labelled in Roman numerals. The introduction to the collection is instructive. It is a three-letter sentence which reads “save our sea...” (Maiwada, 2017). It therefore shows that the poems in the collection are parts of a campaign by the poet to save the sea. Critical Animal Studies, relentlessly, prescribes activism as germinal in the effort to liberate animal from reductive and ideational exploitations. Also, the advent of eco justice has led to the birth of many environmental bodies such as Ecojustice’s demand for ecological responsibility from all organizations that may engage in activities affecting the health of the earth and the environment. Also, is the Animal Rights Movement that consistently advocate for animals. The activities of these bodies have increased and burnished activism towards the protection of the non-human animals. This has also been the basis upon which numerous environmental bodies take up different issues of nature and build their advocacy around them. Washington et al., say “Ecological justice is most appropriately based upon ecological ethics derived from an ecocentric view” (2018, p. 92). The concerns of eco justice are properly articulated by Gibson when he says:

the well-being of humankind on a thriving earth,...an earth productive of sufficient food, with water fit for all to drink, air fit to breathe, forests kept replenished, renewable resources continuously renewed, nonrenewable resources used as sparingly as possible so that they will be available [to future generations] for their most important uses...On a thriving earth, providing sustainable sufficiency for all, human well-being is nurtured not only by the provision of these material necessities but also by a way of living within the natural order that is fitting: respectful of the integrity of natural systems and of the worth of nonhuman creatures, appreciative of the beauty and mystery of the world of nature. (2013, p. 25)

It is in line with this pre-occupation that many individuals and non-governmental bodies began to pick their different areas of interest and tried to defend it for posterity and for the sake of humanity. Maiwada’s concern about the sea and the animals therein and by extension other animals, can be

located within this precept. This effort also coincides with the campaigns of Save Our Seas foundation and Save the Ocean campaign by Mirpuri Foundation, Plastic Ocean International and the Marine Ocean International. These bodies are at the forefront of campaigns and research at saving the seas and the oceans and by implication the animals that inhabit them. The oceans and the seas just like their land counterparts have been subjected to degradation, profiteering and sundry exploitative activities so much so that a lot of species inhabiting them have gone extinct while many others are on the verge of being nonexistent. This is what CAS seeks to prevent. In the words of Best, “CAS openly avows ethical and practical commitment to end suffering and oppression and to promote human, animal, and earth liberation through psychological, moral, and social revolution” (2020, p. 5). A study by Roland Geyer, Jenna Jambeck and Kara Lavender Law reveals that in 2010, “around 4 to 12 million metric tons of our plastic waste enters the ocean from land each year” (2017, p. 2). Plastic waste has been described as dangerous for ocean species and the humans that consume them; it would therefore be advisable to consider reusing the plastics other than turning them into injurious disposables. If humans do not hearken to this advice, it may be at the peril of the oceans, the animals therein and of the entire humanity.

The collection opens with poem 1 with some fishes dialoguing on what the effect of a dead sea would mean to them and the world. They reckon that the death of the sea will mark the death of the fishes. This dialogue of the fish is a major hint to the reader from inception of the collection, about the poet’s disposition to nature. The sea receives tributaries from various rivers just like the different poems mass up into a collection that exposes the poet’s predilection for nature especially the sea and the fish therein. The fishes in poem 2 are seen frolicking in their natural habitat “Gametes in semen/ headed for the ovum/ fish in our own water” (Maiwada, 2017, p. 2) only to encounter different kinds of dangers yet escaping into the realm of freedom. The poet arguing from a co-evolutionary perspective likens the formation of the fishes to that of humans suggesting that both are products of the semen and that only the lucky ones escape into the world. The poet also compares the sea to life that humans live which is characterized by challenges curtailing human freedom, testing human resilience and endangering human lives. Maiwada like Best bemoans the fallacious duality upon which humans’ superiority is built. Best further says that:

Human supremacism prevented philosophers and scientists from grasping the continuum of biological and social evolution as a unity in difference and a difference in unity. Speciesism and Dark Age “science” led countless legions of thinkers to the same error, whereby they overestimate human "rationality" and underestimated animal thinking and the complexity of their psychological, emotional, and social lives generally. (2020, p. 7)

Poem 3 is a remix of poem 2 and it is presented in the shape of fish semen swimming in the form of a tadpole or a polliwog. The poem is almost the same as poem 2 but for a few words that are removed. The poet draws a similitude between the conception of fishes and human beings. This also is a reference to the initial activity preceding the fetus in the formation of humans which is swimming. In this regard, the spermatozoon is a famed swimmer. It is the entirety of this process that the poet tries to capture in words and shape in this poem. The poet further reckons that it is through swimming that humans escape from the gonad to the ovum to commence the process of becoming human beings. Swimming, which is the first activity of humans as gametes is what the fish do all their lives. Swimming therefore becomes a mutual activity between humans and fishes and while fishes do this for the rest of their lives, humans grow into the world to continue their own kind of swimming.

The collection *We're Fish* therefore is the narrative of a fish coming into existence of the human being on green earth that gets caught in the throes of death. This fish together with other fish emanating from the river and the lakes, embarks on an expedition into the sea to taste the sea salt and to acquire a wider space to grow into whales and other bigger fishes. This is compared to the quest of humans into the mother earth as they swim into the green earth from their mothers' wombs to grow into adulthood nursing all kinds of ambition to be bigger in life. However at different intersections in this quest the fish is faced with different experiences ranging from the good, the bad and the ugly.

Shelter is often regarded as a basic necessity for all creatures. But because the term shelter is often too used exclusively for humans, and also because it in a way carries the implication of appearing as an exclusive preserve of human, the term may not serve well in the present context. The term habitat will therefore be the operation word here. Habitat according to

Mcdermid et al., “is the resources and conditions present in an area that produces occupancy for particular species and population or orgasm” (2005, p. 474). A major inference inherent in this definition is that all living things have shelter. Another implication of this definition is that what constitutes shelter may vary from human to human, animal to animal and plant to plant among others. While for instance some humans live in mansions and palaces others live in huts, stalls and under the bridges among others. Similarly, every creature also has its natural habitat. The fish’s natural habitat is in the water but the water can be categorized into rivers, sea and ocean among others. The many abodes of the fish is further classified by the fish persona in poem 4 when it says:

We live in aquariums –
In big gonads and gonads small,
Caught in glass
Caught in sacs. (Maiwada, 2017, p. 4)

As some fish are made to live in conditions that are harmful to their existence so are some mortals. Some people are kidnapped and made to live under severe conditions while others arrested by poverty live like animals in ghettos and shanties. The spirituality associated with luck and fortune in this transcendental world turns humans to pray to God for better living conditions. It is therefore not surprising that as humans pray for food so do fishes. And as humans sometimes have accidents in search of their livelihood so do fishes too. The fish persona retorts that “/We knocked our Dory mouths against the boulders” (Maiwada, 2017, p. 4). Fish like humans struggle for the good things of life, hide in moments of danger and pray against lack and insufficiency generally. Fishes like humans encounter diverse challenges as they move from one environment to another. The fish persona captures some of the wanderings of the fishes when it says in poem 5 that:

We’re in the water swimming,
In the river swimming through rods,
Through the bridge legs of the road
Jumping over water.
We passed the road and the river, clogged in a love
corner. (Maiwada, 2017, p. 5)

The poet tries to show that the fishes embark on different journeys for various reasons just like humans move from place to place for sundry motives. Fishes determine and identify locations and are able to make sense of the goings on around them. This is therefore a challenge to those who would argue that only humans should possess rights and certain privileges. For instance, anthropocentric ethics claims that only human beings are morally considerable in their own right. They argue that extending rights to non-human agency is part of the articulation of the liberalism and green moralism school of thought even though the principle of right extension to nonhuman elements is tethered to John Locke's classical liberal view of rights and responsibilities of individuals. Correspondingly, Alan Carter quoted in Clark also argues that "the injustice to future generations, as well as many non-human lives, is now more serious and the environmentally destructive syndromes of world politics and economics so deeply entrenched that civil disobedience is a duty: the environmental crises are so pressing that we do not have time to wait" (2011, p. 110). Robyn Eckersley's suggestion of an "ecological" democracy in her *The Green State: Rethinking Democracy and Sovereignty* (2004) is curious in this direction. Eckersley suggests a democratic outlook where all interested parties including human and non-human parties are brought together to take decisions on areas of mutual interest such that no party is exempted, oppressed and subjected to speciesist discrimination by the other. Similarly, Kristian Ekeli in *Green Constitutionalism: The Constitutional Protection of Future Generations* (2007) proposes that non-human elements must be in attendance in issues of future concerns. She opined that such non-human elements can be represented by environment activists.

The fishes continue their vicissitude "loathing," "running," "crashing," "flinging floods of memory," and "whispering dreams," (Maiwada, 2017, p. 7) to one another. The poem thus reflects the fun, the troubles and the challenges that the fishes encounter in their journey. The poet also unwraps their inner recesses and takes the reader through their reasoning processes, their emotions and through what conditions their thinking among others. This portrayal reveals the fish as creatures that are not deficient in rationality as anthropocentrism and other humanist theories would have us believe. If the fishes are able to present their narratives to humans, they may evoke sufficient pity to be free from human's exploitative

activities. But for anything close to this to happen, the noxious free enterprise that has engulfed the world must be reversed or tempered. The presentation of the actions of the fishes in the continuous tense shows the habituation and the constant flow with which these actions occur. The many uncertainties that fishes face are akin to what humans encounter in their day to day activities too. It is pathetic that aside from the natural disasters, to which fishes may be subjected, human activity is second to none in the hierarchy of destructions witnessed by the oceans and the seas. Human activities are quite exploitative, and they create the greatest inconvenience and devastation for the fishes. Maiwada in poem 7 captures the sea as saying:

We are borne, bearing the murals of the
Merchant of flora,
The tide-borne troupes,
The circuses, the durbars,
The carnival veiling...
... We suffer the fists of Katrina;
The unrests she is sea baking,
The ballets au naturel...
We bear the murals of those who dropped the fossils...
(Maiwada, 2017, p. 8)

From the conception stage fishes are subjected to a lot of hardships from man and from nature sometimes with only a few of them being able to escape to adulthood in which they still continue to encounter the dangers of existence. Human beings destroy lots of the fishes by killing them and by destroying their natural habitats through greed and exploitative activities and especially through science and technology particularly in the creation of submarines and explosives among others. For instance, humans create ships, canoes, speed boats that move on different waters. Again, dangerous weapons are tested in seas and oceans. Admittedly, however, some fishes too are killed by fishes and other water creatures that feed on them. It is this kind of fish-eat-fish behavior that the poet said inspired him to write the collection. He laments the attitude of man on man that has characterized the manner of existence of humanity. Maiwada reasons that notwithstanding human hubris and claim of superiority they kill one another at the slightest form of difference and this he argues is one of the reasons for the collection; to use

fish as mirror for humans to see their foibles, imperfections and their descent to barbarity. Maiwada in an interview for *The Sun* says:

The state of our world in a free-fall into Armageddon became my concern, and it was my view that people all over the world have found it quite easy to kill, steal and destroy because their victims possess some qualities different from them. A difference in colour makes the next man not only a stranger to today's human being, but also a log of wood. Same is the case when he is of a different religion or sect, ethnicity or geographic entity etc. The only check to our cannibalistic nature is the sameness we see in others.

The poet obviously appalled by man's cruelty and man's inhumanity to man, therefore, chooses to reveal that which is the cannibal nature in humans hence the comparison of humans to fish. The poet believes that human's irreverent domination over other non-animal species is at the core of man's inhumanity to man and their inability to manage difference. This reasoning is in sync with animal standpoint theory that "the domination of humans over nonhuman animals is intimately linked to the domination of humans over one another" (Best, 2009, p. 18). This suggests why the poet feels that if humans can embrace one another accepting each other's differences, they likely may be tolerant of other non-human animals. It is the failure to achieve this, that has led to this reductionist ecology in which the poet draws parallels between human and fish actions in various forms, shapes and shades. In poem 10, Maiwada compares and concludes that humans and fishes share the same foibles and frailties:

We flounder in mud and in crystal,
We speak in tongues. We talk rubbish,
We're vegetarians. We devour our own flesh.
Therefore, we're fish
We school. We roam, have fish hobbies.
We're sharks, rays, eels and gobies;
We, shapes, we, sizes, we, match for fish.

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 11)

The poet associates humans with fish because of the ignobility, destructive and violent tendencies that humans indulge in. In their anthropocentric minds most humans believe that certain actions are reserved for the non-human animals. It is this kind of assumptions that Maiwada challenges in *We're Fish*. He argues that the hitherto episteme upon which human domination is hinged is not only faulty, and has blindfolded them from understanding and acknowledging the profound ways of the non-human animals. It is instructive that the title of this collection may have been taken from this poem. The poem is so central to the theme that it comparatively catalogues many of the actions of humans that are associative of the non-human animals. As there are shades of fish so are there humans in different characters, modes and sizes with their strengths, flaws and foibles. As fishes are susceptible to dangers from their carnivorous peers so are human beings to their cannibal associates. Cannibalism has been defined by Liubov “as a human being who eats human flesh; an animal that eats its own kind” (2014, p. 6). It is therefore established that cannibalism cuts across human and animal dimensions. Though this may not be excusable among humans, it is a fact of life that some humans indulge in cannibalism. Lukaschek, also agrees with the notion of cannibalism exists. He says, “stories of cannibalistic gods or acts of cannibalism exist in mythological systems all over the world from the very beginning” (2001, p. 4). Any way it is considered, cannibalism is hideous and is condemnable in all ramifications. It is this grisly behavior that is at the core of cruelty and bloodletting that has taken over the human environment today. This is so much more in Nigeria where security challenge has reached a behemoth status confronting the most populous black nation and threatening to bring the state down. Imhonopi and Ugochuwku attest to this when they say, “the number of violent crimes such as kidnappings, ritual killings, carjackings, suicide bombings, religious killings, politically-motivated killing and violence, ethnic clashes, armed banditry and others has increasingly become the regular signature that characterizes life in Nigeria since 2009” (2016, p. 2). There is a serious need to reverse this trend before the situation degenerates further.

Other challenges that fish encounter, similar to human experiences are mentioned in poem 18 when the poet writes that:

They're pain, they're mirages,
They are two sides of a silver motley.

They're spirits, they're mortals.
They are buried, they are exhumed.
They're stones, they're umbrae
Our faces are redwhiteblackbrown shoes.

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 20)

The poet tries to show that there exist a lot of similarities between the fish and humans in behavior, thinking, lifestyles and attitude. He further reckons that human's domination and denigration of animals lack a coherent moral justification. Maiwada believes that in showing the ways of the non-humans to humans and drawing on the many semblances they share, it would help gain the traction of sympathy and compassion to the fish and other non-human animals. The poet seems to be saying that if only humans could decipher the language of the fish and by extension other non-human animals, they would appreciate and draw lessons from their stories. The poet also catalogues the challenges and the dangers that confront humans in their environment. This poem, therefore, summarizes the travails of humanity in the journey of life yet in it all, it shows the indomitability of the human spirit to soldier on amidst the numerous natural and self-imposed environmental challenges and destructs. Truly, human faces are "paperbackhardcover" where diverse, yet unlimited human experiences can be read and learnt (Maiwada, 2017, p. 20). The poem is a recall and a record of the different shades of human experiences and vicissitudes.

The semblance between humans and the fishes seems inexhaustible as the poet throughout the collection goes on almost ad infinitum drawing on such similar parallels in human and fish undertakings. This probably accounts for the indistinguishability of voices in this collection between the fish narrator and the poet persona. This strategy seems a deliberate ploy by the poet to evince that the reader should at this point of the collection have been well acquainted enough of the man-fish blend - a theme that he has patently established in preceding poems. The poet therefore chooses to use the fish as a mirror to humans and also as their metaphor based on the many attitudes and characteristics that both shares. By this, he indulges in a reductionism that perceives humans operating at a level lower than what they thought they really are. This is to check the arrogance and the puff with which humans treat and subjugate other non-human elements in the universe. This approach like Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) post humanism precept of

“becoming animal” seems to create a lowering of the human sovereignty and superiority.

It is in this wise that Maiwada in *We're Fish* seeks to defamiliarize the human conception against what Clark calls “an undermining of ‘speciesism’ and a potentially revolutionary ethical appeal against the brutal human tyranny over the animal kingdom” (2011, p. 199). Maiwada’s portrayal of the fish, their nuances, ecology and biology reveal something becoming of a man who must have studied fish and fish ecology. The poet affirms in *The Sun* interview that he has been hugely influenced by Sylvia Earle, the American marine biologist, explorer and author who has dedicated her whole life to oceanography. Sylvia Earle is the American Oceanographer who has devoted her life to the protection of the oceans. Ocean and sea protection activists are at the vanguard of campaigns geared at protecting the oceans and the seas of plastics and such other polyethylene materials that have continued to alter the eco systems of the oceans and destroying them.

The destruction of the sea by humans is the focus of poem 40. The poet portrays the sea as completely destroyed albeit by human exploitative activities. For instance, global fish production in 2016 was put at 171 million tons (FAO, 2018). The craze to amass wealth and resources that capitalism prescribes has put the oceans and the seas and other natural resources, on the path of destruction due human’s unending plunder. The sea cries for help and the inhabitants too like fish and frogs also lament what has become of their situation:

B r e a t h i n g...

The sea has stopped

B r e a t h i n g...

The rivers no longer giving

East wind has raged against her –

The flesh has raged against the spirit.

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 44)

The poet paints the picture of a dying sea that needs human rescue. Overfishing, exploitation and irresponsible environmental littering of the oceans and the seas especially with plastics have continued to create horrendous havocs to the seas and the oceans. It is the common responsibility of the whole of humanity to save the seas and the oceans lest humanity will

be the worst hit when the damning consequences begin to manifest. One sees the fish lamenting the turn of events. The lamentation attracts pity and empathy in the reader:

I'm here a free fish, waiting
To be one with my mother
To be one with the sea
To be cold and still, and stop
B r e a t h i n g...

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 44)

The poet continues to paint the cruelty that humans exhibit against non-human beings with which they inhabit the world. It is instructive however to note that the seas and the oceans are the major sources of fish production and supply. They also provide the natural resources upon which many human activities such as transportation and especially in the construction industry through marine sand and gravel that are mined in the seas. So also are metals such as iron, copper, zinc, gold and silver are extractable from the seas and the oceans. The seas and the oceans also serve as sources of renewable energy such as generating electricity through waves and tides. Also biodiesels are made from marine algae. The significance of the oceans and the seas therefore cannot be overemphasized.

The poem is rich in biblical allusions and it has become the strength of the poet to embellish his poems with biblical materials. In line 5 the poet makes reference to the East wind. He says that “East wind has raged against her.” The East wind is a biblical allusion and is derived from Genesis 41 in Pharaoh’s dream that Joseph interpreted. It can also be found in Exodus 10 and 14 when Moses summoned the East wind against Pharaoh. Similarly in line 6, the poet writes that “The flesh has raged against the spirit.” This line is a rework of Galatian 5: 16-18 which states:

But I say, walk by the spirit, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the spirit, and the desires of the spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would. But if you are led by the Spirit you are not under the law.

The poet further laments the destruction of the sea and the earth and reminisces on the better life that was before humans irresponsibly destroy the world. In poem 64, he writes:

Before this Dead sea,
Before East wind,
Before this blood,
There was our blue sea. (Maiwada, 2017, p. 68)

It is therefore imperative for humans to save the seas and the oceans to save humanity from an impending calamity. It is pertinent and in the interest of all stakeholders both human and non-human animals for the world to be restored to its idyllic, stable past. The use of different materials by Maiwada shows that he is a poet with a wide horizon and he is therefore able to view issues from various perspectives. This has enriched his poetry a great deal and it is commendable.

Maiwada's use of remixes in the collection is fascinating and novel. It reminds one of the melopoeic or the song natures of poetry. The musicality of poetry is realizable through the instrumentality of rhyme, rhythm, meter and such other poetic tools having to do with repetition, emphasis and flow. Song and poetry are intrinsically related. Many great songs today started first as poetry. A major connecting point for these two arts is their auditory nature. Dryden quoted in Goosh (1962) says:

Musick and Poetry have ever been acknowledg'd Sisters, which walking Hand in hand, support each other; As Poetry is the harmony of words, so is Musick of Notes; and as Poetry is a Rise above Prose and Oratory, so is Musick the exaltation of Poetry. Both of them may excel apart, but sure they are most excellent when they are join'd because nothing is then wanting to either of their Perfections: for thus they appear like Wit and Beauty in the same Person. (p. 69)

There is a cautious overlapping between poetry and music and this appears to influence Maiwada's introduction of a concept that previously and absolutely belonged to music. The poet himself affirmed that he had only

been encountering remix in popular music particularly in Rhythm and Blues. He says in *The Sun* interview that:

The only place I have encountered the “remix” concept is in popular music, particularly Rhythm and Blues. I may therefore, conclude that it made its debut appearance in poetry in *We’re Fish*. The thinking behind it is associated with my desire for fusing one or more genres outside poetry into the genre. This desire stretches across my entire writing career. It started in *Fossils*, where I used the mediums “Acts” and Scenes from drama to present the poetry in the book.

Remix is a piece of media that changes a text or material from its original state by introducing and removing other materials to create an embellishment of the original material. Sometimes remix produces a better result than the original while at different times it produces a lesser artistic effect. The infusion and the extrusion of materials may change the coloration and the import of the text; it may intensify the value and it may vitiate it depending on the quality and use of the material added or removed. In this case, Maiwada adopts the remix mode to project different colorations of the many similarities between humans and fish. Remix therefore is adopted by Maiwada as a tool of furthering the projection of the sameness nature of humans and fish, of espousing how far-reaching humans’ destructive and greedy exploits have damaged the world.

Maiwada’s use of remix is mixed with concrete poetry which creates a marriage between visual poetry and sound poetry. This artistically helps in creating a semantic cohesion of meaning. The combination of visual and auditory has a way of impacting on the message of poetry and of extracting meaning from poetry. It is against this backdrop that Maiwada’s exploration of remix and the several graphical drawing of words about the fish-subject of his poetry should be viewed. Poem 9 otherwise titled “Whorl remix” exemplifies the temper being discussed here. The poem is rested on poem 8 which forms the basis of the remix. Poem 9 is characteristic of the pop music from where remix is imitated. It thus plays on many words and draws rhythms from them unendingly. Poem 9 being whorl, truly is a pattern of spirals or concentric circles spinning words into some artistic creations of tiny fishes and all together giving an overview of a whorl. The spiraling and

concentric circles are maneuvers adopted by the poet to etch images and emphasize the various activities and dangers that the fishes are exposed to which are similar to humans.

Poem 9 is a beauty to behold though difficult to read. The difficulty in reading stems from the haphazard arrangement of words and their unconventional violation. For instance, “and” is broken into “a” and “nd” extending to lines 34 and 35. Such is the disordered arrangement of words that normally characterize remix and concrete poetry. Maiwada in the poem, uses these tools to construct the desired pattern of a school of tiny fishes playing with the waves to form patterns. Similarly, poem 11 is the remix of poem 10. Poem 11 also titled “we’re fish” presents the image of a goldfish which also in a way gives the picture of a human being as fish with the emboldening of “we’re fish” at major intersections of the poem. The remix of this poem, beyond emphasizing the theme of the collection reveals the importance of poem 10 as the source of the title of the collection. The picture of a fish possessing the face of a human being summarizes the poet’s preoccupation in the collection that human beings are fishes.

In all, twelve poems in the collection are remixed with each designed to portray different realities of the oppression, the sameness and the coequality of humans and fish. Poem 15 also titled “Face Eye” poetry remix is another version of poem 14. It suggests that fish faces are books of different shades such as hard cover and paperback and that the letters inside connote different things. The poem depicts the picture of a human being facing the East - a geographical area which is often reputed for its richness in knowledge. The poem has one speaking voice narrating the story of many fishes which point humans in the direction of fish for knowledge. This implies that there is wisdom locked in fishes that humans would do well to seek and understand. The fish persona seems to be saying that fish is a book that contains unlimited knowledge and understanding. Unlike other poems occasioning a remix, poem 14 has two remixes. This is because poem 16 also titled “Face Eye” poetry remix is also another remix of poem 14. It contains the shaping in words of two human heads superimposed on each other one facing the right and the other directly facing the reader which if taken together is like a swimming fish.

This simulacrum that fish faces represent may connote categories of representations at different times especially as suggested in poem 15. The fish face like the human face can be a book, a firmament, a waterfall or a

sugar cube among others. What the fish is at a time is the function of the experience it is going through at a particular point. The fish therefore can mutate along the lines of what it experiences at a given time. Fish faces similar to humans represent the various coloration of the problems, happiness and the travails of existence. Poem 37 or “Fish in Pan Remix” is written in the image of a frying pan which is another experience that some fish go through. This poem is the remix of poem 36 which shows the utter helplessness of the fish and humans in the face of uncontrollable nature such as the “East wind’s fire” and “death” (Maiwada, 2017, p. 39). This state of vulnerability is what poem 39 or ‘Sea Storm Remix’ further discusses. It depicts the experience of the fish in the face of wild storms breaking “fish mountains,” and breaking “fish rocks” (Maiwada, 2017, p. 43). In the poem, the poet also refers to Rwanda which at a time was a sour point in human history. Rwanda here can be regarded as one of the storms that humans face in their existence too, an experience akin to fishes being in the frying pan. The allusion to Rwanda is also a reminder of the carnage that took place in the relatively small country in the years past.

The poem “Sea Storm Remix” points to the fact that as fishes are disturbed by wild storms so also do humans have their own storms too in different shapes such as wars and disasters. Some of the images emphasized in repetitive forms in this poem include living city, metropolis, aqua Ruwa Rwanda, planet blue heart and blood among others. These images portend the different human struggles and the attendant challenges that characterize the earthly world in which humans live. It is instructive to note that these poems in order to achieve the effects that they are designed for break all the known rules of syntax and grammar. This is justifiably so because of the concrete nature and the remix experiments that the poems represent.

Beyond the knowledge that the poet is convinced that humanity can gain from fish, he also feels that humans can tap knowledge from other natural elements too. Art in different genres from photorealism to abstractions has always seen nature as quintessential and as a source of inspiration from where ideas and ideals are carbonized. For instance paintings and sculptures are copied from the natural world. Even architectural designs are molded after natural patterns. Similarly, poetry among other things writes about nature and presents many of its wisdoms for the moral rectitude of mortals. The point being made here is that Critical Animal studies (CAS), ecocriticism, animal point theory and eco-pedagogy

inspire humans to learn from animals. Eco-pedagogy according to Hung (2017) “refers to as ecophilia-oriented education.” Hung further, hinges this learning on three aspects namely “learning about nature, learning in nature and learning from nature” (2017, p. 23). This exactly is what Maiwada does in some of the poems by showing that there are educible lessons that humanity could gain from the non-human animals.

The poet also derides humanity against the inferno of violence that has engulfed the world and which has made the world very unsafe. He particularly refers to how combustible the human society has become. In a mark of vexation with humanity, the poet in poem 38 uses such images as Dajjal (line 6) and Cyclops (line 9) to refer to humans. Dajjal is an evil figure in Islamic eschatology while Cyclops are members of a race of savage one-eyed giants. Truly, the incessant waves of violence in the world have reached an alarming stage and the whole of the human society seems to be in turmoil. There are killings, kidnappings, wars, insurrections and terrorism spreading across the globe like a wildfire. The world is far from being the safe habitat of humans and non-human animals that it used to be. As a result of terrorism, wars and insurrectionary activities, most times owing to greed, many animals have been dislocated from their natural habitats and many have gone into extinction due to human’s oppressive nature. In poem 35, the poet refers to terrorism as one of the unfortunate incidences threatening the world peace:

We see the slain throats of the soldier.
We see the wild man and his dagger.
Malala lies in the red sea of her blood
In Taliban land.
We see Kabul in bubbles,
Bombs – his harvest, held in holy hands.

(Maiwada, 2017. p. 38)

While one may tend to query the relevance of this poem to the one book poem status of this collection, the significance of the poem to the theme of the collection is located in the argument of the poet that the human world is characterized by tumult as a result of lack of love to accommodate the differences that are found in other humans how much more the non-human elements. This agrees with the postulation of Best that CAS, “analyzes analogies, commonalities of oppression, and finds that sexism, racism, and

other systems of domination have firm roots in speciesism, thereby showing that the domination of human over human is inseparable from the domination of human over animals and speciesism is a core cause of social crisis and ecological devastation” (2020, p. 13). The reference to Yousafzai Malala exemplifies some of the horror that has taken over the world. Yousafzai Malala is a female activist whom the Talibans shot on her way back from school and whose attempted assassination, the whole world rose to condemn. She became the youngest Nobel laureate and a prominent citizen of Pakistan. The poet also mentioned that the terror has not spared /even Cameron land. Cameron land is a synecdoche for the United Kingdom. He also refers to other activities of humans that are injurious to the systemic cycle of the world. He writes:

We see Ozone ruptured – the umbrella,
Broken, the arrowheads head seawards;
Blood answers the water,
Wormwoods swell the beaches,
As in John’s vision of that island.

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 38)

Humans deplete the Ozone layer thus causing global warming which has become irreversible since its evolution on earth. Ozone layer depletion is one of the most dangerous problems confronting the world today. The ozone layer is a colorless gas found in the stratosphere. It protects the earth and its inhabitants from the harmful ultraviolet rays of. The production and the emission of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) is the major cause of Ozone layer depletion and its major impacts include skin cancer, eye damage and damage to the immune system of humans among others. The world must be weary of further depletion of the ozone layer before it is turned into a furnace which may further shot the earth into a household of death and diseases.

Also instructive is the use of the fish metaphor to pass political commentary on world affairs and particularly on political happenings in Nigeria and in other places across the world. In poem 56 for instance, Maiwada using humor as a tool of dispensing vitriols, mocks the failure of the Nigerian government particularly President Goodluck Jonathan for failing to show political will in directing the affairs of the country. He in line 1 says / “Four seasons all I need – no yeast, and I’ll bake that bag of wheat”

(Maiwada, 2017, p. 60). This is a mockery typically targeted at the Nigerian politicians who could promise heaven and earth during elections yet would get into office and fail to fulfil those promises. It is also a mockery of the so-called human sophistication and civilization that could not organize itself properly yet claims superiority over the non-human animals. Similarly, the poet also uses the fish metaphor to comment on the Chibok girls in poem 57 referring to them as / Trawled fish from Chibok count as fowls. The Chibok girls were kidnapped by the Boko Haram terrorist group on the night of 14 and 15 April 2014 from the Government Secondary School Chibok in Borno State, Nigeria. Many of them were rescued after a few years while some of them till date are still being kept hostage. Many more have been kidnapped and attacks on different communities persist. This might have informed the poet's suggestion that the situation instead of improving seems to be getting worse despite the fact that different governments have come into the saddle. All have failed in their promises to change the situation for the better. The poet writes:

Old Jesus shouted, "Peace, be still"
New Jesus pampers the villain.
Old Jesus fished souls missing,
The New lose
Us in billions.
Old Saul killed a
Thousand; but this, and his
Wind are killing millions. (Maiwada, 2017, p. 61)

This is always the situation in Nigeria when a government deemed to have performed below expectations is changed only for the new government to perform worse. As mentioned earlier this has been the trajectory and the tragedy of the Nigerian political space; it is one of the major reasons the country has consistently been under-developed and why it is still a far cry from what the country should be in spite of the enormous capital and human resources it is endowed. But the shedding of blood in various guises continues unendingly. Bloodletting and violence have become ingrained into the psyche and consciousness of the people as a result of the rapidity with which they occur so much that these ugly incidents have become normal occurrences. On the one hand is the intractable Boko Haram terror cycle; on

the other hand are the incessant herdsmen and farmers' clashes which continued to crimson the Nigerian space. Another challenge is constituted by the cattle rustlers and bandits rampaging, kidnapping and killing people indiscriminately and endangering the Nigerian environment making it unsafe for both human and non-human animals. Aside from the civil war that threatened the existence of the Nigerian state, the current wave of violence seems to be the greatest challenge that the country seems to be facing. Recent situation has led to huge crises in the land as many people have been killed, several dislocated while numerous have turned refuges in their own countries. It has also greatly affected the socio-economic development of the country as many have been prevented from engaging in socio-economic activities. The poet generally and subtly catalogues various unfortunate human incidences that easily rubbish any claim of superiority and civility by humans over the non-human animals. The poet derides a human society that is supposed to be superior to the non-human animals yet is enmeshed in anarchy and chaos.

The collection *We're Fish* is the demystification of humans from the arrogance emanating from the age-old anthropocentric episteme which considers humans as the Lord of the earth over which they establish a quaint superiority over the non-human animals. It is a deconstruction of human's superiority, elitism and haughtiness to condescendingly relate with non-human animals. The collection is a call to retrofit the human and non-human animal relations in a way that the non-human animals are treated as sentient beings and are related with accordingly. *We're Fish* is a warning to the world for humanity to save the world, especially the Planet earth from its present anarchical drift orchestrated by human's irresponsible and unguarded attitudinal and environmental recklessness. But the poet's point of contact to changing the world stems from saving the sea through the marine environmental utility that the collection preaches. According to the poet in his interview with *The Sun*, "we may start healing the world from the sea." The sea is the natural habitat of the fish, in like manner the earth is the natural habitat of humans and since the collection through the fish mirrors humans, the sea therefore must mirror the green earth which is a metaphor for an environmentally healthy society. When the planet earth is saved, humanity may then extricate itself from the present immersion to escape to other planets. These underlining tropes and themes are what *We're Fish*, mediate

with a picturesque innovation, quaint freshness and a charming novelty all in an attempt to save a dying world.

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Surviving the Ends of Man: On the Animal and/as Black Gaze in Jordan Peele’s *Get Out* and *Us*

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Abstract

In this paper, I read Derrida’s “The Animal That Therefore I Am” through the theoretical framework that Hortense Spillers offers in her 1987 canonical essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” and through the black radical tradition that her essay has galvanized, including afro-pessimistic readings of how black social life inheres in/as/through social death. I argue that Jordan Peele’s filmic imagination—in *Get Out* (2017) and *Us* (2019)—demonstrates the ways in which Spillers’ text and those who are in conversation with it put pressure on Derrida’s original formulation, to think about how our concepts of the animal and of nature (not least of all, of the animal gaze) are always already raced and sexed. Specifically, I argue that Derrida’s animal gaze returns Man to the “flesh” of his being, or to a body beyond signification, which is none other than black “un/gendered” flesh. This paper thus finds that the kind of gratuitous vulnerability that the human body experiences under the gaze of the animal makes that body available in black, which is to say: as flesh; and further, that this fleshification feminizes the human body, making it available as hole, that is to say, as gratuitously penetrable and vulnerable. The latter, I argue, also renders that human body as paradigmatically black.

Keywords: animal studies, black studies, black feminism, afro-pessimism, film studies, media studies, Jordan Peele

For Paul D [of Toni Morrison’s *Beloved*] ...the bestialization is not the worst part. ...He recounts, “[I]t wasn’t the bit—that wasn’t it. ...The roosters. ...Walking past the roosters looking at them look at me.” ...It is seeing himself being seen in the gaze of a rooster named Mister. Reflected in Mister’s eyes, he sees for the first time the extent to which his being has been distorted by slavery (Jackson, 2020, p. 67).

Eye to eye with Mister, Paul D is traumatized by his identification with the rooster. The encounter fractures his sense of [human] identity and radically destabilizes his sense of self. Paul D, bit in mouth and in a traumatized state, cannot lay claim to a position of mastery. ...All he can do is try to hold on to his mind while carefully formed illusions of the self shatter (Jackson, 2020, p. 77).

Mister’s gaze is a provocation inviting us to reconsider how we define ourselves especially with regard to the racialization, gendered, and sexual dimensions of our fleshy being. ...Not even Paul D, who is so thoroughly invested in normative codes...can resist wondering what is behind Mister’s eyes: What phenomenological experience and meaning-making exist for the rooster (Jackson 2020, pp. 78–79)?

Seeing Mister see him, Paul D is suspended somewhere between what used to be “the animal,” what used to be “the human,” and an entirely different arrangement of possibilities (Jackson, 2020, p. 80).

In a 1997 lecture delivered at the Cerisy Conference, entitled “The Animal That Therefore I Am,” published later in the academic journal *Critical Inquiry*, father of deconstruction philosophy Jacques Derrida argues that at “the precise moment [in which Man] made of the animal a theorem,” he created “something *seen* and *not seeing*” (2002, p. 383, my emphasis). Another way to say this is: humanist epistemology imagines the animal Other as a figure that cannot look back to return the phallic gaze of the human, and thus, as the paradigmatic subject-*that-is-not-one*.

In meditating on the animal gaze, Derrida interrogates the conceit that would have us believe that the human gaze is the only gaze that can interpellate (non)being. But, in thinking about the “work” that the animal

gaze does on the human, Derrida does not assign agency to the animal, which is an epistemological im/possibility for the humanist logo-*cum*-phallogocentrism that he (and Critical Animal Studies) is at pains to deconstruct but which, I argue, he (and we) reify anyway. Derrida's treatise does not attempt to attribute to the animal what bell hooks (2003) might call an "oppositional gaze" and which I describe as a fugitive-*cum*-femme(inist) gaze—one in which the animal *looks back* (from below) to meet the human's gaze and, in doing so, enacts a resistance that can save her life, dismantling—for a brief moment—the food chain that also scaffolds Man's racial and gender hierarchies, specifically, his antiblackness.

Following Zakiyyah Iman Jackson's (2020) provocative reading of the animal gaze in the epigraphs above, this essay takes care to think about the ways in which the human's gaze as a white-*cum*-phallic gaze operationalizes speciesism as an (anti)black process of un/gendering, making nonhuman animals and black persons alike at once black *and* femme. More specifically, I find that humanism's speciesism is its racism is its sexism, and that the white gaze that enforces this boundary or cut can only ever know nonhuman animals and black persons alike as fleshy raw material for its human world-making.

Jordan Peele's *Get Out* (2017) and *Us* (2019) notably intervene in this phallic way of knowing. The black and/as animal prey in his films gesture towards the im/possibility of a fugitive-*cum*-femme(inist) gaze in which they look back *from below*—not from the seat of the human, but from the underground or "undercommons" (Moten & Harney, 2013) that is their shared Otherwise—to survive their flesh-making, forging social and/as material life from their "law-likely" (Wynter, 2015, p. 32), that is to say, inevitable and uninterrupted social and/as material death. Using black femme(inist)-*cum*-afro-pessimist methods to read Derrida alongside Peele, I argue that the animal gaze *as* the black gaze can teach even the most human among us how to live in common-unity with nonhuman sentient life, and thus, how to survive the ends of Man.

A Note on (Ana)grammaticality

I inherit the splices and dashes that I use throughout this essay not just from visible and vogue (white) feminist new materialist and science studies scholars but also and primarily from femme(inist)s of color—especially, from black femme(inist)s who argue that blackness is a matter

that does not matter. I engage this argument as a writing praxis in order to think about the black body *qua* flesh as raw material that is sliced and diced—reduced to bits and pieces of flesh—by humanism’s world-making cut. More to the point, my writing praxes attempt to account for the fact that language as a discursive-material formation is an antiblack grammar that cuts and splices as it likes—as part of a deliberate campaign to make black people fungible. It is for this reason that a new generation of black radical thinkers intentionally play with form in their writings—because form is a cipher for structure *qua* grammar and because, by mangling form, one also disorders structure. In this way, their writings inaugurate an Otherwise that is anti-structural.

To be sure, my generation is not the first to do this. Feminists of color are well-versed in this practice. See, for example, Gloria Anzaldúa (1987), whose writings marry poetry with prose in order to make an argument about another “cut:” the borderland. Admittedly, Anzaldúa’s intervention does not address the specificity of racial blackness or its sexed and gendered (not intersections, but) effects. Nor does her analysis intervene in the metaphysics of what Sylvia Wynter describes as the “genre of Man”: a speciesist racism that is responsible for creating the whole of Man’s “-isms” (his sexism, misogyny, homophobia, transphobia, etc.). Wynter elaborates in an inter/view with Greg Thomas (2006) that the human is a gendered category of difference and that upending humanism’s intersecting structures of oppression requires that we attend to how humanism’s race cut is also an un/gendering cut that—as Lewis Gordon also suggests (1995)—renders black persons at once black *and femme*. Wynter explains that insofar as “‘genre’ and ‘gender’ come from the same root. They mean ‘kind,’ one of the meanings is ‘kind,’” clarifying that “‘gender’ has always been a function of the institution of ‘kind’” (p. 24). In other words, because “‘race’ is really a code-word for genre,” it also sign-posts gender (p. 24). Wynter notes that her “issue is not [just] the issue of ‘race,’” because race is too often simplified as a cipher for intra-human difference (p. 24). Rather, her “issue is the issue of the genre of ‘Man,’” she writes, because “it is this issue of the ‘genre’ of ‘Man’ that causes all the ‘-isms’” (p. 24). Wynter adds that black women’s (and we might add, femmes’) oppression is emblematic of this genre’s “-isms” insofar as their “struggle...has to do with the destruction of the genre; with the displacement of the genre of the human or “Man,” of which the Black population group—men, women and children—must function as the

negation” (p. 25). Wynter’s argument, in short, pivots on (anti)blackness as the driver of gender and other embodied differences.

More recently, as an oppositional politics to the metaphysics of Man that Wynter describes, indeed, as its refusal, and in direct conversation with afro-pessimism, Christina Sharpe (2016) proposes the concept of *anagrammaticality* to think about the specificity of black structural *qua* grammatical im/possibility. She describes *anagrammaticality* like this:

We can see the moments when blackness opens up [i.e., is cut by humanism] ...in the literal sense as when “a word, phrase, or name is formed by rearranging the letters of another.” ...We can also apprehend this in the metaphorical sense in how, regarding blackness, grammatical gender galls away and new meanings proliferate; how “the letters of a text are formed into a secret message by rearranging them” or a secret message is discovered through the rearranging of the letters of a text. *Ana-*, as a prefix, means “up, in place of time, back, again, anew.” So, blackness anew, blackness as a/temporal, in and out of place and time putting pressure on meaning and that against which meaning is made. ...As the meaning of words fall apart, we encounter again and again the difficult of sticking the signification. This is Black being in the wake. This is the anagrammatical. These are Black lives, annotated. (pp. 76-77)

As a scholar of black femme(inism)s, I inherit this rich tradition of intervening in grammar in order to make a structural critique about the un/gendering antiblackness of humanism’s race/ism.

Critical Animal Studies has a Race Problem

The black femme(inist)-*cum*-afro-pessimist interventions that I invoke eschew Critical Animal Studies (CAS) for its refusal to co-think (anti)blackness and speciesism—an intersection in which, as Jackson notes, “the black(ened)’s fleshy being...[is] a plastic upon which projects of humanization *and* animalization rest” (2020, p. 81). Despite an avowed commitment to rejecting human ways of being and doing and knowing *and feeling* in favor of Other life-sustaining hermeneutics, canonical CAS texts like those written by Giorgio Agamben (2002/4) and even CAS re/visionisms like those offered by Carol Adams (1990) and John Berger (2009) are

problematically entrenched in (white) critical theory and are therefore caught up in its fetishization of mastery. Indeed, even the most exciting scholarship to emerge from CAS does not address animality as also or especially a race/ist and un/gendering cut. As Jackson (2015) argues of CAS and of similar moves to think “beyond” or, as the case may be, *before* the human,

Given that appositional and homologous (even co-constitutive) challenges pertaining to animality...have long been established in thought examining the existential predicament of modern racial blackness[,] the resounding silence...with respect to race is remarkable, persisting even despite the reach of antiblackness into the nonhuman—as *blackness conditions and constitutes [every] nonhuman disruption and/or displacement they invite*. ...According to Man’s needlessly racially delimited terms, the matter of racial being purportedly does the work of arbitrating epistemological questions about the meaning and significance of the (non)human in its diverse forms, including animals, machines, plants, and objects ...Whether machine, plant, animal, or object, the nonhuman’s figuration and mattering is shaped by the gendered racialization of the field of metaphysics. ...Thus, terrestrial movement toward the nonhuman is simultaneously movement towards blackness, whether blackness is embraced or not, as blackness constitutes the very matter at hand. (Jackson, 2015, p. 216, original emphasis)

Indeed, CAS’s academic and/as political-ethical project has not thought about how black social and/or material death is the pivot for animal social and/as material death. Nor has CAS addressed how humanism’s species cut is “contrapuntally” (Radhakrishnan, 2012) or bilaterally born from its race/ist cut, or how this cut defines black persons and nonhuman animals alike as *things*—sentient, but still things—that are seen but not seeing. Nor has CAS spoken to how this species-*cum*-race/ist cut discards with black and animal nonbeings alike as un/gendered flesh.

When race/ism *is* invoked in CAS scholarship, it is, as Jackson implies, to reify black social and/as material death in order to make animal social and/as material life legible, and in this way, instrumentalizes black death. Indeed, while CAS claims to do away with humanist epistemology and, with it, the “-isms” (Wynter, 2006) that Man has erected to divide human

beings from nonhuman animals (and from each other), it is also true that CAS has yet to critically examine the humanist underpinnings that make black and animal nonbeings coeval. Specifically, CAS has yet to interrogate the humanist lore which suggests that racially black persons like nonhuman animals lack the capacity for rationality and reason and, therefore, for self-possession which, rather than auxiliary attributes of Man, are at the essence of his (and increasingly, her, and their) being.

It is for this reason that Jackson's *Becoming Human: Matter and Meaning in an Antiblack World* (2020) and similar scholarship by Joshua Bennett (2020) and Benedicte Boisseron (2018) are published as black studies texts and are not catalogued as interventions in/as animal studies. Their black study, like Peele's intervention in *Get Out*—(mis)categorized as a “comedy” at the 2017 Golden Globes—is (as Peele reflects about the film) trans-genre and genre-bending. It refuses categorization into silos of knowledge production because categorization is a technology of antiblack humanism. This is why Jordan Peele (qtd. in Kohn, 2017) reflects that *Get Out* is “not a movie that can really be put into a genre box,” not least of all, the genre of Man. Following Jared Sexton (2011), I find that Peele's films, as black study, teach us all “how we might better inhabit multiplicity under general conditions at the global scale” (p. 8), in other words, teach us all how we might live across “-isms”—because “black study or, in the spirit of the multiple, [...] black *studies*...do *lead* everywhere,” not least of all, to critical animal studies, “even and especially in their dehiscence” (p. 9, original emphases).

In *Being Property Once Myself: Blackness and the End of Man*, Bennett follows animal figures like the rat, the cock, the mule, the dog, and the shark in literature by black authors like Richard Wright, Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Jesmyn Ward, and Robert Hayden to argue for animal motifs as models for black sociality. His suggestion that social life is only available for black persons in the figure of the animal supports my argument that Jordan Peele employs the animal gaze in *Get Out* and *Us* to signal the im/possibility of black sociality. Boisseron's attention to the animalization of black persons and to the racialization of nonhuman animals—specifically, her argument that humanism falsely opposes blackness to animality as a way to measure (non)being—in *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* similarly suggests that humanism's speciesism is a racism. Her intervention—endorsed by Sandra Gunning because it “demonstrates how

the relationship between race and personhood has been *missing entirely from the current human/animal rights debate*,” described by another reviewer, Kari Weil (2012), as “a timely effort to tackle *the fraught relations between...animal studies and African American studies*,” because, as Jane Gordon notes, also on the book’s back flap, Boisseron’s text demonstrates that “blackness is [...] present in all things animal”—suggests that even CAS’s revisionisms, like those offered by Matthew Calarco (2015) and others who fear that an indistinction between the human and the animal will “ultimately transform [animal] beings into an undifferentiated mass beyond conceptual understanding” (p. 55), absent any kind of analyses of *who among us* have also been turned into “an undifferentiated mass beyond conceptual understanding;” or who among us, as Hortense Spillers (1987) writes, have been made into un/gendered flesh, into that “zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography” (p. 67).

My black femme(inist) study of the animal gaze marries Spillers’ account with Wynter’s argument that racism produces *genre-cum-gender*, in order to suggest that the *longue duree* of racial slavery produces sex and gender difference (for the rest of us) *as a technology of antiblack humanism*; that is to say, in order to un/gender black people as non-human. This un/gendering acts as a lever, too, for animal social death. Jackson and the black femme(inists) with which she, Bennett, and Boisseron are in conversation remind us that the nonbeing sign-posted by un/gendered flesh properly belongs to black (femme) *qua* animal Others who are denied corporeal schemas with recognizable (to say nothing of respectable) boundaries and, therefore, who have no access to what Frantz Fanon (1952/1986) describes as “ontological resistance” (p. 110). As matter that does not matter, they have no inalienable right to life—hence why even liberal and “reformed” civil society as an instrument of humanism does not respond to black peoples’ pleas that they cannot “breathe” (Wilderson III, 2003).

While he does not address the specificity of (anti)blackness or the contrapuntal construction of racism and speciesism that I describe, Cary Wolfe’s (2003) observation that “as long as it is institutionally taken for granted that it is all right to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species, then the humanist discourse of species will always be available for use by some humans against other humans as well”

is instructive in this regard (p. 8). My analysis departs from Wolfe’s in important ways, however. Wolfe draws heavily and uncritically on the works Heidegger, Freud, Deleuze, Lyotard, Levinas, Wittgenstein, Zizek, and other white men (and, sometimes, white women like Arendt) who use knowledge about racial difference to advance white civil society. When Wolfe does bring up the question of race/ism, he does so with sweeping generalizations that liken sex/gender difference to race difference, and not in a way that is attentive to the specificity of (anti)blackness as a color line that is also or primarily a speciesist process of un/gendering. (In one of only a handful of instances in which he addresses the question of racial blackness, Cary writes about Michael Crichton’s science fiction novel *Convo* [1980]. His consideration of Crichton’s “black” gorilla Amy, however, doesn’t account for the ways in which racism is a speciesism for black people. Which is to say, he doesn’t trouble why the nonhuman animals in the novel are referred to as “black things.”) Wolfe’s boundary between the human and the animal therefore risks a colorblind critique that flattens the human’s (presumably) “intra-species” differences, obscuring the specificity of antiblackness as the lever of Man’s “-isms.” Taking my cue instead from the Combahee River Collective’s Black Feminist Statement (1977)—in it, they argue that when black women (and, we might add, femmes) are free, the rest of the world will be free, too—and Spillers’ (1987) suggestion that black women (and, we might add, femmes) are the “zero degree” of Man’s “social conceptualization” (p. 67), I propose that black femme(inist) liberation can act as the pivot for the “intra-species” conflicts and antagonisms that Wolfe describes *as well as* the liberation of nonhuman animals that he and other CAS scholars are at pains to en/gender.

As Jackson (2020) and others suggest, this approach makes possible new directions in CAS that do not think unidirectionally about the im/possibility of liberation, in other words, which do not subordinate the liberation of sexed, gendered, and raced minorities to animal liberation. In thinking instead about how the two—the antiblackness of speciesism and the speciesism of antiblackness—are co-constitutive, a black femme(inist) approach to CAS accounts, finally, for both sides of humanism’s coin (or, cut, as it were). It is humanism’s cut, I argue, reflected in Man’s white-*cum*-phallic gaze, which instructs us to chomp at the bit for more scenes of animal *and* black death. Jordan Peele’s cinematic oeuvre offers an/Other way of looking—from below. His freshman and sophomore films—*Get Out* (2017)

and *Us* (2019)—call for the im/possibility of a black femme(inist)-cum-fugitive gaze that can meet to destabilize the human’s white-cum-phallic gaze, by which I mean, Man’s lust for black and/as animal flesh as the vehicle for the cathexis of his own ontological anxieties. I further find that the furtive glances exchanged between black and animal Others in Peele’s films betray a “law-likely” kinship between the two as nonhuman sentient flesh, or as the living dead. It is this lacuna which is absent in Derrida’s intervention and in CAS’s political-ethical demand and which I attend to in this essay.

Not Your Mother’s Film Theory Essay

This essay follows the ways in which the animal gaze in *Get Out* and *Us* as a cipher for the black gaze rejects the metaphysics of Man, troubling the species-line that is Man’s color-line that is his un/gendering boundary. But, counterintuitively, my analysis does not draw on the film studies canon to make this argument. As black studies texts, Jordan Peele’s films do not live in film theory, and neither does this essay. Even film theory’s (white) feminist re/visions, which think about the gaze as a relationship between the phallus and the psyche, cannot account for the gaze as I enumerate it: as a relationship between race/ism, un/gendering, and psychic in/coherence, which Frantz Fanon in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952/1986)—the urtext of afro-pessimism—attributes to humanism’s race/ist cut.

My intervention instead stays with the structural antagonisms that (white) feminist film theory attributes primarily to sex/gender differences but which is arguably better understood as (anti)black un/gendered difference. The canyons and crevices that are opened up by afro-pessimism’s uncomfortable encounter with black femme(inism)s (Malaklou & Willoughby-Herard, 2018) suggest that humanism recruits not (just)—as Laura Mulvey (1975) and others argue—a phallic gaze but (also) a white gaze in order to arbitrate speciesism *and* antiblackness as processes of un/gendering. More to the point, their conversation instructs us to subordinate patriarchy, sexism, and phallicism—(white) feminist film theory’s darlings of critique—to humanism, thus locating gender as an effect of humanism’s speciesism-cum-racism rather than at an intersection that is co-eval with race/ism.

In what follows, I engage afro-pessimism’s black femme(inist) study of cinema to read *Get Out* and *Us* for animal and/as black ways of looking that trouble the human’s gaze—and film studies itself—in order to think

about the im/possibility of a fugitive-*cum*-femme(inist) gaze *from below* that makes im/possible black and/as animal liberation. As the arbiter of (non)being, Man's gaze, which is a speciesist gaze, which is a white (or, better yet, antiblack) gaze, which is a phallic gaze, which is the gaze re/presented by film studies' camera, cannot account for what exists outside of its own frame: the social and/as material lives of those nonbeings who are socially and/as materially dead.

Nakedness

“In these moments of nakedness, under the gaze of the animal, *everything can happen to me*, I am like a child ready for the apocalypse” (Derrida, 2002, p. 381, my emphasis).

“What does the Animal promise? Nothing short of another cosmos. A radically different set of relations is possible” (Bennett, 2020, p. 4).

The black femme(inist)-*cum*-afro-pessimist theory that I employ suggests that animal and/as black gazing praxes reveal to Man the limits of his own humanism, offering Man and his “junior partners” (Wilderson 2010) fugitive and/as femme(inist) strategies for surviving the ends of Man's earth, or—to use Derrida's phrasing—the “apocalypse.” He reflects that the animal gaze reveals to the human, specifically, to the human's meaning-making mechanisms, or to his logo-*cum*-phallogocentrism, his own “nakedness,” thus returning Man—I argue—to the “flesh” of his (or her, or their) being, or to a body beyond signification. This body-*that-is-not-one*, the critical black femme(inism) of Hortense Spillers teaches us, is always already femme(inized), and, in being black un/gendered flesh, I argue, is the mark of animal nonbeing, too. More specifically, the “naked” body that Derrida's animal gaze hails is perhaps best understood as the black person's (and, I argue, the animal's) “*female* flesh ungendered” (Spillers, 1987, p. 68, my emphasis).

In *Get Out* and *Us*, Man's speciesist-*cum*-racist gaze—a gaze that (*pace* Spillers, 1987) genders black and animal Others as femme at the same time as it un genders them as nonhumans—is met with animal and/as black ways of looking that, rather than adopt a phallic posture which attempts to transcend flesh-making, lives into that flesh-making, asking us to search there, too, for the im/possibility of an Otherwise. By making the human

person “naked,” in other words, by stripping Man of his trappings and conceits, or by making him “flesh,” the animal gaze thus condemns the human to the social and/as material death that black persons and/as nonhuman animals experience as “the fact” of their (non)being (Fanon, 1952/1986)—if only for a moment. Notably, this moment cannot materialize as an event, that is to say, as a historical node or an epistemological touchstone, because, for Derrida (1997/2002) and Peele, too, the animal gaze is not a gaze that can be sustained to induce world-making. Rather, this is a gaze that hails its subject *qua* object in intermittent “moments” that do not arrive or cohere to create a narrative or a (his)story—or even, a *her*story, in other words, even an alternative or subaltern narratology. While Derrida is momentarily undone by the animal gaze—insofar as this gaze momentarily arrests Derrida’s ability to elaborate a coherent corporeal schema—he notably does not understand this un-doing, which is also, I argue, a possibility for living Otherwise, as a racist process of un/gendering. Nor does he understand humanism to be a racism, that is to say, a speciesism that circumscribes the community of the socially living. Consequently, Derrida misses the opportunity to interrogate humanism’s speciesism as a race/ist and/as un/gendering cut, even as his engagement with the im/possibility of Man’s “nakedness” enables such a critique.

Following Spillers’ generative account of black un/gendered flesh in her 1987 essay “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book”—another urtext of afro-pessimism—and Joshua Bennett’s provocation that must we co-think black and animal life in his 2019 essay “Buck Theory,” I expand Derrida’s argument to think about the animal gaze in racialized and feminized terms that destabilize the (*pace* Wynter, 2006) “genre of Man.” As the fleshy, feminized but, notably, ungendered remainder of humanism’s cut, black persons and animals are—as Bennett describes them—“multipurpose.” Bennett elaborates that black persons like animals are “readily available as fetish, floating signifier, scapegoat, ghost, corpse; [indeed, as] any state of matter or magic bullet [that] one might need” (2019, p. 28). More to the point: both the black person and the animal can only accrue value in death, that is to say, as a carcass that can be looted for its atomized parts—in Bennett’s formulation, for its “ass, hips, hair, lips, legs, [and] teeth” (p. 29); as the story of Henrietta Lacks imparts, for its cells; and as *Get Out*’s Jordan Peele shrewdly suggests, for its eyes. By returning Man to the materialism of his own mammalian body, the animal and/as black gaze

not only reveals to Derrida “the abyssal limit of the human: the inhuman of the ahuman, the ends of man” (1997/2002, p. 381) but further, makes that human body available to the kind of looting one usually reserves for black and animal flesh.

The gratuitous vulnerability that the human body experiences under the gaze of the animal not only makes that body available in black, which is to say: as flesh, but further, as Spillers’ formulation suggests, *feminizes* that body, making it available *as* hole. This, too, I argue, renders the human body as paradigmatically black and/as animal. As Lewis Gordon explains (1995), the black person, indeed, even the black man, “is a *hole*” (p. 127, original emphasis) insofar as he—like nonhuman animals—is the hyper-penetrable Other to the *phallicism* or white masculinity of agential humanism. Gordon explains that, insofar as “masculinity is an ideal form of whiteness with its own gradations, the less of a hole one ‘is,’ the more masculine one is; the less dark, the more white” (p. 127). Thus, the black man like the nonhuman animal “embodies femininity even more than the white woman. His skin, his eyes, his nose, his ears, his mouth, his anus, his penis ooze out his femininity like blood from a splattered body” (p. 127). In Gordon’s reading, the black body rendered “flesh”—feminine *and* un/gendered—is always already a splattered body, socially if not also materially dead. As Frank B. Wilderson III (2003) implores, there is no freedom from the fact of this death, except through accumulation practices in which black persons are “warehoused”—Wilderson aptly argues (2003)—“*like the cows*” (2003, p. 238, my emphasis). Per Wilderson’s intervention, animal social and/as material life—the cage—is the only condition of possibility for black social and/as material life. The fact that black people are, in fact, caged like animals (i.e., in the prison-industrial complex)—often, beside (other) nonhuman animals—suggests that Wilderson’s conclusion, though provocative, is not wrong. Wilderson’s account also supports my argument that there exists a generative kinship between black persons and nonhuman animals. Specifically, his account of black captivity suggests a “law-likely” kinship between black and animal Others as nonhuman sentient flesh, or as the living dead. This is not to say that black and/as animal Others *qua* flesh cannot stage their escape from captivity—they can and, I argue, they certainly do—but, as Peele’s films aver, they do so as fugitives who are perpetually in flight and under the persistent threat of capture, and not as beings with access to (*pace* Fanon, 1952/1986) “ontological resistance.” In fleeing nonetheless, black and/as

animal Others make a way out of no way, exemplifying for the rest of us how we might survive the social and/as material death of the Anthropocene. If we objectify ourselves to animal and/as black ways of looking, as Derrida does, then we might learn how to find a non-Anthropocentric promised land where all life matters.

Freedom Now(ish)

If making human bodies coeval, not for a sustained period but for moments at a time, with the socially dead—with racially black people and with nonhuman animals, to be sure, but also and notably, as I will argue: with the earth, which is likewise rendered flesh—is the work that the animal and/or black gaze does to all those people who accrue human recognition, then I wonder: what does the animal gaze do intramurally, that is to say, for the living dead, or for other animals, as well as for the black people who are always already (*pace* Spillers, 1987) “female flesh ungendered,” or (*pace* Derrida, 2002) “naked”? Stated another way: what happens when the person who is receiving the black and/or animal gaze *is* black and/or animal?

In what follows, I build on David Marriott’s argument (2011) that black liberation is only possible in a future-*imperfect* tense that cannot be sustained or actualized but can only be lived, repeatedly, to argue that black and/as animal ways of looking in *Get Out* and *Us* hail freedom *now*. Marriott describes this tense, which he attributes to Fanon (1952/1986), as “a moment of inventiveness whose introduction necessarily never arrive and does not stop arriving; and whose destination cannot be foreseen, or anticipated, but only repeatedly traveled, and therefore, not future at all” (2011, pp. 53-54). This freedom is no (humanist) freedom at all, but rather, is its trace—or, as in Christina Sharpe’s rendering, its “wake”. If, as Fanon (1952/1986) suggests, black freedom requires not the “grammar” of this world but—per Marx’s intervention in “The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon” (1852)—a “poetry from the future,” in other words, a poesis in which the “content” of black and/as animal freedom necessarily “exceeds” any possible “expression” of it, that is to say, any attempt to contain it with formal devices like grammar or (his)story—then black and/as animal freedom can only ever exist as a fugitive praxis that is at once urgent and subject to the unintermittent *longue durée* of racial slavery and/as speciesism.

In what follows, I will argue that if we read Derrida’s treatise through the filmic imagination of Jordan Peele, who uses the animal gaze in *Get Out*

and *Us* as a stand-in for the black gaze, then we can begin to see how Derrida's animal gaze as always already a black gaze works to induce the social and/as material life of social and/as material death, or to induce one's momentary survivability amidst—at best—one's inevitable accumulation. Indeed, rather than enable one's total liberation from the “unending [and] uninterrupted captivity” (Sexton, p. 6) that always already circumscribes black life, the animal gaze in Peele's films makes possible a fleeting and ephemeral moment of escape, locating black social and/as material life, following Jared Sexton's speculative reasoning, “not in the world that the world lives in, but... underground, in outer space” (p. 28); that is to say, not in the human world or in the world of the *mis-en-scene*, but in what Fred Moten (2013) describes as an “elsewhere and elsewhere” (p. 746)—an underground or “undercommons” (Moten & Harney 2013) outside of the probing, phallic gaze of those who need to know.

The Underground

Let us begin there, in the underground, with Peele's sophomore film, *Us*. When Adelaide (the film's protagonist) sees her alter for the first time, her eyes widen to caricature her face. This caricature is suggestive of Jim Crow imagery, specifically, of the Tar-Baby caricature that was used by to entrap Br'er Rabbit. In the next frame, the scene cuts to the knowing gaze of a rabbit—perhaps, to the knowing if ensnared gaze of Br'er Rabbit herself. I argue that this opening sequence, which indexes a theft of black life, specifically, the theft of young Adelaide, and which further makes the theft of black life significant for how we think about nonhuman sentient life, returns us to Peele's freshman film, *Get Out*, which begins with the theft of LaKeith Stanfield's character, set to the Flanagan and Allen song “Run Rabbit Run.”

As the camera widens, we see that the rabbit in *Us* is one of many rabbits in captivity. When the rabbit appears for a second time, she is shown—one hour and thirty minutes into the film—free of her cage, scavenging the floor for scraps, as an adult Adelaide descends the escalator, making her way into what I argue is the film's (*pace* Moten & Harney, 2013) “undercommons”—a nowhere and no-place in which nonhuman animal life *lives*, together, with socially dead black people, not in spite of their inevitable and unending and uninterrupted captivity, but in/as/through this (under)commons of social and/as material death, which is another way to say:

in/as/through the interstices or apertures attendant to their shared, prolonged warehousing.

This undercommons is a future-imperfect “elsewhere and elsewhere,” a fugitive, and maroon space where black and animal Others live, Peele suggests, as kin. It is through their shared kinship that they enact (*pace* Fanon, 1952/1986) the poesis of their social and/as material lives. More to the point, their shared location in the underground—made possible by the networks that black and/as animal Others create not in spite but in/as/through their social and/as material death—challenges the linearity of CAS’s unidirectional approach, suggesting that we must attend to black femme(inist) freedom—to tether-Adelaide’s freedom—*first* if we are to induce animal liberation, too, or if we are to set free all those beings-*that-are-not-one*, in the underground.

“We’re human too, you know.”

This scene indexes the black un/gendered person’s excommunication from humanism in other revealing ways, too. It is in this scene that Adelaide’s tether poignantly reminds her: “We’re human too, you know.” In the same breath, she says: “How it must have been to grow up with the sky, to feel the sun, the wind, the trees, but your people took it for granted.” It bears noting that this comment, made from the position of—what black femme(inist) thinker Saidiya V. Hartman (2003), in conversation with Wilderson’s afro-pessimism, describes as—“the unthought” (p. 185), addresses a someone, somewhere, presumably, in the above-ground; and, in this way, enacts an oppositional gaze that looks back (literally, from below) to interrogate the Anthropocentric boundary that Man has erected to differentiate himself from nonhuman sentient life and, further, to alienate nonhuman sentient life—including but not limited to black persons, nonhuman animals, as well as the “sky,” “sun,” “wind,” and “trees”—from the other nonbeings that are her kin.

The fact that Adelaide’s tether, who is (seemingly) the personification of social death, must remind the above-ground Adelaide—an Adelaide who is (seemingly) socially alive—that her people, which are the tether or underground people, are “human, too”—not unlike the emotional labor with which black people bemoan that their lives matter—indicates that they are not people, that their lives do not matter, because they do not accrue human recognition as (*pace* Fanon, 1952/1986) “the fact” of their being, but rather, must beg for it, like scraps—or, as the case may be (and here: Fanon [and

Peele] get it right)—they must take it violently, with force, adopting a scorched earth approach that endeavors to end the (human) world in order to remake it, in *Black*.

This reading is, however, complicated by the fact that the above-ground Adelaide is replaced at the start of the film with her tether. If tether-Adelaide is actually the one living an above-ground life, then the “real” Adelaide, who was, perhaps, at the start of the film, socially alive—if only because her being and becoming were necessarily animated by a kind of white mimicry—is the one who is now, *in media res*, socially dead. It is in this way that Peele demonstrates how a white praxis of being and doing and knowing, or how the telos of the American dream, which above-ground Adelaide and her family chase with great effort, is still a social death that excludes black people from the community of the socially living.

When read in this way, it is the Adelaide above who is the personification of social death and not the other way around, as the Adelaide below is busy organizing a revolution that will save us all, thus advancing the black femme(inist) agenda that when black women and femmes are free, the rest of us, including nonhuman animals, will be free, too. The Combahee River Collective’s black femme(inist) blueprint for liberation makes tether-Adelaide’s statement that the other tethers are “human, too” especially relevant. Technically, in above-ground or humanist terms, the Adelaide below is the only human underground, but even she recognizes the (*pace* Fanon, 1952/1986) “ontological resistance” of the other tethers.

Tether-Adelaide continues, listing the features that make her human, “like you”: “eyes, teeth, hands, blood—exactly like you. And yet, it was humans that built this place,” she says, as a rabbit forages in the foreground (again) for scraps. What’s significant about the list that tether-Adelaide assembles as a testament to her humanity is that it actually forecloses her human recognition, insofar as these items typify her being not in phallic or ontological terms, that is to say, not as a body typified by cohesion, but in and as atomized pieces. As Spillers and Bennett suggest, tether-Adelaide’s bits and pieces cannot be assembled to fashion a totality or a whole, but rather, interpellate her nonbeing in and as fleshy material parts that can be easily looted by a human or above-ground people to induce *their* world-making. Tether-Adelaide therefore gets it right when she bemoans that “it was humans that built this place,” which is to say, it was the “genre of Man” that constructed the black person (like the nonhuman animal) outside of what

it means to be and do and know the human, or outside of being, thus constructing racial blackness and/as animality as the constitutive outside—as, quite literally, the underground or underbelly, or raw material—to a human “us.”

What’s the Anthropocene got to do with it?

Also in this scene, tether-Adelaide intertwines the fate of her people, that is to say, the fate of black and/as animal Others in the “underground,” with the earth’s, reminding us that black and/as animal lives will matter only when the earth’s nonhuman sentient life—like the trees, and the sun, and the sky—matter, too. Notably, this is not the first time that Peele has embedded a lesson about the social and/as material life of earth-matter, which is also a lesson about how to survive the decaying Anthropocene, in a film about (not the horror of, but) the terror of black death. Bennett explains that in *Get Out* we likewise “witness firsthand the ways in which black [...] vulnerability is inextricable from a desire to not only encounter the animal anew, but to see the earth, the flora and the breeze, [and] the countless forms of life and nonlife that persist alongside [black people] at the underside of modernity” as essential to any kind of movement for black life (2019, p. 32). Which is to say, in Peele’s films we encounter the black femme(inist) lesson that Audre Lorde (1979) imparted long before afro-pessimism’s political-academic project, in which she implores us to think about the problem of racism and the problem of patriarchy—and, of the insufficiency of the “master’s tools” to redress this intersection—as a problem for “the future of our *earth*”—not the world, but the *earth*.

Indeed, the black femme(inist) and/as afro-pessimist thinkers with whom Peele’s films are in conversation gesture towards a new understanding of the Anthropocene, not least of all because their argument that black and/as animal life is coeval with earth-matter exceeds our current understandings of Anthropocentric violence. When I invoke the Anthropocene, then, I do so with the knowledge that this term—even in its re/visionisms—re/produces the violences that it seeks to critique; and in order to call out precisely the fact that, as Kathryn Yusoff (2018) argues, “the diagnostic of the Anthropocene”—including those attempted by Jason M. Moore (see his concept “Capitalocene” [2016]), Justin McBrien (see his concept “Necrocene” [2016]), and even feminist thinkers like Donna Haraway and Anna Tsing (see their concept “Plantationocene” [Haraway 2015, 2016;

Tsing 2017])—“does not,” which is to say, has not, and perhaps, cannot “unleash any ethical crisis in liberal discourse about who is targeted by these material practices” (p. 51). Indeed, Moore’s, McBrien’s, and Harraway’s and Tsing’s re/visions are absent any kind of analyses of the materiality that racial blackness signifies (if it can signify anything at all), to say nothing of the fungibility that racial blackness *qua* materiality invites. Nor do their texts address how black peoples’ living death is reflected in the materiality and/as fungibility that the human world assigns to “the earth, the flora, and the breeze, [and] the countless forms of life and nonlife that persist,” including animal life.

Unlike current theorizations of the Anthropocene, which blame the ends of Man’s earth on capitalist impulses driven by resource extraction, globalization, and industrialization, Peele’s films gesture towards the antiblack psychic-unconscious structures—what Jared Sexton describes (in a nod to Jean-Francois Lyotard [1974]) as a *libidinal economy* in which the human’s “energies, concerns, points of attention, anxieties, pleasures, appetites, revulsions, and phobias” (Wilderson, 2010, p. 7, n. 8) is propelled by (anti)blackness—that make(s) Anthropocentric violence possible. Bennett’s observation that Peele’s move to think with nature “necessarily requires a willingness to think about [black] vulnerability in capacious, and *ecologically-attentive*, terms” (2019, p. 32, my emphasis) suggests that Man’s appetite for black social and/as material death is borne from the same psychic-unconscious structures that compel him to gratuitously consume nonhuman sentient life, which includes animal life *and* earth-matter. In other words, an antiblack libidinal economy alloys animal and earth-matter suffering, too.

Because there is no escape from the antiblack structures of feeling that frame our every interaction, the animal gaze in Peele’s films, as a cipher for the black gaze, can only ever hail (*pace* Marriott, 2011) a future-*imperfect* revolutionary posture. Despite (or rather, precisely because of) its im/possibility, this posture teaches us *all* how to live Otherwise. It calls forth, with the knowledge that it could never induce or make real, a world that is *no world*, or a world in which there is no racial hierarchy of being or food chain or constitutive outside to the community of the socially living. Black social and/as material life—like animal and earth life—has no referent in this, the human world, and can therefore unlock Other ways of living, for all of us.

Peele’s “turn toward the natural world”—in which he elaborates “a constellation of nonhuman life forms that are likewise living under threat of death, or capture, as a result of white civil [society]” (Bennett, 2019, p. 32) in order to make black death analogous to animal and earth death—has profound implications for CAS, specifically, for CAS’s efforts to co-think animal liberation with the liberation of other kinds of nonhuman sentient life. In *Get Out* and *Us*, Peele suggests that a human “us” who are struggling to survive the ends of Man might turn towards the im/possibility of black *qua* animal *qua* earth poesis in order to find new, sustainable models for survivability. By which I mean, Peele’s films teach us as a human audience that the revolution for black life, like CAS’s political-ethical demand for animal liberation, like any effort to curb Anthropocentric violence must not be—cannot be—humanized if it is to guarantee a future-*perfect* freedom for nonhuman Others; and that neither can our human freedom dreams, if we are to survive what Derrida described as the coming apocalypse and which the decaying Anthropocene makes real.

Looking From Below

“How might the view from ‘under the hatches’ be another site from which to conceptualize the operation of power?” (Browne, 2015, p. 32)

While *Us* gestures towards the racial violence that is a cleansing violence that is required to make black (and animal) lives matter *structurally*, it is *Get Out* which elaborates what the social and/as material life of social and/as material death looks like as a fugitive praxis that need not wait for the impossible possibility of liberation in order to enact survivability *now*.

We might begin by asking a pertinent question about Chris, the film’s protagonist (and prey): what do Chris’s eyes *qua* the animal gaze see, and what do they induce for Man? Stated another way, what is it that the film’s white liberals want to loot from Chris’s nonbeing? The gaze of Chris’s camera offers a window into his ways of looking. These black-and-white pictures—the background dressing for the film’s opening credits—are uncanny conjurings of black and animal social and/as material life paired with music that alludes to the gaze. Specifically, these images are set to Childish Gambino’s “Redbone” (2016). The song’s refrain—“get woke”—

despite its popular usage as a liberal colloquialism to prompt performance activism—literally beseeches us to *open our eyes*, perhaps, so that we can engage the film’s subtext about the black-animal kinship that abounds in *Get Out*.

There are three images in total. The first is of a black man holding several large white balloons which cast a long shadow—perhaps, over his own life—in the frame’s foreground. This shadow, which notably takes the shape of a horse’s head, suggests that the animalization that black people experience as a proscription *and* a prescription, that is to say, as a myth *and* a norm, may be the only trope attendant to racial blackness which describes black people not as cargo, but as sentient, living flesh. The second image indexes the paradox of black motherhood. As Alexis Pauline Gumbs (2016) reminds us in her distinction between black *m/othering* and white *motherhood*, black motherhood is a structural impossibility. Specifically, this image—of a (presumably, black) baby in the womb of a black mother who is in the streets, perhaps in the same streets that took Chris’s mother—indexes the im/possibility of black reproductive futurity. The third image re/produces a scene of animal social life: of a white pit-bull yanking their chain in search of something outside of the camera’s frame, perhaps, in search of a (*pace* Moten, 2013) “elsewhere and elsewhere” to the world that the rest of the world — the world of the *mise-en-scene* — lives in. (In *Us*, Peele remedies this search for an Otherwise in the making of a radical, shared undercommons where black and/as animal Others interpellate their own [non]being—and each other’s—outside of the all-knowing, phallic gaze of Man.)

On their own and as a collection, these images suggest that what white liberals are after when they attempt to loot Chris’s eyes is what white liberals have always wanted: to appropriate black social and/as material life as that racialized and/as feminized matter which *cannot* matter and as such, which is fodder or “raw material” for the phallicism of human world-making—“the calculated work of iron, whips, chains, knives...the bullet” (Spillers 1987, p. 226). For Spillers especially, black flesh is always already a feminized matter-*that-cannot-matter* because the black body is, as (*pace* Fanon, 1952/1986) “the fact” of its nonbeing, reduced to the “anatomical specifications of rupture,” typified not by the sentimentality of humanism’s logo-*cum*-phallogocentrism, but by its “objective description of laboratory prose”: “eyes beaten out, arms, backs, skulls branded, a left jaw, a right ankle, punctured; teeth missing” (226). That this description so uncannily resonates

with our humanist accounts of animal death is not a coincidence, but rather, indicative of the contrapuntal construction of racial blackness and the nonhuman animal that I elaborate.

But, if black and animal Others are—at least as the white-*cum*-phallic gaze of the camera constructs them—interchangeable motifs, and if what white people want is Chris’s eyes, then what they’re really after is the animal gaze. This move to inhabit animal subjectivity is no different from the back-to-the-land-movements of white liberals who think that where there is modernity, there is alienation. What their movements neglect to consider is how our understandings of nature—of who is closer to nature, and of who is indistinguishable from nature—are always already raced and sexed.

Two significant scenes in *Get Out* engage in a discussion of the animal gaze as it interpellates the fugitive praxes of black people. In the first exchange, Rose—the femme fatale who seduces Chris for his eyes, which is to say: for the black social and/as material life that his gaze induces—hits a doe on their way to the Armitage residence. In the subsequent scene, Chris exits the vehicle to check on the doe, and in doing so, gives the doe as good a death as he can. When Chris approaches the doe, he hears a moan that is a wail that is a sorrow song—off screen. At the moment of their introduction, Chris stands visibly above the dying doe, in a forest, which is another way to say: in the bush, constitutively outside of Man’s mythos of modernity. Chris’s eyes meet the camera’s gaze which—the audience is meant to deduce—is a stand-in or substitute for the doe’s gaze, *but the incongruence here matters*. Despite the fact that the camera’s gaze is a cinematic index for the doe’s gaze, the doe’s gaze is actually a gaze *from below*, which Peele indexes in the subsequent scene, set—counterintuitively—in the world of the human, or of the socially living.

As the camera cuts to an exchange between Rose and a police officer in the background—Rose is presumably reporting the accident—we see Chris’s contemplative stare, which is a stare filled with sadness, in the foreground, in the moment before the police officer asks Chris for his driver’s license (despite the fact that, as Rose retorts, Chris wasn’t the one driving the car). What is significant about the moment *before* the moment of the racist exchange with the police officer—a racist exchange that serves to remind viewers that it is not gratuitous or exceptional displays of police violence that kill black people, but rather, that “business as usual” is what kills black people—is that rather than meet the camera’s gaze, Chris mourns the doe’s

death by looking away, below and off to the side, as if in search of something that is outside of the camera's frame. This is a something beyond the world that "the rest of the world lives in," or beyond the world of Rose and the police officer. Perhaps, he is in search of the social and/as material life that inheres in/as/through the natal alienation and gratuitous violence that frame *his* life, reflected in the life and death (and gaze) of the doe. Perhaps, he is in search of the doe's sorrow song, which is—notably—also a freedom song, or at least, a fugitive song, and which sets the tone for his survival dance in subsequent scenes. In order to survive the "sunken place" of his psychic in/coherence and, more urgently, the material death of his lobotomy, Chris must "dance to the 'music of the madness'" that is his "unending, uninterrupted captivity," "for there is freedom and freedom is there, a mad freedom where there is none" (Sexton, 2011, p. 6).

Black-Animal Kinship

My reading suggests that the doe's death reminds Chris of the time and place and affect in and with which he lost his own mother, who also died from a hit-and-run (also off-screen). This remembering enables Chris's "fugitive possibility of eluding [the embrace]" of the "premature, spectacular death" unleashed on him by the white liberals who love and want his flesh and can take it, too. I further find that the doe represents for Chris the profound natal alienation that has, since his mother's death at (his) age 11, defined (overdetermined) the social death of his nonbeing. We see this reflected in the deafening silence and deep reflection—more to the point, the inarticulability—that Chris demonstrates in response to the doe's death.

We might pause here to reflect that this is not the first time that a film about black death has shown us the capaciousness of black peoples' empathy, indeed, their kinship with nonhuman animal life. In *Fruitvale Station* (2013), Michael B. Jordan's character Oscar Grant also sits with an animal—specifically, a pitbull—as the dog dies on the streets, after they have been struck by a hit-and-run. This scene prompts Jordan, not as Oscar Grant but as himself, to reflect in an interview with Oprah Winfrey that "black males" are "America's pitbulls." This animal, like *Get Out*'s animal, is significant. In *Get Out*, the deer (like Chris) is game that can be tamed, captured, mastered, and trophied. Similarly, in *Fruitvale Station*, the pitbull is trained to do the bidding (and the barking) of the master, but is (like Oscar Grant) fungible, like roadkill.

The deer in *Get Out* like the dog in *Fruitvale Station*, as “both animal familiar and epithetic descriptor of the Black male slave [...] [haunt] the freedom dreams of Black men,” which are black femme(inist) dreams, in these films as in life (Bennett, 2019, p. 28). Bennett suggests that these “animal familiars” *qua* fleshy Others are the motifs to which black men turn in order “to imagine the never-ending threat of premature, spectacular death, *as well as* the fugitive possibility of eluding its embrace” (p. 28, my emphasis). Which is to say, black men like Chris who are in search of an analogue or referent for their own suffering necessarily turn towards animal Others for models of fugitivity they might adopt to—quite literally—save their lives.

Femme(inist) Fugitivity

Chris’s “animal familiar”—the deer—returns in generative ways at the film’s close. It is in this second scene that we see how the deer’s gaze—this time, a buck’s gaze—induces femme(inist)-*cum*-fugitive possibilities for Chris. When Chris first notices the taxidermized buck hoisted above him in the room of his capture, their eyes are—at best—missing; or, perhaps, they have been replaced with glass eyes, which is another way to say: with Man-made eyes. The latter is a human *qua* phallic or agential gaze that instructs Chris to mime and mine the master’s tools not to induce the revolution that will make black life (and animal life, and earth life) matter *structurally*, but to undermine the master’s project long enough to take a fugitive breath. If the doe’s gaze in the former scene is a gaze-*that-is-not-one*, which is another way to say: if the doe’s gaze—at once femme and flesh—is the definitive gaze “from below”: a gaze that (quite literally, in Peele’s rendering) is without representation, then the buck’s gaze in the second scene demonstrates that part of racial blackness which *can* be represented, which is that part of racial blackness that plays the role assigned to it by white supremacist humanism—the part of a violent black man who is a threat to white family. (Recall that it is precisely this role that Chris *must* play in order to stage his escape from the Armitage residence.)

The timing in which Chris first notices the taxidermized buck further anticipates his performance of black caricature. Chris first notices the buck’s gaze and is interpellated by it to enact a fugitive praxis—in *phallic* terms—immediately after the video “Behold the Coagula” plays. Lest we forget, this video is primarily about the sanctity of the white family and about the need

for black unsignified and unsignifiable flesh—that is to say: the need for black *feminine* flesh—to make and sustain the white *qua* patriarchal family. In this sense, Chris is doubly hailed to participate in the libidinal economy that can only know him as a blackface caricature. (The symbol at the bottom of the “Behold the Coagula” video is also significant. It is the symbol of St. Hubertus—the patron saint of hunters, metal workers, mathematicians, and notably, opticians.)

But; I want to suggest that another reading is possible. Despite the phallicism with which the buck’s Man-made eyes hail Chris as a caricature, if we read the buck’s eyes as indicative of an absence rather than a presence, in other words, if we read the buck’s eyes as simply missing, then we can begin to see how the buck’s gaze actually induces a femme(inist) fugitivity, returning Chris to the dying doe, and further, I want to suggest, teleporting Chris to the hour of his mother’s death. Specifically, the buck’s gaze inspires Chris’s memory of his own body as it was affected by his mother’s death—what Bennett describes as Chris’s “recalling, in that moment, the nervous hand motions he exhibited the day his mother died” (2019, p. 36). The fact that it is the repetition of this trauma and of those shaky hand-motions that is responsible for Chris’s ingenious escape from the Armitages’ grip suggests that there exists between Chris and the doe (and, the buck, too) a kind of cross-species revolutionary m/Othering—and here, Gumbs’ (2016) writings on revolutionary *m* [slash] *othering* are again instructive. Chris’s shaky hands suggest that the black body, which is to say, black flesh, knows what to do, indeed, knows how to enact a fugitivity, before the mind—which has never belonged to the being of the black person—has had a chance to catch up, or before the phallicism of the mind has had a chance to circumscribe and discipline—to penetrate—the un/gendered flesh of the Other. In this way, Peele upsets the cartesian dualism (and the agential masculinity) that—within an onto-epistemic order of the human that claims that the mind can be disaggregated from the material body—pathologizes racial blackness as the paradigmatic location of hyper-penetrable flesh.

Recall that the white liberals who are literally “buying” Chris for his flesh, more specifically, for the purposes of inhabiting his flesh with the substance of their own minds, firmly believe in this racialized-*cum*-gendered Enlightenment mythology. In fact, they have made a technology or praxes for social and/as material life from this separatism, which relies on racial blackness as the paradigmatic location of mindless, un/gendered flesh, or

(pace Derrida, 2002) as the paradigmatic location of Man's "nakedness." While this nakedness corresponds, primarily, with black and/as animal social and/as material death, the animal and/as black gaze in *Get Out* makes white liberals hyper-penetrable, too—if only for the moment that makes possible Chris's escape. In doing so, it subversively teaches Peele's human audience how to survive their imminent ends.

In order to activate—not the actualization of, but—the trace or wake of a black freedom that is an animal freedom that is a moment of ontological and epistemological catastrophe for the human, and of ecological possibility for the earth, Peele's films—following Joshua Bennett's analysis—"[turn] to animal life-worlds as sites of *fugitive* practice and possibility" (2019, p. 28). I have suggested that Peele creates in *Get Out* and *Us* an alternative kinship model that teaches those humans among us who are also hailed by the animal or black gaze in moments that reduce us to flesh—that is to say, as Hortense Spillers does, in moments that reduce us to that "zero degree of social conceptualization that does not escape concealment under the brush of discourse, or the reflexes of iconography" (1987, p. 67)—about how to create social life not in spite of social and/as material death, but in/as/through the social and/as material death that surely awaits us, if we are to be, as Derrida (2002) instructs, "ready for the apocalypse," or for the decaying Anthropocene, as the case may be.

The nonhuman animal like the black person who *looks back* (from below) at a human gaze that is also a white-*cum*-phallic gaze generates not the possibility for the human to create an/Other world—a world that might do right by black and animal life, and which might think about the earth, which is also living flesh, as worthy of social and/as material life. Instead, the animal gaze like the black gaze hails human persons in "moments" that teach him how to generate fugitive possibilities for surviving *this world*, which is another way to say: for surviving the world of Man, or for surviving the world of the Anthropocene. Further, the animal gaze like the black gaze in Peele's film suggests to the human that his survival in a world that is no world—in the world of the apocalypse—is entirely dependent on his ability to live Otherwise, as socially dead and un/gendered flesh, not in an alternate reality in which all lives matter, but in the human world in which some lives don't. To be sure, this survival will require him to forsake the privileges of phallic agentialism, in other words, to renounce the world of the human and

to instead make common-unity with the femme but nonhuman sentient life that is always already flesh, or (*pace* Derrida, 2002) “naked”—with racially black people, with nonhuman animals, and with the earth. Indeed, what I have suggested by reading Derrida’s “The Animal That Therefore I Am” through the filmic imagination of Jordan Peele is that the animal gaze that is a black gaze implores us to *live in the undercommons* where racial blackness and nonhuman animal life has always lived, without a proper name. This is where the tether people and Br’er Rabbit live—notably, in flight. Those of us who are also hailed by the animal or black gaze in moments that reduce us to flesh might learn from their example about how to flee the violence that awaits us.

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Hegemonic, Quasi-Counterhegemonic and Counterhegemonic Approaches to the Exploitation of Animals in Laboratories

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Abstract

Louis Althusser's concepts of the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatus are applied to the current rationalizations and institutionalization of the use and abuse of experiments on animals. The concepts of hegemonic, quasi-counterhegemonic, and counterhegemonic discourse and practices are introduced to show the array of approaches to testing on nonhuman animals, ranging from justification, to supposed amelioration, to outright rejection of the torture to which they are subjected. An examination of the biomedical industrial complex and the psychology/psychiatry industrial complex shows how they utilize a justify the torture of animals in the name of acquiring knowledge supposedly for the welfare of humans. Although the quasi-counterhegemonic position, as illustrated by the 3Rs and the Animal Welfare Act, calls for better treatment for laboratory animals, it still accepts their abuse in the interests of human well-being. Counterhegemonic arguments are presented including the arguments that the results of animal experimentation are both unreliable and unnecessary and morally wrong.

keywords: laboratory animals, biomedical industrial complex, psychiatric industrial complex, pharmaceutical industry, horrendous experiments

In his book *The Reproduction of Capitalism*, Louis Althusser (2014), a Marxist, distinguishes between the Repressive State Apparatus and the Ideological State Apparatuses, the two clusters of institutions that are integral to the capitalist system. That includes capitalist systems around the world, whether in developed or developing countries. The former relies overwhelmingly on repression, sometimes violent, but also on ideology; the latter rely overwhelmingly on ideology, but secondarily on repression (Althusser, 2014, p. 86). There are institutions/organizations collated with each ideological apparatus, among them the scholastic, the familial, the religious, the political, the associative, the information and news, the publishing and distributing and the cultural (Althusser, 2014, p. 75). He admits that many more can be added. I suggest that one should aggregate the biomedical state apparatuses, and the psychology/psychiatry state apparatuses. They can be envisioned as types of industrial complexes, similar to the military-industrial complex first referred to by Eisenhower in his 1961 farewell address and expanded by Relman (1980) to include the medical-industrial complex with its privatization of health care in the interests of profit-making. The prison-industrial complex arising with the privatization of prisons has also been widely explored (e.g., Thompson, 2012)). In criticizing the turn to medicalization both mental health and behavioral problems caused by environmental factors, Gomery et al., (2011) conflate the biomedical industrial complex and the modern psychiatric-industrial complex and also refer to a variety of authors who have identified it as mental health industrial complex or a psycho-pharmaceutical-industrial complex. Although Althusser (2014, p. 81) did not utilize the concepts of various industrial complexes, he did argue that any given Ideological State Apparatus constitutes “a complex system that combines several institutions and organizations, as well as their practices.” The biomedical and psychological/psychiatric industrial complexes can be envisioned as a bundle of ideological state apparatuses, as well, including the scholastic, the legal, and the political. While they may be conflated in the literature (e.g., Gomery et al., (2011)), I believe the examples of animal exploitation by each will show that they can be conceived as separate, if interrelated, industrial complexes.

Although not citing or engaging with Althusser (who focuses on institutions and does not mention nonhuman animals *or* humans in his work), Ryder (1975, pp. 99-101) delves into what he calls the “laboratory animal industry” which includes breeding animals for laboratory use, selling laboratory equipment designed for experimentation on nonhuman animals, the hiring of technicians to care for them, and testing on behalf of clients. This industry is part of what I call the biomedical and psychology/psychiatric industrial complexes. I will focus here partially be on how these complexes sustain and reinforce the exploitation of nonhuman animals in laboratory experiments. Their propaganda in sustaining these practices are part of the ideological state apparatuses with which they are associated and which have a material base in their respective “missions.”

In the following pages the hegemonic discourses of these institutions will be examined, and examples of nonhuman animal experiments given. How medical doctors/psychologists/psychiatrists are socialized into these horrific practices will be considered in the second section. Althusser (2014, p. 220) notes that there is resistance to ideological state apparatuses, but he did not theorize this. I will argue that there are quasi-counterhegemonic discourses that sometimes, in an interest-driven way, may be taken into account and somewhat modify the hegemonic discourse, and lead to (minor) changes in practices, though seldom their abolition. I will also argue that there are quasi-counterhegemonic discourses that accept the premise that animal experimentation is of value to human well-being, but wish to ameliorate some of the suffering. Some of these quasi-counterhegemonic discourses and institutions will be explored in the third section. In the fourth section what I call the counterhegemonic discourses and institutions will be discussed and I will present arguments against the use of animal experimentation will be explored.

1. Experiments Done on Non-Human Animals and Their Justification

The overwhelming argument of the pro-animal laboratory research apparatuses claims that the sacrifice of, and cruelty involved in, animal research is justified because of its contribution to human well-being, health, and welfare. These arguments are integral to the workings of institutionalized groups such as the Americans for Medical Progress (AMP) a non-profit established in 1991 to combat the “animal rights threat to biomedical research (Newton, 2013, p. 160) and the National Association for Biomedical

Research (NABR), founded in 1985 (Newton, 2013, p. 192). Both organizations have websites that tout the value of animal research for saving human lives; they also publish opinion pieces and give interviews to the media. Among the other feats of the NABR are aiding in the passage of the Animal Enterprise Protection Act in 1992 and of the Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act in 2006. In these two acts, “Congress took a very strong stand against the use of violent action by animal rights activists against individuals and institutions who use animals in biomedical research programs” (Newton, 2013, pp. 192-93). Among these “violent actions” were videotaping the conditions of animals in laboratories and revealing the cruelty of some (most) experiments and releasing the captured animals as well.

The pharmaceutical industry claims as its mission the promulgation of human well-being, and forms an integral and obviously capitalistic part of the biomedical and psychology/psychiatric industrial complexes. Reformulating existing drugs and developing new ones provides them with profit-making patents (Sharpe, 1988, pp. 125-126). With respect to the interests of the drug companies, Ryder (1975, p. 103) points out: “The desire to relieve suffering or to otherwise help humanity are not the main motives behind the deaths of millions of animals in laboratories around the world. The main motive is not medical but commercial.”

Integral to the hegemonic discourse as concerns experiments on animals is “speciesism,” a term first used by Ryder (Nibert, 2002, p.7), and meant to “describe the widespread discrimination that is practiced by man against other species” (Ryder, 1975, p.7). Ryder draws a parallel between speciesism and racism; Nibert (2002) carries this comparison even further and more widely as concerns injustices in the society. According to Nibert (2002, p.9) speciesism, like racism, sexism and classism, is an ideology; it can thus be seen as integral to the hegemonic ideological state apparatuses, bolstered, as the passage below argues, by the repressive state apparatus:

Generally speaking...humans tend to disperse, eliminate, or exploit a group they perceive to be unlike themselves (an outgroup of the ‘other’) when it is in their economic interests to do so. Next, the oppressing group must have the power to subordinate members of the at-risk group. While physical force is the key to this subordination, such force is usually vested in part in political control. Those who exercise political control wield the power of the state, and the ability

to make and enforce law. Finally, ideological manipulation fuels prejudicial attitudes and discriminatory acts that help protect and maintain oppressive economic and social arrangements. (Nibert, 2002, p. 13)

Speciesism thus justifies the torture of laboratory animals for the welfare of a group more powerful than they are.

The scope of experimentation on animals is tremendous and numbers in tens of millions of nonhuman animals annually. It is estimated that in 2015, 79.9 million animals were used for testing worldwide. In that year, the top five countries using animals for experimental purposes were estimated to be China, with 20,496,670; Japan, with 15,035,305; the United States with 14,574,839; Canada, with 3,570,352; and Australia, with 3,248,843 (Taylor & Alvarez, 2019, p. 204). In this paper my focus will be on biomedical and psychological/psychiatric experimentation on animals in the United States.

1.1. Examples of Biomedical Experiments on Nonhuman Animals

Thousands of animals are used in the U.S. and around the world in laboratory experiments. Rudloff (2017, p. 178) cites the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) 2014 report (2015) that holds that the number of animals used in research experiments in the U.S. as “21,083 cats; 59,358 dogs, 169,528 guinea pigs, 121,930 hamsters, 57,735 nonhuman primates, 45,392 pigs, 150,344 rabbit, 10, 315 sheep and 27,393 farm animals.” Since under the Animal Welfare Act (about which more below) mice, rats, birds, and fish are not counted in the estimates of numbers used in laboratories; it is unknown how many of them are used, but it is estimated that from 93 to 97 percent of animals experimented upon belong are rodents (Rudloff, 2017, p.177; Frasc, 2016, pp. 288-289)

Dr. Moneim A. Fadali, M.D., in his book *Animal Experimentation: A Harvest of Shame* (1996) gives many examples of horribly cruel animal experiments. Burn experiments with guinea pigs involved immersing them in 100-degree Centigrade water. The results were skin burns over 50 to 70 percent of their bodies (Fadali, 1996, p. 168). Fadali cites Robinson and Miller, who experimented on and published a number of articles on burned guinea pigs in journals such as *Circulatory Shock* and *Advances in Shock Research* (see, e.g., Robinson and Miller, 1980). Among the funders for this research were the National Institute of General Medical Services (NIGMS),

the National Institute of Health (NIH) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).

The Yale University School of Medicine broke the spines of cats using different weights “in order to quantify variables associated with spinal cord injury” (Fadali, 1996, p. 172). Invasive experiments on cats continued throughout various decades as can be seen by going to google scholar and putting in the keywords “Yale University School of Medicine experiments on cats.” Fadali gives numerous other examples of horrendous cruelty such as shooting immobilized monkeys in their heads, immobilizing cats and mutilating their stomachs to assess the effect on gastric acid, and performing starving experiments on dogs (Faladi, 1996, Ch. 8). Fadali also delves into the eye experiments on cats and kittens carried out at the University of Oregon in the late 1970s and 1980s. Articles by Gordon, Moran & Presson (1983) and Presson, Moore, & Gordon (1983) recap these experiments.

The experiments were carried out on infant cats. In one experiment, fourteen cats had their right eye intorted (forced toward the nose) 90 degrees, five cats had their right eye extorted (forced outward) 90 degrees, five cats with all right extra-ocular muscles cut, the eye rotated and then returned to the original position, two cats with their right eye intorted and also with the left eye sutured shut, two cats involved with experiments in both eyes, and two cats who had not been altered, but were controls. The cats lived in total darkness except for one hour a day when the visual acuity experiments were done on them (Gordon et al., 1983, p. 619). In another experiments the kittens had these alterations foisted upon them when they were between 9 and 15 days of age, when normal eye opening would have occurred and were tested at the age of two to four months (Presson et al., 1983, pp. 631-32). The main conclusion of these researchers seems to be, after torturing a myriad of kittens, that if vision is surgically altered in a negative way, tasks necessitating visual acuity are harder to perform. The research was supported by the National Eye Institute. Similar experiments on kittens and on adult cats by these and a variety of other researchers were reported between 1973 and 1979 in journals such as *Visual Research*, *Brain Research*, *Experiments in Brain Research*, *Experimental Neurology*, *Journal of Comparative Neurology*, *Society of Neuroscience Abstracts*, and *Journal of Neurophysiology*. In 1987 similar experiments were reported on frogs

(Kostyk & Goldstein, 1987) and in 1993 on seven infant wallabies (James et al., 1993).

1.2. Psychological/Psychiatric Experiments on Nonhuman Animals.

According to Andrew Scull (2010, p. 1247):

[T]o quite an extraordinary extent, drug money has come to dominate psychology. It underwrites psychiatric journals and psychiatric conferences...It makes psychiatric careers, and many of those careers it fosters become skills for their paymasters, zealously promoting lucrative off-label uses for drugs whose initial approval was awarded on quite other grounds...Side-effects, even profound, permanent, and perhaps fatal, are ignored or minimized.

What Scull does not go into, is that this drug money also plays a major role in funding animal testing. Not only are psychotropic drugs tested on animals, but they are subjected to a wide range of painfully cruel experiments in the name of advancing knowledge about human psychology. From the mid-1960s to at least the mid-1970s, Martin Seligman and his colleagues (e.g., Maier & Seligman, 1976; Seligman, 1972) initially subjected 150 dogs to electric shocks from which they could not escape. In the beginning the dogs ran and howled and struggled but eventually they gave up, simply whining, and no longer tried to escape. Seligman (1972) (See also, Maier & Seligman, 1976) called this giving up “learned helplessness.” Among the conclusions were that 1) learned helplessness occurs in “instances in which an organism has learned that outcomes are uncontrollable by his response and is seriously debilitated by this knowledge” (Maier & Seligman, 1976, p. 4) and 2) stress and depression are correlated (Seligman, 1972, p. 407). The research was funded by the National Institutes of Health (NIH). Similar experiments had previously been conducted on rats, cats, fish, mice, and human males (Seligman, 1972, p. 408). Seligman’s theory of learned helplessness were still being cited and experimental procedures to understand it better are still being performed more than 50 years later.

Nastily cruel experiments had been conducted prior to the concept of “learned helplessness” and would be conducted afterwards. In 1957, Richter explored the question of “sudden death” in wild, domesticated, and hybrid rats who were placed in a cylinder filled with water and with a jet stream that prohibited them from floating. The experimental group consisted of rats

whose whiskers and facial hair had been shaved off (thus they could not tell when their noses were above the water). The control group, whose whiskers and facial hair were intact, swam for from 60 to 80 hours before drowning. The wild rats in the experimental group died more quickly than the others, which was ascribed to their being upset by handling. Some of the rats were injected with morphine and they also died quickly. Some had their adrenal or thyroid glands removed, but this seemed to have no effect. Richter's article received more than 1,000 citations by "scientists" looking into the relationship of stress to depression, PTSD, or what later came to be known as "learned helplessness" in humans.

Similar experiments, occurring a little over 20 years later, questioned whether "sudden death" was an explanatory value related to feeling of helplessness, or whether the rats merely drowned "due to starvation, fatigue, and dehydration" (Hughes & Lynch, 1978, p. 323). Hughes and Lynch (1978) called for further research. In sum, thousands of wild, domesticated, and hybrid rats have been drowned to prove or disprove hypotheses about whether their giving up was due to feelings of helplessness (and what physiological changes that involved) or if they simply died from exhaustion (and what physiological changes that involved) and more research is called for.

Among the most cited of experiments causing suffering are those concerning maternal deprivation in monkeys. They all involved separating new-born or infant monkeys (usually, but not exclusively, rhesus monkeys) from their mothers to see how their behavior and/or physiology were affected. An early study by Arling and Harlow (1967) led to the conclusion that female monkeys who were not raised by their mothers showed deficits in mothering behavior themselves. One of the authors was Harry F. Harlow, whose painful experiments on monkeys lasted for decades. In one article, Harlow et al., (1965, p. 90) the authors note that for the previous 10 years, they experimented on the subject of partial isolation in rhesus monkeys who were raised from birth in bare wire cages and suffered "total maternal deprivation." The monkeys showed such behaviors as "compulsive nonnutritional sucking, repetitive stereotypical movements, detachment from the environment, hostility directed outwardly toward others and inwardly toward the animal's own body" and other abnormal behaviors (Harlow et al., 1965, p. 90). In this article on "Total Isolation in Monkeys," the authors move on to new levels of torture in which monkeys were removed from their

mothers as infants and confined in stainless-steel chambers for three, six, or twelve months. One of the six monkeys confined for three months refused to eat after release and died five days later; one other had to be force fed in order not to die of starvation. One of the researchers' conclusions were that the longer the time the monkeys had been isolated, the less likely they were to socialize with other monkeys after their release (Harlow et al., 1965, p. 94). Harlow and his colleagues published articles based on maternal deprivation in monkeys in numerous journals, including, among others, *Journal of Alternative Psychology* (1964, 1970, 1975, 1976), *Psychological Review* (1976), *American Psychologist* (1958, 1972), *Journal of Child Psychology* (1962), *Journal of Nervous and Mental Disease* (1965), *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* (1964), and *Developmental Psychology* (1972). For 12 years Harlow was editor of the *Journal of Comparative and Physiological Psychology*, known for having published many articles on painful experiments on animals (Singer, 2004, p. 78). He was also known for his experiments on “psychological death” in primates (Singer, 2004, p. 35).

These are only a few examples of the horrendously cruel experiments conducted on nonhuman animals. Animals have been forcefully fed alcohol and drugs to see their reactions upon withdrawal, subjected to burns and excessive heat or cold, given electrical shocks to various parts of their bodies, been driven crazy by pain, had portions of their brains excised, and on and on, usually being killed thereafter in order to conduct autopsies. Horrible experiments on animals that have not been touched on here are reported by anti-vivisectionists such as pathologist Pietro Croce (1999), medical doctor Moneim A. Fadali (1996), psychologist Barbara F. Orlans (1993), experimental psychologist Richard D. Ryder (1975, animal liberationist Peter Singer and medical doctor Robert Sharpe (1988).

2. Socialization into Animal Torture

According to Althusser (2014), schools are one of the most important of ideological state apparatuses aiding in the reproduction of capitalism. I would include here the schooling into the biomedical and psychological/psychiatric industrial complexes and the reproduction of the commodification of animals for profit. Although Althusser does not elaborate on the concept of socialization, it is implicit in his theory of how the ideological state apparatuses work and is inherent with regards to his discussion of how individuals come to accept ideologies carried by

institutions and organization and become acculturated, or schooled, into the practices of these (Althusser, 2014, pp. 156, 198, 236). Those medical doctors, psychologists, psychiatrists who lend themselves to involvement in nonhuman animal experimentation have been socialized into these practices and their accompanying ideologies through both the carrot and the stick.

Hafferty (2009, pp. 54-58), in his study of the professionalization of medical students posits the ideas of education as socialization and medical schools as sites of “occupational socialization.” He argues that “the very object of socialization is to take what is unusual, nonroutine, or discordant to an outsider and render it commonplace and taken for granted by those within the group one seeks to join” (Hafferty, 2009, pp. 60-61). Arguing that medical professionalization and peer pressure are forms of social control, he points out that such socialization, which he later in his article calls “resocialization,” involves “deep learning and internalization” (Hafferty, 2009, pp. 62-63). Professionalizing medical students depends upon, he writes, the instilling of “new ways of thinking, acting, and valuing” (Hafferty, 2009, pp. 63).

With regard to this socialization (or resocialization), Singer (2009, p. 70) notes:

When future medical students, psychology students, or veterinarians reach the university and find that to complete the course of studies on which they have set their hearts they must experiment on living animals, it is difficult for them to refuse to do so, especially since they know what they are being asked to do is standard practice. Those students who have refused to engage in such studies have found themselves failing their courses and are often forced to leave their chosen field of study.

Thus, there is a repressive dimension to the ideological apparatus, as Althusser argued. The students’ forced choice is part of the repression inherent in the educational ideological state apparatus, here as concerns animal experimentation. They must be socialized into speciesism, or be discarded. Students must join the ranks of the speciesists, one who “believes that merely being a member of the human species...gives human beings a special value that warrants considering their well-being to be categorically different from and superior to that of other animals (Bernstein, 2004, p. 49).

Aspiring students can either advance in their careers by taking part in the cruel experiments on animals, or abandon their aspirations.

Singer (2009, p. 72) also argues that once animal experimentation becomes normalized in a field, publications and promotions become dependent on it, and, also, funding agencies tend to support proposals for new experiments. He underscores that researchers in medicine and psychology and the biological sciences “like to get on with their careers, to be promoted, to have their work read and discussed by their colleagues. Publishing papers in appropriate journals is an important element in the rise up the ladder of promotion and increased prestige” (Singer, 2009, pp. 73-74). Some of the articles from these journals have been cited above, and some of the journals listed. Singer (2009, p. 73) also notes that “It is not uncommon...for experimenters to admit that similar experiments have been done many times before, but without this or that minor variation—and the most common ending to a scientific publication is ‘further research is necessary.’” The content and influence of such publications form an integral part of the ideology of animal testing, with lack of publication (and thus lack of grants) being the fate of those who do not conform.

It has been pointed out that legislation demanding drug testing on animals is a boon to the pharmaceutical industry since it provides a “legal sanctuary” for them (Greek & Greek, 2000, p. 48) According to Greek and Greek (2000, p. 57), “The pharmaceutical companies, while privately acknowledging that animal testing does not work, continue to lobby for and use it because their attorneys can get up in front of juries and say, ‘See. My client did due diligence with bunnies, guinea pigs, or rats. So don’t levy damages against us.’”

To summarize, among the motivations for experimentation on nonhuman animals are 1) desire for career advancement; 2) greed (or financial gain) or 3) conformity to practices in the field. As Merriam (2012, p. 133) puts it seems likely “that many scientists who experiment on animals are motivated by the prospect of career advancement, or financial gain, or are simply mindlessly following protocol calling for live animal subjects.”

Grants for research involving nonhuman animal experimentation come from governmental bodies, such as NIH and HHS in the United States, or the pharmaceutical industry. As mentioned previously Ryder (1995, p. 103) contends, through what can be called, following Hafferty, the re-socialized may be blind to this, that it not so much the desire to relieve human

suffering but rather commercial gain that motivates animal testing. As concerns the psychological/psychiatric industrial complex, Scull (2010, p. 1247) writes:

[T]o quite an extraordinary extent, drug money has come to dominate psychiatry. It underwrites psychiatric journals and psychiatric conferences...It makes psychiatric careers, and many of those careers it fosters become shells for their paymasters, zealously promoting off-label uses for drugs whose initial approval was awarded on quite different grounds... Side-effects, even profound, permanent, perhaps fatal side-effects, are ignored or minimized.

Two of the ideological state apparatuses that feed into animal experimentation are university research centers and the legal system. Much animal experimentation has been funded by the National Institute for Mental Health (NIMH), The National Institutes for Health (NIH) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS-- as well as other governmental organizations--as has been mentioned previously. Glasser (2017) examines the importance of these types of research grants to universities that motivate them to perpetuate and even expand experimentation on nonhuman animals.

First, the grants are awarded both directly to the individual project but also cover indirect costs that are granted to the university as a whole. Glasser (2017, p. 108) gives as examples, the costs of “staff to handle the finances, maintain labs and buildings, and other operational costs the university may incur to functionally support research on campus.” He underscores that these funds are in addition to the funds for the experimental project. Although varying from university to university, they often account for an additional 50 percent of the funding granted to the project. Thus, if there is a grant of \$500,000 for the research project, an additional \$250,000 is given to the university for indirect costs (Glasser, 2017, p. 208). Secondly, since the passage of the Bayh-Dole Act of 1980, universities are allowed to patent and sell the research findings, including those done on nonhuman animals (Glasser, 2017, p. 109). Glasser (2017, p. 109) holds that this leads to the commercialization of research findings rather than to the dissemination of knowledge. Notably, advances in knowledge production which has been

one of the justifications(and rationalizations for abuse) advanced by the experimenters for painful animal tests.

Althusser underscores that the legal system is one of the most important ideological state apparatuses—but also as part of the penal system, one of the most important institutions in the repressive state apparatus. He comments that “Law *formally* regulates the interplay of the capitalist relations of production, their property (assets), their rights to ‘use’ and ‘abuse’ their property with complete freedom, and the reciprocal rights to acquire property” (Althusser, 2014, p. 166, italics in original). Animals are considered property under U.S. law and thus can be used and abused with complete freedom, although quasi-counterhegemonic inroads may be made (though they tend to be coopted and distorted by the ruling capitalist interests) and counterhegemonic discourses and practices invoked to militate against the hegemonic ideological state apparatuses.

Besides being bolstered by funds from governmental organizations, and the ideological weight this carries, experimentation on nonhuman animals is protected—even coddled-- by the legal system. Calls for legislation to punish and criminalize those activists who videotaped cruelty to animals in laboratories and often liberated them, began in the 1990s (Nibert, 2002, p. 167). Because animal rights activists sometimes broke into laboratories and videotaped procedures that had been prohibited by the quasi-counterhegemonic Animal Welfare Act, liberated animals, and destroyed the equipment used in their torture, a backlash from groups, institutions, and industrial complexes imbricated in the commodification and exploitation of nonhuman animals took place. The efforts of these apparatuses culminated first in the Animal Enterprise Protection Act of 1992 and later in the Animal Terrorism Enterprise Act of 2006, the latter of which was endorsed by the pharmaceutical industry and the Animal Enterprise Protection Coalition (AEFC) founded by the National Association for Biomedical Research (NABR) (Wikipedia; McCoy, 2007, pp. 58-59)

The Animal Enterprise Protection Act of 1992 provided for fines and or imprisonment for any disruption of an animal enterprise that led to the loss or damage of property, including animals (which under U.S. law are defined as property), records or equipment used in their torture that led to more than \$10,000 of economic loss. (Animal Enterprise Protection Act, 1992). The Act was concerned with farm animals as well as laboratory animals. The provisions of this act were strengthened with the passage of the Animal

Enterprise Terrorism Act--which also raved on about physical harm or death to which animal handling personnel might supposedly be subjected (Animal Enterprise Terrorism Act, 2006) No deaths had ever occurred, though this did not stop the FBI from categorizing animal activists as “domestic terrorists” (McCoy, 2007, p. 54)

As concerns the rule of law, Singer (2009, p. 93) notes that legislators are more likely to be influenced by medical, veterinarian, and scientific groups that have lobbies in Washington and that support experimentation on animals, and to pay little attention to their constituents who oppose such experimentation on moral grounds.

3. Quasi-Counterhegemonic Ideological State Apparatuses

Diverging from, but building on Althusser I would like to introduce the concept of quasi-counterhegemonic state apparatuses. By quasi-counterhegemonic state ideological apparatuses is meant not those intended to overthrow the hegemonic ideological state apparatuses, but to modify them in the direction of a supposedly more moral order. Included are organizations/institutions and laws with their own ideologies and practices that aim to bring about modified ideologies and practices while still incorporating the hegemonic ideologies. Thus, as concerns animal experimentation, its existence is not questioned, but efforts to make it a bit kinder are advanced. Among these modifications only two will be considered here: They were proposals for the 3Rs and the passage of amendments to the Animal Welfare Act.

In 1959 William M.S. Russell and Rex L. Burch, with the aim of increasing laboratory animal welfare, published their book *The Principles of Humane Experimental Technique*. In it, they advanced the principles of what became known as the 3Rs, that is Reduction, Refinement, and Replacement. Reduction involved using fewer numbers of animals utilized for any given experiment. Refinement involved decreasing painful and inhumane procedures in any given experiment. Replacement involved seeking non-sentient materials that could lead to the avoidance of the use of animals in experimentation. However, Balls (2020, p. 45) concludes that the application of the 3Rs is not always followed and that claiming to use the 3Rs may be valuable in deflecting criticism from animal experimentation but does not address the question of what justifies the use/abuse of animals in the first

place. Some of the 3Rs were incorporated by amendments to the Animal Welfare Act.

The Animal Welfare Act was originally passed in 1966 under the name Laboratory Animal Welfare Act partially in response to the public outcry over the death following laboratory experiments of a Dalmatian who had been stolen from his yard by a man who trafficked stolen animals into laboratories as well as another case of a stolen pet who was found emaciated in a laboratory (Rudloff, 2017, pp. 173-174). Its aims were to prevent the black market sales of animals to research laboratories by requiring licenses for dealers of animals to research institutions; to ensure good treatment of animals being transported across state lines; and “to ensure humane care and treatment to animals in research facilities” (Frasch, 2016, p. 286). It also called for periodic inspections of the laboratories, which angered the biomedical industry staff (Nibert, 2002, p. 165). The 1966 law covered dogs, cats, monkeys, guinea pigs, hamsters, and rabbits only (Rudloff, 2017, p. 174). A 1980 amendment extended the law to cover research on all warm-blooded animals except farm animals, but also excluded rats, mice, and birds (Frasch, 2016, p. 286, 288; Rudloff, 2017, p. 174) despite the fact, or perhaps because of the fact, that mice and rats are the nonhuman animals most used in experimental research and exploit millions of these animals every year (Lee, 2016a, p 14; Lee, 2016b, pp. 206-207).

The 1985 amendments to the Animal Welfare Act which became known as the Improved Standards for Laboratory Animals Act (ISLAA) purportedly incorporated the 3Rs, in order to decrease the inhumanness of animal testing (Lee, 2016a. p. 23; Lee, 2016b, p. 194). Yet pain relief can still be withheld if it is considered “scientifically necessary.” Lee (2016b, p. 200) points out that definitions by scientists and by animal welfare activists of what is “scientifically necessary” would probably differ. Furthermore, the stress of captivity, handling, and restraint can cause changes in metabolism, immune functions, and susceptibility to disease, thereby affecting their metabolism and psychology, and thus rendering the research results suspect (Bailey, 2018).

Nonetheless, to attempt to incorporate the aims of the 3Rs, to ensure the welfare of animals in laboratories and to supervise laboratory conditions, the 1985 act provided for the establishment of Institutional Animal Care and Use Committees (IACUCs). Rudloff (2017, p. 176) holds they were instituted as a result of society’s concerns about the welfare of these

nonhuman animals. One of the members of the committee (with a minimum membership of three persons) would have to include one person who was not employed by the research institution (Orlans, 1993, p. 55); yet is the chief executive of that institution who is to select all of the members (Lee, 2016b: 201-202).

As Frasci (2016, p. 289) points out, the IACUCs “generally do not include people with animal protection interests.” Part of the duties of the IACUCs members is to review the conditions in which laboratory animals are kept and to discourage experiments in that involve pain or distress to the animals. As seen above, experiments causing horrible pain and distress, conducted primarily by the psychological/psychiatric industrial complex, are quite common. The call for analgesics (pain medications) in the case of pain is rejected in some experiments because it would affect the results of the experiments. There is some consensus that contemporarily the Animals Welfare Act and its amendments has never been strictly enforced and the outside IACUC member supposedly representing the interests of animals and animal welfare groups is often part of the inner circle of the researchers (e.g., Frasci, 2016; Lee, 2016b; Rudloff, 2017). Earlier on it was noted that if the outside member indeed represented the animals’ interests, s/he might be pressured to conform to the consensus of the other committee members, or their objections and input ignored, or their negative vote on a project or procedure counting for little and essentially nullified by the “scientists” on the committee (Orlans, 1993, Ch. 7).

Concerning the futility of the provisions of the original Animal Welfare Act (and by generalization, also its amendments) Singer points out:

The researchers “cannot of course give dogs the continual electric shocks that will produce a state of helplessness if they anesthetize them at the same time; nor can they produce depression in monkeys while keeping them happy and oblivious with drugs. So in such cases they can truthfully state that the objectives of the experiment cannot be achieved if pain-relieving drugs are used, and then go on with the experiment as they would have done before the act came into existence. (2009, p. 76)

The provision that pain can be caused only if deemed scientifically necessary, a clause included in the 1985 Act as well, promises that painful experiments

will continue, and gives wide leeway for researchers to do whatever they wish to nonhuman animals.

To conclude, the two examples here, of a call for the 3Rs and the passage of the Animal Welfare Act and its amendments, are only quasi-counterhegemonic. Purportedly aimed at mitigating the wholesale torture of laboratory animals, they not only fail to do so, but also openly endorse the idea that animal testing is necessary if it will benefit humans. The amounts of money earned through funding, grants, and financial arrangements with the pharmaceutical industry appears to be the primary motivation and the bedrock of the continuance of experimentation on nonhuman animals. The commodification of these animals that is at the center of the biomedical and psychological/psychiatric industries, is part of the reproduction of capitalism. They are a form of quasi-counterhegemonic ideological apparatuses that reinforce the very practices they seek to modify.

4. Counterhegemonic Ideologies and Some Counter-Hegemonic Practices.

I will not consider here the non-profit animal rights organizations that oppose the use of animals in laboratories, such as The Humane Society of the United States, People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), Physicians Committee for Social Responsibility, the National Antivivisection Society, and many, many more. Rather, the arguments against the use of research on animals will be outlined. They fall into three types. First is the argument that research on animals is not always transferable to the human condition, and may even aggravate human ills. Second is the argument that animal testing is totally unnecessary in pursuing the goal of human health. Third, is the argument that such cruelty to living beings is morally bankrupt.

4.1 Animal Experimentation as Unreliable

Numerous examples have been given by the anti-vivisectionists—some of whom previous engaged in research on animals—of how 1) tests on animals sometimes are not transferable to humans and may even cause damage; 2) negative results on animals does not always mean negative results for humans.

Fadali (1999, pp. 44-50) lists 69 medicines tested on animals that have, for the most part, far different effects on laboratory animals than on

humans. Some are safe for animals, but not humans, some are safe for humans but not animals, and some are dangerous for both. As examples of the first is the antibiotic Chloramphenicol which is safe for animals but causes irreversible bone marrow damage in humans; the tuberculosis treatment Isoniazide which causes no liver damage in animals but does in humans; the anti-arthritis drug Suprofin which is safe in animals but causes major liver problems in humans; the often mentioned in the anti-vivisectionist literature Thalidomide which is safe for animals but causes birth defects and fetal deaths in humans; and the antidepressant Zimelidine which causes no problems in animals but can lead to liver problems, nerve damage and paralysis in humans. Lethal to animals but of benefit to humans are aspirin, which kills cats and causes birth defects in cats, dogs, monkey and rats, and penicillin which kills guinea pigs. The antiallergy drug Cortisone causes damage, but in unique ways, to mice, rabbits, and humans.

Croce (1999, pp. 15-17) points out that morphine calms humans but causes frenzy in cats; parsley is not poisonous to humans but kills parrots; botulin is harmless to cats as is arsenic to sheep and hedgehogs; and chloroform is poisonous to dogs, cats, and rabbits. In sum, what is harmful to animals may be helpful to humans and what is not harmful to humans may be so to animals.

Engel (2012) divides the types of errors resulting from testing on nonhuman animals into three types, 1) false negatives, 2) false positives; and 3) false efficacy predictors. False negatives occur when it is predicted after animal experimentation that a drug will be safe for humans. Two of the examples he gives are Thalidomide (mentioned above) and Vioxx which protects against heart attacks and vascular disease in animals but causes heart attacks strokes and liver failure in humans (Engel, 2012, pp. 221-223). False positives include those drugs that harm animals but are effective on humans, such as penicillin—also harmless in rabbits but lethal, as seen above, in guinea pigs and hamsters. He remarks that if penicillin had been tested on these latter animals it would have been rejected for human use (Engel, 2012, p. 225). And as for false efficacy predictors Engel (2012, p. 223) points out that drugs that are effective in animals may prove ineffective in humans—a finding, he underscores that comes after billions of research dollars are spent on testing these pharmaceuticals rather than being spent on trying to find a means of preventing the disease in the first place.

C. Ray Greek, M.D. and Jean Swingle Greek, DVM dedicate a chapter of their book, *Sacred Cows and Golden Geese* (2000, Ch. 4) to documenting false negatives and false positives of medications as they relate to animal experimentation. Two of their examples of false negatives (in which animals are not affected but humans are) are, 1) birth control pills that decrease blood clots in dogs, have no effect in other animals, but cause “life challenging blood cloths in some women;” and 2) a heart medicine, Perhexiline, that caused liver failure in humans but did not have the same effect on animals (Greek & Greek, 2000, p. 62, 64). Two of their examples of false positives (in which animals are negatively affected, but humans are not, are: 1) the antibiotic Streptomycin causes limb malformation in the offspring of rats; and 2) the anti-tuberculosis medicine, Isoniazid, causes cancer in animals (Greek & Greek, 2000, pp. 72-74)

Bernstein (2004, p. 134-137) also gives a number of examples of types of errors. He holds that experiments on dogs, rats, mice, and hamsters would show Vitamin C to be a useless additive to human diets, because these animals produce this vitamin in their own bodies. Bernstein (2004, p. 134) also lists some of the drugs that would have been rejected if they had been tested on animals: insulin, which causes malnutrition in chickens, rabbits, and mice, and digitalis, used in humans to lower blood pressure but can lead to high blood pressure in animals.

To summarize, millions and millions of animals are subjected to drug testing to develop pharmaceuticals that may be dangerous, even lethal, to humans or that have no effect at all on them. In the words of Balls (2018, p. 2): “About 95% of all new drugs have to be withdrawn during or after clinical trials, or even after registration for clinical use, because of lack of efficacy or unacceptable adverse effects not detected during preclinical testing, which relies heavily on laboratory animal tests.”

4.2 Animal Experimentation as Unnecessary

There are other methods of gaining knowledge about drugs and diseases than testing on animals. Among those alternatives that have been proposed, and that already have achieved success, are epidemiological studies, clinical studies of patients using volunteers, *in vitro* cell and tissue testing, mathematical modeling and computer simulation, the use of autopsies, genetic research, the use of diagnostic imaging such as ultrasounds, CAT (computer aided tomography) scans and MRIs (magnetic

resonance imaging, and PET (positron electron tomography), and post-marketing surveillance to uncover the side effects of the drugs (Greek & Greek, 2000, Ch. 6).

Epidemiological studies map the occurrence of a disease by examining populations segmented by age, sex, and location—whether local or global. Bernstein (2004, p. 142) gives an example of an epidemiological study: “Advances in the prevention and treatment of heart disease are largely a result of epidemiological research. Shortly after World War II Ancel Keys discovered that cholesterol rates were substantially lower in poorly fed Europeans than in well-fed Americans. This marked the beginning of the idea that diet and coronary heart disease are closely linked.” The link between smoking and lung cancer was also discovered through epidemiological research.

In vitro (in a test tube) techniques use cell, organ, or tissue cultures to examine such questions as the toxicity of a chemical or a drug; for example, skin irritation tests can be used on cultures of human epidermis (Monamy, 2017, p. 84). Such cells, organs and tissues can be retrieved from human bodies *post mortem* (Monamy, 2017, p. 87). The development of cholesterol- and triglyceride-lowering drugs for coronary heart disease came from *in vitro* testing (Bernstein, 2004, p. 143). Croce (2017, p. 158) suggests that such *in vitro* tests are an important source of information on viruses, on hormones, on toxicology, on carcinogenic substances, and on immunological possibilities, among other things. Noting that the teratogenic effects (those causing birth defects) of Thalidomide were not detected by research on nonhuman animals, Croce (2017: 166-167) holds that *in vitro* studies can also uncover teratogenicity. Computer modeling and simulation, also known as *in silico* research, promises to be a valuable research tool that does not necessitate the torture and killing of animals. For example, using such sources as a population’s electrocardiograms and magnetic resonance images have been found valuable in developing pharmaceuticals for cardiac problems in humans (Rodriguez, 2019).

In preventing the endless recapitulation and redundancy of previous research, it has been suggested that all past and present research be computerized, so that it is accessible to all researchers (Croce, 2017, p. 129). Computer simulations along with mathematical modelling can also be used to pinpoint the etiology and thus perhaps the cures for various diseases. For those pre-medical, physiology and medical/psychiatric students there are

computer simulations such as *Anatomy and Physiology Revealed* for discovering the workings of the brain and heat and circulatory functions (Monamy, 2017, p. 85). Other computer simulations also exist.

In sum, there are various alternatives to animal testing that do not involve cruelty to nonhuman animals, and that promise to be scientifically far more valid.

4.3 Moral Arguments Against the Abuse of Animals in Laboratories

Nonhuman animals should not be treated as property. They are sentient beings with rich social and emotional lives. They feel pain, stress, terror, loneliness, all of which are exacerbated under laboratory conditions and have formed an integral part of experimentation on these living beings. A kind of speciesism, similar to racism and sexism in that it discounts the lives of others by those who hold power, underlies the horrendous torture of animals in experimental laboratories. The object of this speciesism is almost always economic gain.

In his ongoing arguments against treating animals as property (and echoing arguments introduced previously), Francione contends:

In the United States alone, we use millions of animals annually for biomedical experiments, product testing, and education. Animals are used to measure the effects of toxins, diseases, drugs, radiation, bullets and all forms of physical and psychological deprivations. We burn, poison, irradiate, blind, starve, and electrocute them. They are purposely riddled with diseases such as cancer and infections such as pneumonia. We deprive them of sleep, keep them in solitary confinement, remove their limbs and eyes, addict them with drugs, force them to withdraw from drug addiction, and cage them for the duration of their lives. If they do not die during experimental procedures, we almost always kill them immediately afterwards, or we recycle them for other experiments or tests then kill them. (2008, p. 27)

Such treatment of any living, sentient being shows only the deepest moral bankruptcy. Done in the name of economic gain these practices nothing more than abhorrent acts of torture.

Conclusions

The laboratory animal industrial complex is undergirded by ideological state apparatuses, including the educational system for medical and psychiatric researchers, the legal system that protects pharmaceutical companies, the institutions involved in grant funding, and a hegemonic discourse that claims animal testing is necessary for human welfare. The accumulation of capital is involved in all of these ideological state apparatuses—funding for researchers, funding for research universities, industries supplying laboratory animals and laboratory equipment, among others, all earn or are beneficiaries of large sums of money and thus lobby for its continuance. The examples of cruel, even horrific experiments on animals given in the paper are a miniscule sampling of what is going on in laboratories today and justified by it being useful for human while hiding pecuniary motives.

The quasi-counterhegemonic position accepts animal testing as a necessity. The endorsers of this position do call for less pain (but accept that there will be some pain), less multitudes of animals to be utilized (but accept that some animals will be utilized), and, if possible, the replacement of animal experimentation with other forms of scientific inquiry. With the latter suggestion they overlap with the counter-hegemonic position. Counter-hegemonic discourse holds that 1) animal testing is unnecessary and 2) animal testing may lead to results not applicable to humans and even harmful to them. Many also endorse the position that animal testing is abhorrently immoral and point out the moral bankruptcy of the horrendous cruelty involved in animal experimentation.

One wonders how much hope can be given to the counter-hegemonic position given its entrenchment in educational and legal ideological state apparatuses, and the amount of money being made on the desecrated bodies of nonhuman animals. As other counterhegemonic discourses and movements, it must erode at least and overthrow at best the hegemonic discourse, a discourse that justifies and promotes the torture of living beings. It has been a long time since efforts to undermine the hegemonic discourses of racism, sexism, and classism but they (with occasional setbacks) are slowly being eroded. Hopefully speciesism will be as well. Perhaps researchers pioneering alternative methods such as *in vitro* and *in silico* testing, as well as computer simulation and epidemiological studies, will (justifiably) undermine the profit-making incentives involved in exploiting nonhuman animals for biomedical and psychological/psychiatric testing.

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Coyotes

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Abstract

A call to resist the maddening homogeneity of domestication and instead embrace an ethos of the coyote, whereby might deliberately live. By encroaching upon the coyote's territory, we encroach upon our humanity.

Keywords: *coyotes; coyote ethos; deep ecology; ethics; encroachment; habitus*

A small patch remains for them.

Split-rail fencing and homogenous houses circumscribe
the peripheries, their shrinking patch,

 yipping and huffing bouncing through half-built boxy houses,
 wistful whining, high and longing, riding breezes through
 rows of green, then grey, then brown blocky sentinels
 (then green, then grey, then brown again).

Unexpected, heavy snowfall drives builders and craftsmen away.

No foundations to pour, siding half-finished and unpainted,
 stacks of drywall in garages where melting snow soaks exposed
gypsum.

No carpets, no tile, no framing. All cancelled.

 Only snow and their calls buoyed on cold morning winds.

I like to walk through those shrinking woods.

 Once, one could follow a path to seemingly forgotten copses,
 a long rotted amphitheater with mossy, mushroomed benches,
old growth oak and maples jumbled, fallen,
new shoots exploding through rich, deep layers of decayed brush.
In the spring I foraged fiddleheads, the new growth,
sluicing through the cutting, natty old ferns, in awe of fecundity.

On a morning of snow, a morning claiming

 silence against generators, tile saws, and nail guns,

I saw their tracks, in their small patch.

Perhaps they had come to eat the workers' cast offs,

 wrappers, scraps, Styrofoam boxes drifting through the streets.

Perhaps they ventured further out that in the heavy snow,

 feeling safer in a white, still, shrouded morning.

Their tracks, light in heavy snow, smaller

 than the palm of my hand, moving
 contiguously deeper into their shrinking world.

Loud, clumsy crunching through a morning

 that is rightfully theirs; nothing but another worker,
 heavy boots and purpose disturbing peace,

and I feel guilt, and longing, and abiding loss

that one should seek that which is rich and hidden and not ours,

that which wants of nothing until it is forced to want.
That which was untethered, impeccable before circumscription.
And I am angry at these one, two, three
 <<choice of floor plans and custom finishes>>
houses and generic, grotesque footprints poisoning soil with
concrete debris.
And I am angry at a perfunctory nod to conservation--
 these ridiculous, manicured “green areas” tucked in non-descript lot
corners.
I do not have the right to disturb you in your shrinking patch.
I am sorry.

Who is the scavenger? I wonder, in my awkward, ambling way,
struggling through that which was yours.
Feeding upon scraps to satiate a starving soul, famished amidst plenty.
 Obligatory Teslas in garages.
 Radiant Wi-Fi polluting air meant for bays and howls and birdsong.
 Desperate for sunlight filtered through trees--
 instead refracted off a hundred windows.
And through your shrinking patch I move,
the well-meaning, purposeful, thoughtless predator. Discursive wretch.
 Following tracks...
I see you. Soft rising and sinking clumps of grey and brown,
 cached beneath old ferns and ancient growth.
I’m sorry I came. Please ignore me.
 Be...

Would that this frame and function collapse upon itself..
Would that my clodding, clumping pursuit lighten with each step.
 A chrysalis in motion, throbbing, electric,
 boot prints in the snow growing smaller, patterns changing.
Prints no bigger than the palm of his hand.

He is new here, afraid, awash, excited,
 skulking to them, low to the ground. No threat in him.
He has fed off discarded tamales and French Fries.

He has avoided growling dogs eager to claim dominance.
He has darted away from speeding cars and indifferent drivers.
In this shrinking patch he arrives,
 to find them—to find her—to forget well-kept lawns,
 or neighbors unable *not* to look through neighbor windows,
 or to forget to forget to charge the Tesla,
 or to worry more about a solid shit than a limpid Wi-Fi
signal.

To wake early to rustling in the ferns,
 or to perk ears to the first birdsong,
 such as it is, in trees—such that remain.
To huff, to bay, to leave tracks for those gracious suppliants coming to find
us
in our shrinking patch.

I woke early as the snows surrendered to Pacific rains.
Generators started, paint and drywall sprayers churning,
 stunted starting followed by convulsed stopping.
Tile saws groaning as they cut through fascia stone adorning entry ways.
All the sounds of progress this morning, through corridors
 of half-built houses pregnant with a choice of finishes.
Tomorrow I'll wake earlier, and earlier again if hunger drives me,
 craning, ears perked, listening.
Staying closest to her,
venturing out to feed and then to rest in this, our shrinking patch.

Coyote

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Abstract

Coyote looking into the distance in Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado.

Keywords: *coyote; animal-land ethic*



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Abiodun Oluseye teaches English and Communication Studies at the Federal Polytechnic Ilaro. He has done extensive works on the study of ecocriticism in Nigeria and has been published in reputable journals.

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M. Shadee Malaklou is a critical race and gender and sexuality studies scholar with expertise in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952). Her scholarship interrogates social and political constructions of time to argue that gender and sexuality are produced through the exclusion of black persons from human recognition and protections. In addition to writing for academic journals, Malaklou regularly publishes think pieces, most recently, in *The Conversationalist*, *The Feminist Wire*, and *CounterPunch*; and periodically contributes to *Always Already: A Critical Theory Podcast* as the Frantz Fanon correspondent. Prior to joining Berea College in Fall 2019 as Chair and Assistant Professor of Women's and Gender Studies and the founding Director of its Women's and Gender Non-Conforming Center, Malaklou served as Assistant Professor (2016-2019) and Acting Chair (2018-2019) of Critical Identity Studies at Beloit College, where she was also a Mellon Faculty Fellow for the Associated Colleges of the Midwest (2016-2018). Malaklou also currently serves as visiting faculty in the Centre for Expanded Poetics at Concordia University in Montreal.

Talitha May is a writer and researcher who lives in Portland, Oregon.

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nonhuman animals and has a forthcoming article on the fur trade in a volume in *Research in Political Economy* on the capitalist commodification of nonhuman animals.

JCAS Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established to foster academic study of critical animal issues in contemporary society. While animal studies is increasingly becoming a field of importance in the academy, much work being done under this moniker takes a reformist or depoliticized approach that fails to mount a more serious critique of underlying issues of political economy and speciesist philosophy. JCAS is an interdisciplinary journal with an emphasis on animal liberation philosophy and policy issues. The journal was designed to build up the common activist's knowledge of animal liberation while at the same time appealing to academic specialists. We encourage and actively pursue a diversity of viewpoints of contributors from the frontlines of activism to academics. We have created the journal to facilitate communication between the many diverse perspectives of the animal liberation movement. Thus, we especially encourage submissions that seek to create new syntheses between differing disputing parties and to explore paradigms not currently examined.

Suggested Topics

Papers are welcomed in any area of animal liberation philosophy from any discipline, and presenters are encouraged to share theses or dissertation chapters. Since a major goal of the Institute for Critical Animal Studies is to foster philosophical, critical, and analytical thinking about animal liberation, papers that contribute to this project will be given priority (especially papers that address critical theory, political philosophy, social movement analysis, tactical analysis, feminism, activism and academia, Continental philosophy, or post-colonial perspectives). We especially encourage contributions that engage animal liberation in disciplines and debates that have received little previous attention.

Review Process

Each paper submitted is initially reviewed for general suitability for publication; suitable submissions will be read by at least two members of the journal's editorial board.

Manuscript Requirements

The manuscript should be in MS Word format and follow APA guidelines. All submissions should be double-spaced and in 12 point Times New Roman. Good quality electronic copies of all figures and tables should also be provided. All manuscripts should conform to American English grammar spelling.

As a guide, we ask that regular essays and reviews be between 2000-8000 words and have no endnotes. In exceptional circumstances, JCAS will consider publishing extended essays. Authors should supply a brief abstract of the paper

(of no more than 250 words). A brief autobiographical note should be supplied which includes full names, affiliation email address, and full contact details.

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