

Journal for Critical Animal Studies

ISSN: 1948-352X

[Journal for Critical Animal Studies](#)

Editor

Dr. Amber E. George
Galen University

Peer Reviewers

Michael Anderson
Drew University

Annie Côté Bernatchez
University of Ottawa

Amanda (Mandy) Bunten-Walberg
Queen's University

Dr. Stella Capocci
Montana Tech

Dr. Matthew Cole
The Open University

Gretchen Cook
University of Tennessee

Christian Dymond
Queen Mary University of London

Dr. Carrie P. Freeman
Georgia State University

Michelle Gardner
Galen College

Dr. Cathy B. Glenn
Independent Scholar

Krista Hiddema
Royal Roads University

William Huggins
Independent Scholar

Dr. Stephen R. Kauffman
Christian Vegetarian Association

Madalynn Madigar
University of Montana

Z. Zane McNeill
Central European University

Dr. Anthony J. Nocella II
Salt Lake Community College

Dr. Emily Patterson-Kane
American Veterinary Medical
Association

Dr. Katherine Perlo
Independent Scholar

T. N. Rowan
York University

Jerika Sanderson
Independent Scholar

Colin H. Simonds
Queen's University

Monica Sousa
York University

Taylor E. Staneff
University of Victoria

Elizabeth Tavella
University of Chicago

Tamar Diana Wilson
Independent Scholar

Allen Zimmerman
Georgia State University

Contents

- Issue Introduction: Intertwining Threads of Coexistence pp. 3-5
Amber E. George
- Essay: Collaborations of Care: On Writing Excess pp. 6-19
and a Pig Named Jessica
Solomon Davis and Talitha May
- Essay: Exploring Nonhuman Animal Representation pp. 20-44
in Children's Media: A Critical Literature Review
Olatz Aranceta-Reboredo
- Essay: Animal Liberation as Buddha Activity: pp. 45-63
A Tibetan Buddhist Approach to Liberative Praxis
Colin Simonds
- Essay: The Cat Who Questions My Humanity: pp. 64-83
Ruminations On Animals and Philosophy
Elliot Mason
- Essay: Monstrous Tricks of the Tongue: Species pp. 84-110
Performativity and Domestication
Samantha Baugus
- Essay: Generalized Prejudice Reduction: Speciesism, pp. 110-139
Sexism and Racism - What if We Can Diminish All by
Tackling Just one?
Dusan Pajovic and Ricardo Borges Rodrigues
- Book Review: Edibility and In-Vitro Meat: Ethical pp. 140-144
Considerations
Nathan Poirier
- Book Review: Game. Animals, Video Games and pp. 145-150
Humanity
Emelia Quinn

Book Review: The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21 st Century <i>Juan Jose Ponce León</i>	pp. 151-161
Video Game Review: Stray and Endling: Extinction is Forever <i>Richard Giles</i>	pp. 162-169
Poem: Six Poems About What We Eat <i>Lisa Kemmerer</i>	pp. 170-172
Poem: Queering Animal Law, A Haiku Series <i>Sam Skinner</i>	pp. 173-174
Author Biographies	pp. 175-177
JCAS Submission Guidelines	pp. 178-179

Issue Introduction: Intertwining Threads of Coexistence

Amber E. George

drambergeorge@gmail.com

In this issue, we invite you to embark on an immersive journey into the world of critical animal studies, guided by a carefully curated selection of essays, insightful critiques, and heartfelt poems. This issue serves as a rallying cry for scholar-activists and thinkers who dare to challenge the status quo, urging us to reimagine our relationships with the nonhuman beings we share our world with. Each contribution stands as a powerful testament to the transformative potential of critical animal studies, delving into the ethical, cultural, and philosophical underpinnings of animal liberation. This endeavor is not merely an academic exercise but a form of activism – a call to action for those who recognize the urgent need for advocacy in scholarship. Let these pages serve as a canvas where the pursuit of knowledge meets the heart of activism, painting a vision of a future where we move beyond coexistence and embrace a shared destiny deeply interwoven with the lives of all sentient beings.

We begin with Solomon Davis and Talitha May's contemplative essay, "Collaborations of Care: On Writing Excess and a Pig Named Jessica," which delves into the relationship between humans and animals within the domain of care. The narrative unwinds slowly, inviting readers to pause and consider the interspecies connections that shape human and animal lives through the lens of a narrative that centers around a compassionate bond with Jessica, the pig.

Olatz Aranceta-Reboredo's "Exploring Nonhuman Animal Representation in Children's Media: A Critical Literature Review," critically examines the portrayal of animals in children's media. The essay probes the consequences of imbuing nonhuman characters with human traits and questions the implications these portrayals have on young minds in shaping their views on the natural world.

In "Animal Liberation as Buddha Activity: A Tibetan Buddhist Approach to Liberative Praxis," Colin Simonds offers a unique fusion of spirituality and activism. This essay explores how Buddhist principles can inform and inspire the pursuit of animal liberation, suggesting a path of compassion that transcends cultural boundaries and speaks to universal tenets of ethical conduct.

Elliot Mason's "The Cat Who Questions My Humanity: Ruminations On Animals and Philosophy" invites readers into a personal philosophical inquiry. Mason's interaction with a contemplative feline serves as a catalyst for a broader discussion on the essence of humanity and the ethical obligations that arise from our recognition of animal sentience.

Samantha Baugus' "Monstrous Tricks of the Tongue: Species Performativity and Domestication" scrutinizes the language surrounding domestication and speciesism. Baugus argues for a critical awareness of the performativity of language and its power in shaping our engagement with different species. Similarly, in the essay "Generalized Prejudice Reduction: Speciesism, Sexism, and Racism – What if We Can Diminish All by Tacking Just One?" by Dusan Pajovic and Borges Rodrigues, readers are invited to consider how addressing one specific prejudice, and the Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) that supports it could lead to a broader decline in prejudicial attitudes against nonhumans.

The conversation continues into the realm of ethics with Nathan Poirier's book review, "Edibility and In-Vitro Meat: Ethical Considerations," which confronts the moral dilemmas presented by in-vitro meat production. The piece encourages reevaluating our food choices and their impacts on animal welfare and environmental sustainability. Emelia Quinn's review of "Game. Animals, Video Games and Humanity" delves into the representation of animals in the virtual playgrounds of video games, questioning how these digital environments reflect and potentially mold our attitudes toward real animals.

Juan Jose Ponce León's critical examination of "The Politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st Century" presents a radical vision for a transformative movement that seeks justice for animals, humans, and the environment alike, challenging the status quo and advocating for a comprehensive approach to liberation. Richard Giles' poignant review of "Stray and Endling: Extinction is Forever" contemplates the irreversible loss of species through the lens of literature, emphasizing the urgent need for conservation and the role of storytelling in preserving the memory of the lost.

Lastly, the issue is punctuated with poetic reflections. Lisa Kemmerer's "Six Poems About What We Eat" and Sam Skinner's "Queering Animal Law, A Haiku Series" offer lyrical musings that stir the conscience and capture the essence of our complex relationships with animals, both in law and on our plates. Together, these contributions weave a rich narrative that

challenges readers to reassess the traditional hierarchy between humans and animals, urging a reimagining of our roles in this interdependent web of life.

ESSAY: Collaborations of Care: On Writing and a Pig Named Jessica

Solomon Davis and Talitha May

solwkdavis@gmail.com; tdm@pdx.edu

Abstract

This collaborative *essai* is a hybrid of prose and poetry that reflects upon two different experiences with farmed animals. The prose explains the lessons a rhetoric and writing instructor learned from attending Farm Sanctuary's inaugural *Social justice and our food system* online course whereas the poetry recounts a philosophy instructor's lived-experience with a lost pig named Jessica. Together, these virtual and material experiences with animals echo the pedagogical and everyday importance of cultivating new notions of language and writing spaces to engage in alternative ways of living.

keywords: Farm Sanctuary, writing, intersectionality, care, pig lessons.

The Black Lives Matter protests across the United States commanded a collective challenge to systematic and institutionalized racism. In turn, the protests, and particularly the 2020 George Floyd protests in Portland, Oregon, prompted me to rethink my critical citizenship as a college writing instructor and rethink my overall pedagogy. As such, I began to question my complicity in a racist society because no one can stand outside societal influence and structures even though we might tell ourselves a different fiction. Sociologist Crystal M. Fleming (2018) explains this complicity when she says, “as long as everyday citizens are fed a daily diet of white supremacist ideology, historical ignorance, and disinformation, the overall power structure remains difficult to detect—and oppose” (p. 35). Imbued with such a view, I found it necessary to continue unmooring myself from habituated ways of thinking. Challenging *habitus* has always been a cornerstone of my teaching philosophy; however, the murder of George Floyd alongside protests commanded me to take pause, further reflect upon my complicity, and earnestly reconsider my notions of critical citizenry.

As such, among my efforts included applying for and being accepted to Farm Sanctuary’s 2021 inaugural, ten-week, online *Social justice and our food system* program alongside a group of approximately ten fellow vegans from varied professional backgrounds including academia, art, social work, and more. Founded in 1986, Farm Sanctuary is the first sanctuary in the United States for farmed animals—the sanctuary advocates for systemic reform of the treatment of non-human animals and educates the public about plant-based living. Facilitated by Farm Sanctuary’s Director of Social Justice Initiatives, Miko Brown, a Black vegan whose work in social justice spans decades, the program drew upon a variety of genres for participants to read/listen to/watch from the expertise of various scholar-activists and histories of resident non-human animals. The program adopted a social justice and vegan framework to examine the colonialist history of the US food system that continues to oppress human and non-human animals.

We not only met asynchronously via Slack, an online workspace to discuss readings, ask questions and respond to one another, but also synchronously over Zoom to share resources; further understand complex and nuanced relationships between the oppression of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and non-human animals; and engage vegan praxis in a variety of ways. Participating in Farm Sanctuary’s program informed and influenced my overall pedagogy in unexpected ways and I was excited

to share my experiences with other instructors including a philosophy instructor named Solomon Davis who writes poetry.

Upon discussing the program with him and sharing stories of Farm Sanctuary animal ambassadors, he recounted his experience of once caring for a piglet whose history was a mystery. One late summer in Bothell, Washington, a tiny piglet somehow had found her way into his neighbor's yard—no one reported her missing, so Solomon and his wife named the piglet Jessica and began taking care of her despite lacking experience with pig care. Our discussions about our different virtual and material experiences began to echo similar ideas.

More than merely echo, however, our conversations veered into inquiry whereupon our conversations began to clarify one another and center on the limitations of language and how, in turn, these limitations influence how we experience the world. Solomon's experience with Jessica, for example, prompted him to question how we might become attuned to sensing, subtle, extra-linguistic lessons from non-human animals? For me, the program invited me to reconsider the limitations of mainstream, academic writing in the context of writing about critical animal studies, and specifically, my writing pedagogy, which unwittingly perpetuated a normative pedagogy of coherence and racism rather than of multidimensionality.

Writing about the limitations of pedagogical prescription is nothing new—the field of composition is awash with this worn idea; nonetheless, our virtual and material experiences helped me realize that writing about critical animal studies/environmentalism/etc. commands an experimental site of language/writing excess that allows writers to draw connections, spark new ideas, examine how issues are coextensive, and by extension, wrest sense from our complex lives and engage in alternative ways of living.

As such, in this hybrid text, we juxtapose our two experiences—one virtual and the other material alongside prose and poetry (with mine being the former and Solomon's the latter) to re-imagine new, genre defying writing spaces that have the capacity to forge and affirm new ways of thinking. This experimental text attempts to function as smart glasses combining both virtual and material experiences, but without the overlay of corporate ideology. In French, the term *essai* means attempt—as such, this text is an attempt—an experimental *essai* that invites you to consider what might inventive, experimental, and caring collaborations spark? How might

we push language/writing in new directions and become attuned to sensing subtle, extra-linguistic lessons?

The Law of Coherence

Farm Sanctuary framed its program with an intersectional approach to cultivate an understanding of how social justice concerns are entangled with the exploitation of animals. Moreover, the program emphasized how cross-issue alliances are essential for systemic change. The backgrounds of Farm Sanctuary animal ambassadors and the intersectional scholarship of scholar-activists such as pattrice jones, Syl Ko, Aph Ko, Sunaura Taylor, A. Breeze Harper, Lauren Ornelas, Leah Penniman, Kathryn Gillespie, Billy-Ray Belcourt, and others offered intersectionality as a frame of intelligibility for me to understand how to teach writing about critical animal studies—a wicked subject that exceeds the focus, coherence, and orderliness of mainstream composition. Collectively, they suggest that when we write about the oppression of animals, we also write about racism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism, classism, speciesism, and other forms of social injustice.

The word composition derives from the Latin *componere*, which means to put together; however, when I initially taught environmental sustainability writing, and environmentally themed writing units in other classes, I inadvertently severed ideas when I pushed for focus, clarity, coherence, and concision. Reflecting upon my ungenerous, composite comments to student texts, for example, I would question and command: *writing about racism, sexism, classism, and animal exploitation? Focus on one or the other—not x, y, and z; eliminate the detours and circuitous argumentation, and get to the point.*

I remember how when I first taught environmental sustainability writing courses, I normally thought my students wrote multi-directional, starfish-like texts devoid of focused ideas and thesis statements. Instead of valuing these texts, I instead pushed students toward something akin to what Michel Foucault (2010) calls the “law of coherence,” which aims to restore “hidden unity” (p. 149). As such, I inadvertently severed the capacity for writers to engage complexity, nuance, curiosity, inventiveness, and new ways of thinking. Moreover, I limited my capacities as a reader—I read texts in idealistic and reductive ways that deprecate the world as it is with all its wicked problems. I prevented myself from engaging what Friedrich Nietzsche (2020) characterizes as the “perfect reader” who is “a monster of

courage and curiosity who is also supple, cunning, cautious, a born adventurer and discoverer” (p. 103). The violent law of focus and coherence *de-composed* lines of inquiry and subtle, generous, *care-full* thinking the texts commanded. Nonetheless, the next round of un-consumable student texts always found a way to regenerate another delicate starfish arm—not all was lost.

Impossible Subject of Writing

Although queer scholars Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes (2011) argue in their *essai* *Queer: An impossible subject for composition* that queer is “an impossible subject” in the composition classroom because queer embraces incoherence in its resistance to normalization and containment, writing about critical animal studies likewise shares queer theory’s underlying logic of impossibility (p. 177). Alexander and Rhodes (2011) maintain, for example, that composition pedagogy cannot adopt other than the heteronormative status quo of “that which is proper, orderly, and harmonious. To do so would be to engage in work that is not composition. Such work is impossible for composition” (p. 196). Queerness rebukes enclosure and definition; however, “excess, often characterized as the extraneous, as the ‘off topic,’ must be trimmed to produce shapely texts” (Alexander & Rhodes, 2011, p. 194). Similarly, writing about critical animal studies rebukes enclosure and exceeds the limitations of composition imagined in such a way that normalizes order and harmony. We can, however, reimagine composition in new ways that account for such impossibility through more panoramic frames.

Compositionist Derek Owens (2001), for instance, maintains that writing about environmental sustainability commands “multiple, simultaneous focusing” through cross disciplinary dialogue (p. 140). His approach calls for a theory to see like bees—to cross pollinate and see in multiple ways (p. 140). Not unlike Kimberlé Crenshaw’s theory of intersectionality, which provides an analytical framework to understanding how multiple oppressions can overlap and interlock in ways invisible to reductive approaches to understanding social injustice, Owens’ notion of bee thinking commands complexity. Although intersectionality allows for complexity and makes visible forms of oppression in which we may have not previously had frames of intelligibility to understand, I am not sure if this mode of analysis alone can help writers grapple with the complexities of writing about critical animal studies.

Limitations of Intersectionality

Many authors whose works I read from Farm Sanctuary's *Social justice and our food system* program identified the limitations of intersectionality. In her text *Racism as zoological witchcraft: A guide to getting out*, for example, Aph Ko (2019) calls for multidimensional analysis because when we characterize categories such as race and gender as independent categories, we lose sight of how they co-constitute one another. In other words, such analysis moves beyond looking for connections/overlaps among categories; instead, multidimensional analysis examines how oppressions *compose* one another—not *de-compose*. Such a consideration gives way to understanding that we cannot discuss racism without also discussing animal oppression. As Ko (2019) argues, for example, “just as racial oppression is anchored to animality, animal oppression is anchored to race”—in other words, no identic separation exists between these categories although we might tell ourselves otherwise (p. 34). Similarly, Billy-Ray Belcourt (2015) asserts “we cannot address animal oppression or talk about animal liberation without naming and subsequently dismantling settler colonialism and white supremacy as political machinations that require the simultaneous exploitation and/or erasure of animal and Indigenous bodies” (p. 1). Ko (2019) and Belcourt (2015) suggest these are not mere intersections; instead, these aspects are mutually constitutive. Animal liberation, animal oppression, settler colonialism, white supremacy? Yes, yes, and yes.

White Curriculum

Upon reflecting on initial classes I taught, however, I realized that severed and de-composed writing by also teaching a white curriculum. In the limited occasions I did talk about race or gender, my syllabus neatly packaged these markers of identity in the ecofeminist section or the deontological ethics section—no surplus, just hermetically sealed units. After reading one of my syllabi from a former class, for example, I wonder where were discussions of the legacy of colonialism such as food apartheid, environmental racism, land exploitation, and more? *What did I teach?* My settler-colonialist syllabus erased BIPOC bodies because I did not have multidimensionality as a frame of intelligibility—I did not yet have refined ears to hear and listen. Moreover, it was a matter of my historical ignorance, racism, and privilege.

Classroom Revision

A few years ago, however, I taught online writing and rhetoric college courses where I wanted to extend what I collectively learned from the Farm Sanctuary program. Students inevitably become sponsors of environmental literacy and advocates for social change, so the classroom always becomes a site of activism. As such, I created a unit about social justice and our food system in which students wrote synthetic texts about how social justice issues intersect with race, gender, ability, age, and other markers of difference. In both classes, students repeatedly shared how they were unaware about issues such as environmental racism prior to reading the week's texts. Moreover, many white students expressed shame, grief, and even rage at their ignorance over a variety of issues such as food apartheid. One student asserted that her mother did not know, until just recently, about the United States' colonialist history. Despite these emotional and revelatory responses, a few students expressed disinterest in the material, avoided engaged writing, and reinforced ubiquitous cultural myths such as meritocracy and reverse racism.

What stood out, repeatedly, however, were conspicuous expressions of shame that cast a long shadow on the classes. Week after week of trying to comfort white students about their shame, I thought about how the BIPOC students in the class witnessed their fellow students' historical ignorance alongside their teacher's racist efforts of comforting white students. Robin DiAngelo's (2021) text *Nice racism: How progressive white people perpetuate racial harm* seems to explain for me why shame was so prevalent in my classes. DiAngelo (2021) points to how bell hooks and Audre Lorde have explained, for instance, that feelings of shame "can function as a form of self-centeredness in which white progressives turn the focus back on themselves" (p. 124). Rather than indulge and "collapse in the face of its ugly manifestations," DiAngelo (2021) asserts we must recognize complicity and take responsibility for our socialization in a racist society (p. 126). By relinquishing ego defense mechanisms such as shame that reinforce our identities as "good" people, we can instead shift focus from being to *doing*. DiAngelo (2018) explains that rather than focusing on whether or not we are racists, because our identities don't fall into false binaries of good/bad, we must instead shift focus to asking if we are "actively seeking to interrupt racism"—as such, it is a matter of doing over being (p. 87). As a result of this experience, I subsequently added intersectional texts such as Mikki Kendall's (2020) *Hood feminism: Notes from the women that a movement forgot* that

not only challenge cultural narratives but also connect to issues such as food insecurity that my students experience.

My efforts of reconceptualizing my white curriculum and normative pedagogy of containment have evolved over a span of two years. I still, however, grapple with composition's relationship with wicked disciplines such as critical animal studies because engaging in anti-racist work rebukes a settled position and requires ongoing care and action. Now, as a member of an anti-racist writing assessment committee at my university, I have adopted new approaches to assessment such as considering students' progressive improvement over cumulative grading practices that merely reinforce privileges students may have initially brought with them to class; nonetheless, I'm still haunted by the limitations of composition pedagogy.

My students from an upper-division course about writing as critical inquiry likewise struggled with writing about intersectionality. Inspired by Food Empowerment's (2022) "One Glass at a Time" booklet about the exploitative US dairy system and my experience of having taught public policy writing, I assigned students to write a brief that would not only identify how specific food choices are implicated in injustices to marginalized communities, workers, the environment, and non-human animals, but also recommend actions for everyday citizens. Composite student reactions to weekly syntheses and the assignment brief pointed to their distressed reactions to the incongruity of academic writing confronting the complexity and messiness of wicked problems. The students attempted to coax and tame a thematic thread only for it to fray in multiple directions. Even their writing demonstrated their struggle of wrangling wickedness into composition's "law of coherence"—I delighted in this struggle because it demonstrated their awareness of language and the choices they have to negotiate as writers. Only when we become aware of the limitations of language, can we begin to sense new possibilities of living.

Even though I assigned the risky genre of a brief to illuminate the centrality of this tension for students to confront excess, complexity and wickedness, some students either dismissed writing the assignment or presenting their briefs, which makes me take pause about how such avoidance suggests how they might negotiate the world's complexity—perhaps they take comfort in a very different world of harmony and order. Despite their dismissiveness, when a couple of students presented their briefs to the class, they turned to the dry-erase board to *draw* messy intersections, overlaps, and divergences of excess thereby creating a new, multimodal

writing space. Their (in)artistic renderings challenged the “law of coherence” and began cultivating new spaces of writing.

Farm Sanctuary’s online program helped me consider how I limited writing to a normative pedagogy of containment and racism rather than of multidimensionality. Writing about critical animal studies commands an experimental site of language as excess that affords writers opportunities to draw connections, forge new ideas, examine how issues are coextensive, and by extension, heighten awareness about how we negotiate living in a complex world. Rather than engage the “law of coherence,” that drains language of vitality and excess, what could a re-conceptualized composition of excess—a putting together—of inventive, experimental, and caring collaborations spark? Could we develop the capacity to sense in new ways? How might we become attuned to sensing, subtle, extra-linguistic lessons?

We invite you to reflect upon these questions as we segue to poetry, which for us, has the affective capacity to push language to its margins and exceed the “law of coherence.” Solomon’s poem “For Her Gifts” echoes many of the aforementioned limitations of language, but also offers an added dimensionality and multimodality that my prose alone cannot address.

Figure 1

Jessica



Figure 2

Jessica and Solomon



For Her Gifts

To carry a simple spirit with me, as I do, warms me,
though you’re gone now, and I languish in a language, so high,
so lofty, lying powerless in the hope you feel, you know,
that you are remembered. Words you cannot hear,
scents lost to you, simple sights no longer seen;
only to remember, as I do, our time and your gifts.

Windows flung free in the teasing warmth of Spring
flooding stale, stagnant air as crisp reverie flows over all.
Faces, pallid and pasty from a long Winter, look to the sun
announcing its return, allowing first bursts of warmth.
Air refreshed, windows are shuttered.
Sun felt, between blinking squints, we turn away,

closing a euphoric aperture, moment lost, erased.
But how fresh, how warm, was your subtle ascension.
Such a tiny thing, your arrival a late Summer mystery,
a piglet finding its way to suburban yards
far from pens, prodding, persecution;
wagging your tail, rooting playfully through falling pears.

The neighbor's yard, not ours, and you became theirs,
naming you *Porkchop*, a revealing joke, the aperture closing.
In a name all that you were became a horrific finality:
a tree whose only purpose in growing was foresting,
a flower grown only to be plucked, displayed,
beings bred and branded only to serve, to work, then to die.

I who have killed, butchered, castrated
as part of a life framed in sanguinary fables,
stood in your warmth, your air,
and I listened to you—*Porkchop* wouldn't do—
for artful definition, for names, kingdoms burn,
innocents die, leaving anamorphic apertures open.

Names we give, our obsession with classifications, categories,
sanctioned sinlessness spraying great crimson swaths;
and here, being with you, listening for your name,
as my wife and I watched the neighbors fiddling
with fencing, getting water, fetching an old dog house.
That won't do, I said, my complicit experience revealed,

announcing that my wife and I would tend to you, for them
that saw you only as an end, a fated name, a work in progress,
placing you in a 6' by 10' hog wire enclosure as they did,

pressed up against a fence from which neighbor dogs
growled and barked, an old dog house too small
for a frame poised to grow, to root, to thrive.

And how you grew little one, as I knew you would,
such a beautiful Hereford, red and muscular,
a white crest centered on bulldozer of a head,
set between soft, wry eyes watching the world about you.
And such curiosity, such an expansive spirit,
rooting and snuffling at my boots as I built you a home,

for a dog house would not do, you who needed to grow,
and though I had a plan forming, though I feared your end,
for now you needed a home; and with care and joy
I built this for you; framed, raised, roofed and dry,
an attached stall with straw replaced beneath Northwest skies,
cleaning up, our daily pilgrimage to visit, to enjoy

the presence of one such as yourself, growing so big.
Peanut butter and apple sandwiches, my oatmeal, pasta,
fruits and vegetables—though you like your carrots cooked.
The neighbors would watch from the porch as you played
with their dog, chasing him round the big fir tree,
and I would grow sad that, through a foggy aperture,

they could so easily see before them playful joy
and, so easily, dismiss your wagging moment as fleeting, insignificant:
one destined to lie upon the couch, the other upon a plate.
Had they, had we, listened better, felt more deeply,
what a gift sounds like, feels like, looks like,
knowing we will turn away, guilty, as we judge play,

as we see joy in our dog, but a heavier, healthier harvest in a hog.
Care presents itself, tests us, and in the test, nuanced natures
challenge us to listen, to see; yet we continue to turn away.
Your lessons were so subtle, for you had no words, no parables,
no singular, all-expressing gesture to show appreciation or need,
and in care, in caring, we needed only to be with you,

removed from the prosaic noise of thanks and selfishly defined reciprocal acts,

and, in listening, embrace gifts, subtle and lasting. Timeless.

Such were yours, and each test of patience a boon.

Feed and water dishes akimbo, your shovel face breaking boards, breaking fencing, my beloved flannel in tatters as you nibbled, pulled at me, letting me know you wanted my attention, my time.

To almost lose you, a bitter cold week rushing in,
and as we came to check on you and spend time,
to break the icy crust off your water, bringing warm breakfast,
we found you cold, breathing slowly, a panic in me so real
that I failed in my care, the task set upon myself, leaving you
on a razor cold night, no others to keep you warm.

No others, no siblings, no pen mates, no warmth on cold nights,
and I hadn't listened, became deafly docile, imagining you a pet
and, in that act, risking the loss of your gifts, your voice, your being.

Dry towels thrown in the dryer to warm you,
rubbing your scruffy bristle to warm you,
as I fumbled through my shed, grabbing kerosene

for a forced air heater I used on cold construction days,
for propane tanks with portable heaters for camping,
and in the roar of a drywall heater you stirred, ate,
found a measure of warmth in our enclosure.

For three nights, every three hours, I refilled that heater,
replaced propane, sat with you, felt your breathing,

falling asleep in rhythm to the bellows, your warm breath, your bulk,
and a sorrow as I listened, for you had grown so much,
so strong, so beautiful, no longer fit to be a backyard curiosity.
Over the next weeks I gauged the neighbors' motives
as they looked upon you, aperture narrowed through desire,
a name they had imposed upon you coming to fruition.

To imagine such an end for you left me desolate, empty,
and scenarios for your ransom, a life for a life, violated me;
one farmer willing to keep you alive for breeding,
for your teat count was good, to produce piglets
born to die and you, your use diminished over time,
inevitably cursed to the same fate: managed, monetized, murdered.

Pig sanctuaries, farm sanctuaries, capacities overwhelmed, good spirits
unable to bring you in, house you, join you to others like you.
Would that you understood me; the neighbors are good people,
they just wouldn't listen, couldn't, nor the crushing host
that cannot, will not, listen lest guilt, trumpeting sentence,
calls them from backyard parties, barbeques, and dismembered being.

But your gifts, subtle and pervasive, not consciously given,
reciprocity carried upon gentle breezes, nestling
in reflective silences beyond measures of *this* or *that*.
Of patience, of empathy, of care without expectation,
of no need for thank you, karmic or heavenly reward:
Kind souls helping change a tire because they wanted to help.

We paid your ransom, found a gracious host to take you in, safe,
fifty wooded, welcoming acres in Skagit scenery, open,
and how I cried to see you go into the trailer,
to follow you up, to see you introduced to others,
and you stood, tranquil yet nervous, looking at me,
a parent unable to walk away from a first school day.

How I carry you with me—benign, beatific spirit—
warmed, and saddened, by a language ill-suited to express my thanks
to one who felt pain, and anger, and need, and wagging joy;
to one who gave such abounding gifts, set such sweetness
on my being by being with, beyond words, in frigid nights,
and I am left with a hope, vain and despairingly human,
that you know I remember and listened and loved you,
Jessica...

References

- Alexander, J., & Rhodes, J. (2011). Queer: An impossible subject for composition. *Journal of Advanced Composition*, 32 (1/2), 177-206. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20866990>
- Belcourt, B. (2014). *Animal bodies, colonial subjects: (Re)locating animality in decolonial thought*. *Societies*, 5, 1-11. doi:10.3390/soc5010001
- DiAngelo, R. (2018). *White fragility: Why it's so hard for white people to talk about racism*. Beacon Press.
- DiAngelo, R. (2021). *Nice racism: How white people perpetuate racial harm*. Beacon Press.
- Fleming, C. M. (2018). *How to be less stupid about race: On racism, white supremacy, and the racial divide*. Beacon Press.
- Food Empowerment Project. (n.d.). *One glass at a time*. <https://gotcolonization.org/>
- Foucault, M. (2010). *The archaeology of knowledge: And the discourse on language*. (A. M. Sheridan Smith, Trans.) Vintage Books. (Original work published 1997).
- Kendall, M. (2020). *Hood feminism: Notes from the women that a movement forgot*. Viking.
- Ko, A. (2019). *Racism as zoological witchcraft: A guide to getting out*. Lantern Books.
- Nietzsche, F. (2020). *The anti-christ, ecce homo, twilight of the idols*. (Judith Norman, Trans.) Cambridge University Press. (Original works published 1888).
- Owens, D. (2001). *Composition and sustainability: Teaching for a threatened generation*. NCTE.

ESSAY: Exploring Nonhuman Animal Representation in Children's Media: A Critical Literature Review

Olatz Aranceta-Reboredo
olazaranceta@gmail.com

Abstract

In contemporary times, children tend to establish stronger emotional connections with nonhuman animals through their depictions in various forms of media rather than through direct experiences in real-life interactions. These portrayals of nonhumans play a decisive role in the cultural canonization of speciesist ideologies and anthropocentric perspectives. This paper aims to contribute to critical animal studies literature on portraying nonhumans in children-oriented content. To this end, this paper conducts a literature review of the pre-existing research on nonhuman animal representations in media for children from a critical animal studies perspective and an anti-speciesist stance. In order to avoid a human-centric perspective of nonhuman representations, the search criteria exclude the analyses that focus on the interpretation of animals as symbols and embodiment of human matters. Overall, nonhuman animals are represented in connection to human issues, within an instrumental continuum and happily “consenting” to being used, and their representations often undergo a process of excessive cutification. Moreover, the persistent gendering of nonhumans includes the projection of human heteronormativity onto nonhumans. Predominantly, the acknowledgment of their individuality depends on the degree of stereotyping and whether the anthropomorphized traits include voice and naming. The representations identified in the literature have been classified and put together to aid future research on the matter by offering a recollection of main representations with an anti-speciesist approach and a diagram that might serve as a tool for analysis.

keywords: Media for children; speciesism; representation of animals; animals in media; anthropomorphizing; disneyfication.

Children are exposed to various media from the very beginning of their lives. They learn about what is “good” or “bad” through the media outlets they consume; societal norms, ethical values, and cultural narratives are part of the information children receive through media content. The values, ideas, and perspectives formed during childhood -and due to the influence of movies and other media- are the basis for how people understand the world for the rest of their lives (Wager, 2014, p. 4). Furthermore, among this knowledge and entertainment, “powerful information on how different kinds of animals are regarded by (adult) human society is also being offered” (Paul, 1996, pp. 178-179).

Nonhuman animals have been part of children-oriented content for centuries; many stories use animal motifs to transmit their messages. Other animals are usually considered practical characters because they allow reader identification while keeping their distance to interpret the messages of a story. As a result, animals are continuously and diversely represented in media for children as protagonists, side characters, part of the story, and more. In decreasing opportunities for children to interact and establish meaningful relationships with other animals, children's parallelly rising relationships with nonhuman representations (Kokai, 2019, p. 103) gain even more relevance. Recent research points out that using anthropomorphized animal characters for telling human stories normalizes and replicates real-life human-nonhuman domination mechanisms, and urges that ways of making animals matter in children's content should be discussed (Andrianova, 2021).

Methodology

This paper hopes to serve as a basis for future research on the representation of nonhuman animals in media for children by providing patterns of representations identified by previous researchers and their discussions. This is achieved by conducting a literature review, a method of research that integrates the perspectives and findings from many empirical findings and helps to provide an overview of an area of interdisciplinary and disparate research (Snyder, 2019) such as Critical Animal Studies in this case. Coming from an anti-speciesist outlook, the literature has been interpreted using a Critical Animal Studies perspective (Taylor & Twine, 2014).

The literature is reviewed using the inductive method, which involves analyzing data to identify themes, concepts, and patterns, which can then

guide the selection of articles or sources for further analysis. As a result, the criteria for selecting relevant articles and sources was based on the themes and patterns that emerged from the data of initial searches. The broad search on academic databases started combining several keywords (e.g., nonhuman animals + media for children ; animals + children's media + representations ; animal representations + children's films / TV ; anthropomorphization + children's media) and took place from February 2021 to May 2021 as part of an end of master's degree project. While reading through the articles, common patterns of analyses were identified, and an issue arose: the discussion is often centered on the pedagogical or symbolical value of nonhumans according to humans' interests. As such, an exclusion criterion was created: the works that seemed to have an approach that did not center animals and their experiences in their scholarly analysis were automatically discarded. This choice was mostly made because the objective of this work is to offer a review of categories and create a tool for conducting a less anthropocentric research. Even if a literature review of human-centred analyses and discussions on nonhuman representations would be interesting research, the interpretation of that data falls outside this paper's scope. Most of the found research has been done on mainstream media like Disney, so the research on representations of marginalized texts (i.e., vegan media) is not part of the review. The works discussed below are amongst the analyses that consider *animals as themselves*—referring to “foremost representations of real nonhuman animals, with bodies, needs, desires, and behaviors that align with those of their species identities” (Philips, 2016, p.51)—when analyzing their representations instead of as just symbols or metaphors of humanness.

This paper reviews the representation of nonhuman animals in media for children, which includes and prioritizes audio-visual content (television series and films) in the search. However, some reviewed studies also consider the representations of nonhumans in other content, such as books and magazines. First, this offers an overview of the representations in children-oriented content in a non-isolated way, looking at media output as a heterogeneity of representations, ideologies, and discourses simultaneously and in opposition. Second, by looking at common points and discrepancies, this paper collects, compares, and contrasts the main archetypes, patterns of representations, and previous analyses' implications. Last, this paper provides a diagram that integrates the contributions of several authors and serves as a tool to not only classify the representation of nonhumans in children's media but also to interpret and understand it in relation to the

approach of the representation (e.g., from human/anthropocentric to nonhuman animal-centered) and characteristics of the portrayal (the degree of anthropomorphizing).

Overall, the paper attempts to contribute to the literature on media representations of nonhuman animals. Dealing with the discursive reproduction of speciesism through the representations of other animals in children-oriented content, this review offers a recollection useful for identifying, criticizing, and critically analyzing speciesism in media for children.

How do Humans Represent Other Animals in Media for Children?

This section will cover existing literature on the representation of nonhuman animals in media for children. The categories used here are extracted from various studies focusing on television content, children's films (where Disney occupies an important place), children's magazines, and animated content, including the children-targeted ones. Most of the selected work has something in common: the represented nonhuman animals showcase anthropomorphic traits.

The anthropomorphic representations of nonhumans are of critical importance because the (mis)conceptions these portrayals create about them last into adulthood and inculcate values and behaviors, including dietary choices—e.g., meat-eating—and ecological attitudes (Andrianova, 2021, p.3). Researchers like Philips (2016), Stanton (2018), Yeung (2020), and Korimboccus (2020) have already pointed out that the representations of nonhuman animals should be problematized not only for their effect on human-human relations but because of their effect on real-life's human-nonhuman relations, especially since corporations can promote the construction of such representations to impact societies, communities, and cultures to their benefit (Yeung, 2020, p. 14).

This section is structured in the following way: to start with, it develops the issue of de-centered nonhumans in both the representations and the analyses. Next, the still human-centered way of picturing humans is targeted, addressing how some representations rely on the societal instrumentalization of nonhuman animals. Moving onto species-specific issues—without losing the anthropocentric approach—a discussion of the stereotyped representations is provided. Afterward, on the topic of anthropomorphism, the issues of Cutification and Disneyfication are addressed. The next subsection delves into the complexity of portrayals. It goes back to the idea

of anthropomorphizing as a tool to invisibilize nonhuman sentience. It is followed by addressing the idea of nonhuman animals as “naturally” belonging to domesticated spaces. Later, the invisibilization of nonhuman experiences is addressed through the exemplifying case of cisheteronormativity being projected onto them. Finally, a summary of the results and further comments close the section.

The de-centering of nonhumans in their own representations

As with other children-oriented content, most of the academic analysis on anthropomorphizing nonhuman animals is human-centered. Research has been conducted on the impact of sexist, racist, heteronormative, and homonormative portrayals that use nonhumans to convey such values. When the representation of nonhumans is problematized, it tends to be human-oriented, and they are placed as no more than symbols or nonhuman embodiments of human struggles (Nagata, 2019; Meeusen, 2019). Nonhuman animals have constantly been conceived in relation to human animals, not by themselves, both in media (Philips, 2016) and in scholars' analyses. Nonhuman animals are denied the possibility to represent themselves or their own interests by both the media producers and the researchers.

In analyses about movies that tackle species-specific issues, such as the one by Meghann Meeusen (2019) in “Power, Prejudice, Predators, and Pets: Representation in Animated Animal Films” regarding *Zootopia* (2016) and *The Secret Life of Pets* (2016), the commentary by the author is limited to the experiences of the nonhuman characters as representativeness for human matters. Situations presented in the films—such as animal testing in *The Secret Life of Pets*—are real-life issues and not limited to animal allegories. However, the group of outcasts that have “suffered at the hands of man” are interpreted as representative “of humans, rather than actual animals” because of the racial coding of such characters (Meeusen, 2019, p. 355).

On the other side of the spectrum, Lynda Korimboccus (2020) offers a thought-provoking examination of the British television show *Peppa Pig* (2004—). Even if Korimboccus points out that in the television series “Peppa Pig and her friends are essentially anthropomorphized animals living in a very human-like society” regardless of the “hints of egomorphic stereotypes” (2020, p.7), she goes a step further and analyses the ‘Peppa Pig Paradox,’ which refers to the phenomenon of children fond of Peppa Pig regardless of their consumption of pig-based products (p. 5). According to Korimboccus

(2020), Peppa Pig would then exemplify the representation of nonhuman animals as symbols and vessels for human societal values, behaviors, and morality; the only connection to their 'pigness' would be the egomorphic stereotypes that do not provide information about the perspectives of pigs or the other species of the show. Nevertheless, she is able to center pigs on the study. As a matter of fact, the case of Peppa Pig points out a paradox already identified by Elisabeth S. Paul in 1996 for the British Children's Television case: including representations of mammal nonhuman animals within the circle of compassion does not mean that specific actions, such as eating or harming them, are questioned on children's television. However, what is the significance of prioritizing the centering of nonhumans and decentering human subjects and experiences in children's content?

Steve Baker (1999) argues that recognizing the necessity for the 'we' (humans) to be a decentered subject has consequences for thinking about nonhuman animals and representation: "The decentering of the human subject opens up a valuable conceptual space for shifting the animal out from the cultural margins" (p. 26). The two commented analyses and the implications of their approaches show that the need to re-center nonhuman animals and their experiences is also applicable to studying their representations. Even if the interpretations of the human dimension of the film's conflicts are valuable and critical for understanding the conveyed messages, they should not displace and invisibilize nonhuman realities that are shown explicitly. Doing so leads to further de-centering of other-than-human animals from their own experiences and narratives in a context where we should be centering them as subjects.

Placing the nonhuman: Instrumentalized representations

In reflecting on the way that the definition, categorization, and representation of nonhuman animals depend on the form of relationship they have with human beings, Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart (2014) argue that these relationships revolve around the (dis)utility imposed onto nonhumans as they are placed on an instrumental continuum (pp. 16-17). With this in mind, the typical characteristics of nonhuman representations might include both their instrumentalization and the lack of equal consideration of nonhuman interests.

In the pioneering study carried out by Gerbner in 1995, "Animal Issues in the Media: A Groundbreaking Report"—where U.S. children's television Saturday programs were included—nonhuman animals were overall

portrayed instrumentally for human's interest, and systems of domination such as speciesism were naturalized, rationalized, and ritualized. Soon after, in 1996, Paul's study on British children's television offered a critical analysis of children's television and the portrayal of nonhuman animals that provide much information of interest for us here. For instance, he identified two main themes: species were depicted differently depending on their position within "the phylogenetic 'hierarchy,'" and the portrayals of nonhuman animals engaging with humans contrasted in "affectionate versus utilitarian relationships" (p. 178).

Meagan Philips' (2016) study on US animated children's films identified several nonhuman representations, including food with no questioning (p. 23), props, symbolic purposes, used to define human characters, and part of the background and with a stereotype-based portrayal—the latter making their personhood either absent or irrelevant (p. 26). Nonhuman animals could also be represented as sidekicks, which place them between the more-than-animal but a less-than-human continuum and differentiated from the other individuals from the species but not equated with human companions (p. 34). These portrayals present a conceptualization of nonhuman animals as objects defined by their utility for humans. Awareness of these categories allows us to reflect on their causes and consequences.

Stereotyped representations

Additionally, several authors have noticed the reproduction of common stereotypes associated with other species in popular culture. Whether it enhances the film's comic appeal or connects the nonhuman individual to certain human groups—an issue that this review will not cover—stereotyped animals are produced in connection to (mis)conceptions and not their real-life behaviors. However, is the inaccuracy of the representation the only problem with stereotyping practices?

These stereotypes that characterize animal representations operate within a body of knowledge, becoming part of the common-sense consciousness, and are connected with prejudices that end up being naturalized (Baker, 1999, pp. 16-19). According to Hall's (1997) work on representation and difference, the representational practices known as stereotyping tend to "to occur where there are gross inequalities of power," and they include essentializing, reductionist, naturalizing and difference-fixing effects, as they reduce the represented individuals to a few essential characteristics which are also represented as fixed by Nature. Stereotyping is a part of the maintenance

of social and symbolic order, and in this context, it facilitates the division between the Us (human) and Them (nonhuman) (pp. 257-258). This problem can be seen in nonhuman stereotyping, especially since anthropomorphism might affect people's ability to distinguish fact from fiction. Reductionist portrayals can misrepresent the truth about animals (altering their *umwelt* or perspective), create unrealistic expectations, hinder conservation efforts, and reinforce negative stereotypes—like fear and villainization of stereotyped animals (Hight, 2017, p. 31). This last idea of negative stereotype reinforcement is especially relevant in the types of animal representations in media for children, and might range from the dullified to the villainized species associations.

Åsa Pettersson (2013) identifies the following frames for nonhuman animal representation in television for children: factual, stereotyped, and anthropomorphic (p. 110). Factual representations are not found as commonly as the others; even in scientific documentaries, species are shown through a human lens and anthropomorphized. Among these three, the stereotyped representation is especially interesting for its consequences in real-life interactions. Unlike the already discussed anthropomorphizing, stereotyping directly associates certain species with (often harmful) stereotypes discussed in detail below.

There is a tendency to choose some species, like crocodiles and snakes, as villains, therefore promoting the association of certain stereotypical traits with particular species (Grazia, 2020, p.11). Certain species, such as spiders, are villainized and full of negative stereotypes; fishes, on the other hand, are collectivized, and their representation cannot be understood outside of their utility as food for humans and other animals (Leventi-Perez, 2011, pp. 88-89). One might wonder why these negative associations are important enough to deserve attention in media for children or the animated genre. Wells (2009) makes a great point by addressing such concern and explaining that if an individual is framed as villainous or mere vermin and later on faces harm without any compassion, there is no “recognition of the animal as a feeling creature” onscreen (p. 116).

Taking into account that children “are not immune to the circulation of popularly held negative beliefs about certain animals” (Taylor & Pacini-Ketchabaw, 2020, p. 5) and that compassion is not extended towards negatively stereotyped species, children and other viewers would then be prone to extend these attitudes in real life. A similar point appears to be asserted by Small (2016), who defends that the portrayal of certain species,

such as wolves, hyenas, and sharks, as “rather villainous” is detrimental for them at a time when “cartoon images of animals shown on television and in movies have become important in influencing people’s attitudes towards animals” (Small, 2016, p. 8). Even if the previously mentioned study by Gerbner might seem outdated because it dates back to 1995, it serves to exemplify the potential influence of the US Saturday morning television. This is so because, in this shows, nonhuman animals were represented as victimized, moralized, and strikingly placed in roles worse than humans: the hero/villain ratio for nonhumans was 10/9 while it stayed at 10/5 for humans, and the good/bad role ratio was 10/9 for nonhumans and 10/7 for humans (Gerbner, 1995, pp. 9-10).

Furthermore, this stereotyping also affects the roles that certain species can have in the stories. When analyzing anthropomorphic animal characters in animated films, there appears to be a tendency to choose some species like dogs and cats, as protagonists and others—such as crocodiles and snakes—as villains, which would further increase the association of not only certain stereotypical traits but also positive or negative moral traits with particular species (Grazia, 2020, p.11). As an example to illustrate this phenomenon, movies like *Lady and the Tramp* (1955) show rats stereotyped as the embodiment of nature and threats, wildness and “part of the nature that *must die*” (Mastroestefano, 2013, p. 39). This specific film would add another layer to the existing negative “vermin” status by adding an anthropomorphized villainous intention of killing a newborn baby, further worsening the bad status.

While presenting certain animals like crocodiles, snakes, spiders, and rats as villains in children’s media might be used to educate children about the danger they pose in real life, this strategy should be problematized from an anti-speciesist perspective. Firstly, presenting these nonhumans as villains may create a harmful and inaccurate view of them in children’s minds, contributing to harmful stereotypes and biases towards these animals. As previously mentioned, such stereotypes and biases can lead to negative attitudes towards the animals, which may create unnecessary fear and misunderstanding. In other words, these portrayals promote speciesism by perpetuating negative stereotypes associated with different nonhuman species. At the same time, this would not be as problematic without the simultaneous celebration of the superiority of the human species and justification of nonhuman subordination to human agency occurring in the same content (Leventi-Perez, 2011, p. 86).

Secondly, it is essential to note that not all the usually villainized nonhumans are dangerous or aggressive toward humans. These individuals have complex social lives and behaviors often overlooked by their simplified portrayals in the media. Instead of portraying certain nonhuman animals as villains, it would be more ethical to provide age-appropriate and accurate information about their behavior and habitats; this would help children learn about the risks of real-life interactions and how to safely behave around them if an encounter occurs. Moreover, teaching children to respect and appreciate the complex lives of these individuals can further cultivate empathy and a desire to protect them and their habitats.

It should be highlighted that stereotyped representations do not affect villainized characters only. For instance, insects are also constantly devalued and placed outside of the moral circle of concern through stereotyping, as happens with Ray in *The Princess and the Frog* (2009) (Grisel, 2012, p. 4). Characters like Ray have no existence beyond their utility and use for the humans in the film; the presentation of his death -squashed off-camera- is distinct because it happens while helping the humans that devalue him and makes his character appear disposable: he dies when he is no longer necessary (Grisel, 2012, pp. 11-14). A collectivized representation that fishes and other animals face in films would also be connected to stereotyping species as lacking intelligence, sentience, and complexity. According to Leventi-Perez (2011), this collectivized and negative portrayal of certain nonhuman species then translates into hasty generalizations, cultivating disdain and fear towards the same species in real life, and justifies their domination -and even extinction (p. 108); moreover, it makes it even harder for nonhuman animals like fishes to be understood outside of their utility as food for humans and other animals (p. 89).

Anthropomorphism, cutification, and disneyfication of other animals

Children are constantly exposed to anthropomorphic depictions of animals, whether it is through television, magazines, didactic material, or another medium. In general terms, anthropomorphizing is "the habit of attributing traits, believed to be uniquely or typically human, to nonhuman entities" (Karlsson, 2012, p. 709). The species-overlapping traits employed when attributing "human traits to animals" include emotions, motivations, and cognitive and social capacities (Leitsberg, Benz-Schwarzburg & Grimm, 2016, p. 8). Anthropomorphized animals shape our cultural perspectives on

real animals, so these depictions should be analyzed by broadening the focus on the consequences that anthropomorphized nonhumans have on the perceptions, stereotypes, and issues of human-human relations (Philips, 2016).

In media for children, nonhumans are changed in body appearance, language, and behavior to simplify their features. There are some recognized assets in anthropomorphizing nonhuman animals, primarily as a tool commonly used to engender a sense of empathy towards the animal characters (Caraway & Caraway, 2020, p.6). Burton & Collins (2015) defend that anthropomorphism can generate affection, care, respect, and concern between the viewer and the represented animal species, which can later be translated into responses beyond the television screen (p. 290). Hight (2017) also considers anthropomorphism beneficial for invoking empathy, creating social change, being an effective and educative tool as a narrative device, and more (p. 31). It is through empathy that humans can “transgress the species border” regardless of the “embodied anthropocentric viewpoint” (Karlsson, 2012, p. 709). Intending to achieve viewer empathy, Vale & McRae (2016) consider that because of the lack of a shared language or communication system, it is inevitable to attribute a degree of humanized features to other animals (p. 130). In a few words, anthropomorphized representations would be valuable and necessary to promote empathy towards nonhuman animals.

At the same time, there are also some disadvantages to anthropomorphizing. Vale & McRae (2016) denounce that anthropomorphic constructions and sentiments misdirect empathy “away from the plight of real animals, and that every animal has the right to be acknowledged as a unique individual, rather than a generic entity” (p. 128). Moreover, depending on the degree of anthropomorphization, this depiction might make them look childlike; in children’s media, nonhuman animals are often displaced, misplaced, ‘extraordinarily’ anthropomorphized, and portrayed with a lack of subjectivity (Timmerman & Ostertag, 2011, pp. 66-67). In children-oriented media and, specifically, girl-targeted content, the extra “cuteness” added to the portrayal of nonhuman animals can be easily identified. One might even say that the cutified versions of nonhumans are associated with childhood and stereotypically feminine interests. According to Cole & Stewart (2014), children’s magazines promote the emotional attachment to specific animals through sentimental imagery and the ‘cuteness’ that infantilizes animals (pp. 108-109). Far from being something positive, they argue that the cutification of these representations facilitates the perpetuation

of exploitative instrumental relations, and point out that such portrayal is present both in mainstream and marginal media—including vegan children’s media like Ruby Roth’s children’s books (pp. 154-157). Vale & McRae (2016) take a step further and do not consider cutified nonhuman animals as real animals at all but as versions of other species that “seem entirely immune from the troubles and hardships endured by animals in the real world, offering us relationships that are both convenient and reassuring” (p. 129). This connection even affects the viewer’s expectations; the “viewer is imagined as only being interested in animals if they are like humans and if they are cute” (2013, pp. 119-120), which feeds back into the interest in using these cutified representations.

The anthropomorphizing of nonhumans is often further pushed onto neoteny —“the retention of juvenile characteristics in the adult” (Neoteny, n.d.)— by manipulating the looks and behavior of animals “into [a] surrogate stuffed animal [...] given eyes and ears of clearly exaggerated size, even for newborns” and occurs by the hand of mainstream studios like Disney (Eidt, 2016, p. 7). Estren (2012) identifies neoteny as a possible barrier to improving human-animal relations; this phenomenon would result from the preference that develops towards juvenile morphological traits such as widely big-spaced eyes, more oversized heads, shorter limbs, or overall baby-like features. This ends up offering not a factual, but a fictional version of other species as Vale & McRae (2016) conceptualize them.

Phenomenons such as Bambification or Disneyfication are a cultural reference and “influence of ‘the popular’ on human understanding of other animals” (Parkinson, 2020, p. 30). As such, Disney deserves a special mention not as a producer of content for children but as an influence on how nonhumans are represented in children-oriented media. According to Parkinson (2020), anthropomorphism and Disneyfication have become entwined regarding popular culture, and Disney has become a “signifier for all that is wrong with the worst excesses of anthropomorphism in popular culture” (p. 36). Most of the time, these representations leave almost no space for resistant readings and indoctrinate the audiences “into understanding other animals through a specific type of anthropomorphic lens, one that sees them as little more than ‘humans in fur coats’” (2020, p. 36).

To briefly connect the effects of these representations to studied consequences in societal attitudes, scholars like Stanton (2021) have pointed out the relevance of the “Disney effect”: the impact of films from this animation studio on societal attitudes. Films where animal narratives are

central to the story have shown their potential to influence positively or negatively the audience; on the one hand, films like *Dumbo* (1941) and *Bambi* (1942) have been followed by an upsurge of environmental concerns and anti-hunting / anti-circus attitudes, while, on the other hand, the repercussion of films like *101 Dalmatians* (1961) and *Finding Nemo* (2003) included an increase in purchases and subsequent abandonment or neglect of dalmatians and clownfishes.

The Art of Acknowledging Individuality: Voice(less) and Name(less)

There are many ways to recognize the individuality of a nonhuman character when representing them. The harms of a collectivized representation have already been addressed within the stereotyped subsection. Here I will comment on two representational anthropomorphic motifs that can shift the public's perception and push the acknowledgment of a nonhuman animal: granting them a voice and a name of their own.

In “Constructing Nature Through Cartoons: Cultural Worldviews of the Environment in Disney Animated Film,” Lucas Wager (2014) states that animated and anthropomorphized Disney nonhuman characters would gain empowerment, agency, and recognition of their individual experiences through the granting of human language or voice; consequently, he considers that when certain species are represented with characteristic voicelessness, it can be interpreted as a purposeful silencing that affects nonhumans regardless of their screentime or role in the film (2014, pp. 32-33).

Kate Steward and Matthew Cole also illuminate the silencing aspect of voiceless and nameless representations within media for children in “The Conceptual Separation of Food and Animals in Childhood” (2009). They explore how nonhumans usually used for food production purposes are represented in a state of voicelessness and namelessness, which is done together with a depiction based on massified collectivization, no individually characteristic traits, and dullification (p. 467). Madelaine Leitsberg, Judith Benz-Schwarzburg, and Herwig Grimm (2016) also pointed out the latter phenomenon when analyzing the instrumental portrayal of non-human animals in advertising through a case study of an Austrian television commercial. According to their analysis, portraying nonhumans—in this case, the cattle—as: “stupid (i.e., lacking complex cognitive capacities), trivialized and de-individualized constitutes a direct form of objectification.

It invites the viewers to not see the animals as subjects and thus, to perceive them as less morally significant” (p. 8).

A final point of clarification concerns the relationship between anthropomorphism and the acknowledgment of individuality through the characteristic traits of owning a voice and a name. As Wells (2009) pointed out, denying expressiveness to nonhuman animals amounts to a decision of declaring “a fundamental rejection of the likeness that might characterize animal identity and animal cognition,” which further suggests neither the nonhuman animal nor their “representational tropes” have validity, and that empathy is not sought (pp. 96-97). This conscious characterization that denies subjectivity coincides with the conclusions of Timmerman & Ostertag (2011): as long as media for children reinforces anthropocentrism, shows nonhumans anthropomorphized most of the time, and silences their subjectivity, “the possibilities for children to know and learn from/with the more-than-human” are diminished (p. 71).

Domestication: Better off here

The myth of other animals being able to defend themselves and safe only within farms or human-controlled spaces, promoting the idea of farmed animals needing human protection, is a consistent message in children-oriented content (Cole & Stewart, 2009). Such an idea is promoted regardless of the nonhuman species' degree of domestication or assigned role. The following subsection deals with the representation of nonhuman animals as “naturally” belonging to domesticated spaces in media for children, which would place other animals within an instrumental continuum and always connected to humans.

Apart from the narrative of the inherent vulnerability of stray and non-domesticated individuals unable to fend for themselves, the civilized, domestic spaces are shown as the most suitable for nonhuman animals through the desirability of the insertion into the human society or a family nucleus. Disney animated films offer a variety of examples connected to this idea: the happy farm myth, the normalization of “taming” nonhuman animals into domesticity, and the desire to be part of an interspecies family—that, most of the time, will follow the nuclear family scheme.

To start with, Stanton (2021) holds Disney’s work accountable for being “complicit in keeping the 'happy farm' myth alive” (p. 2) by showing romantic, unrealistic, and misleading images (p. 7) of the conditions of farms where animals “consent” to being. A perfect example would be *Home on the*

Range (2004), a movie that contrasts with the usual representation of farmed animals but whose anthropomorphizing promotes the myth of animal consent on being farmed and the happy farm myth. Stanton (2021) highlights that most of the time, Disney movies depict farmed animals in groups (p. 10) and in “a much simpler, less-anthropomorphized, and less-unique way than [...] other animal characters” (p. 15). By representing nonhuman animals as either dull or consensually exploited, the narrative that children’s movies promote is biased in favor of the perpetuation of animal exploitation.

When it comes to nonhuman animals’ taming or domestication process, several different narratives are happening simultaneously in media for children. According to Quijano (2013), cases like the franchise of *Pokémon* represent nonhumans as objects to be collected, trained, and tamed by and for human interests with an occasional recognition of their subjectivity. A similar representation of nonhuman subjectivity within a subservient, naturalized, and unquestioned role is identified by Wager (2014) in *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* (1937). On the other side, Quijano argues that *How to Train Your Dragon* (2010) would present the relationship between humans and the tamed nonhuman animals as one of companionship, coexistence, and mutual benefit.

Connected to the idea of domesticity as desirable and beneficial within an “interspecies family,” Meeusen (2019) describes a representation of nonhuman preferences happening in media for children. An example of this would be the film *The Secret Life of Pets* (2016), where white children are shown to ‘tame’ the marginalized and oppressed animal characters; even Snowball, a rabbit leader of the abandoned pets’ underground gang, goes from a militant activist to a tamed domesticated individual in a matter of seconds (p. 357). This idea of the desire to be part of an interspecies family is connected to objects like the collar, which is a vital part of the representation of the process of domestication and insertion into human society. The collar—and thus, the domestication—signifies the transition into respectability, identification, and “subject-hood” when a dog receives it, meaning that the closest that a dog can get to have an identity is when being marked “as ‘owned’ and in their proper place” (Mastroestefano, 2013, p. 32).

Considering the idealized domestication narratives and the portrayal of nonhumans as both dependent on humans and individuals who desire to be in dependent positions, it can be argued that these representations perpetuate and normalize the existing power imbalances both within and outside of homes. Interspecies families portrayed in children’s media often feature

animals that have been tamed and, as a result, center their experiences on human desires.

Nuclear family and gender performance

Contrary to what the title might suggest, this subsection is not about humans reinforcing the gender binary in human society through its portrayal of symbolic nonhumans. The issue in question is that nonhumans are being represented in children-oriented content within human cultural terms: they are being portrayed as gender and sexually conforming to human cisheteronormativity, which misrepresents the diversity found throughout nonhuman species. It is hard to find research that challenges gender norms in representations of nonhuman animals from the perspective of nonhuman animals instead of projecting the consequences onto human-human relations.

On the one hand, gender stereotypes and normative gender representations are being pushed into nonhumans. Already back in 1991, Marsha Kinder identified that, in the USA, Saturday morning children's television programs showed anthropomorphized animals gendered based on clothing, naming, and performance in a way that the (hyper)feminine was added to indicate gendering while the masculine was the default (pp. 49-50). Even if androgeinity would be a more species-accurate representation than hyper-femininity versus neutrality, this phenomenon is not limited to media for children. It can also be found, for instance, in British advertisements, where "the male ants are visually portrayed in a particular way and the female is depicted by an addition of certain features to this male form – she is 'marked'" (Kalliat, 2013, p. 24), and in non-sex-specific stuffed animals (Lambdin, Greer, Jibotian, Wood & Hamilton, 2003). Mastroestefano (2013) points out that, even if in real life, nonhuman animals appear as mostly androgynous beings by human standards, they are firmly and consciously gendered in some children's movies through "recognizable physical characteristics or behaviors so that the animal characters' gender will appear as obvious and natural to both the child and the adult spectator" (p.7).

Furthermore, these narratives show nonhumans as "complacent in their gender roles" (p. 18). The fact that in animal representations the natural or less anthropomorphized designs would be considered masculine unless feminized—to fit human gender roles in other animal-agendered contexts—is, to say the least, interesting. This complacency would affect humans' understanding of animal behavior and societies, creating heteronormative expectations and dynamics.

On the other hand, when it comes to sexualities, gender expectations, and family structures, the recurrent anthropomorphized representations of penguins as vessels for monosexual and heterosexual narratives are a good example to illustrate the phenomenon. According to Schneider (2012), animated children's films like *Happy Feet* (2006) and documentaries for all ages like *March of Penguins* (2005) construct "cute and cuddly" representations of the species within heteronormative standards. Moreover, when the reality of same-sex relations amongst penguins is acknowledged—such as in the famous case of the "gay" penguins confined in the Toronto Zoo for a breeding program—they are interpreted as monosexual, while decisions regarding the separation of the couple were referred to as "homophobic" or "a hate crime" (pp. 17-18).

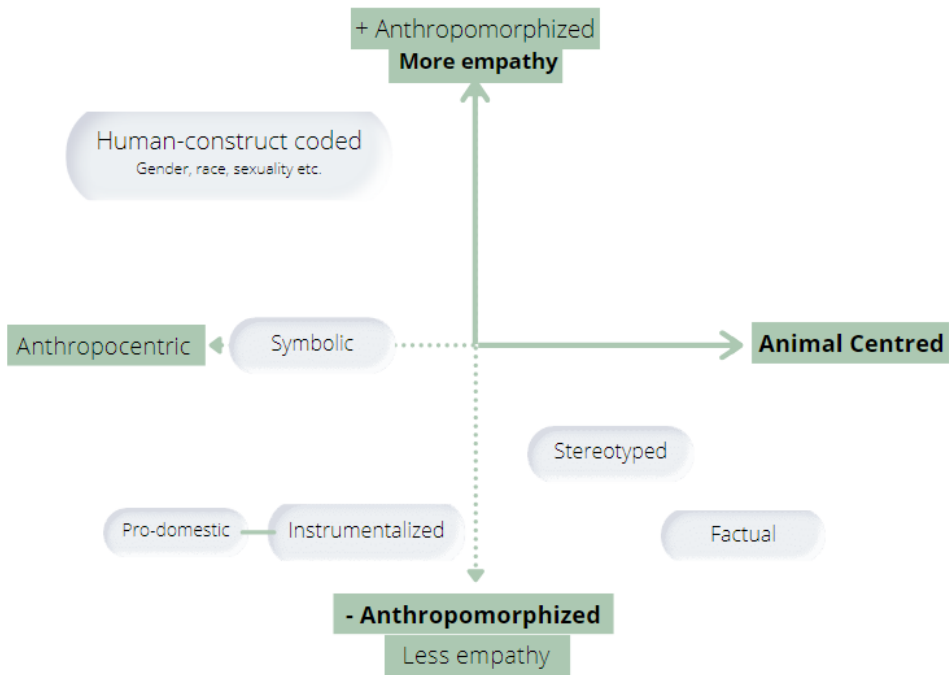
These cisheteronormative and monosexual portrayals misrepresent and result in the erasure of queerness found in animals (Campbell, 2009); it can even create a barrier to understanding animal behavior and biology, and does not do justice to nonhuman realities. Regardless of how harmless or benign certain representations in children's media might seem, they have the potential to have "far-reaching, enduring consequences for the animals they depict" (Goldsmith, 2021, p. 82). By portraying nonhuman animals as strictly conforming to human cisheteronormative standards, this media further reinforces rigid gender sexual binaries that do not belong in human and nonhuman ways of understanding the world.

Discussion

From this review, several categories and frames have emerged that help classify and understand the portrayal of nonhuman animals in media for children. This classification of representations and how they are intertwined with each other and power structures is a tool for future research. The categories found through the inductive research of the literature review have been put together in a conceptual map that helps to visualize the connections and axis in place, inspired by the diagram by Cole and Stewart on the social construction of other animals (2014, p. 22). As can be seen in the figure below, there are two axes in the diagram. The x-axis indicates the approach of the representation (from human/anthropocentric to nonhuman animal-centered), and the y-axis indicates the characteristics of the portrayal (the degree of anthropomorphizing that each representation showcases, which mostly overlaps with the moral sensibility and empathy generated in viewers as well).

Figure 1

Diagram of the Main Nonhuman Representations



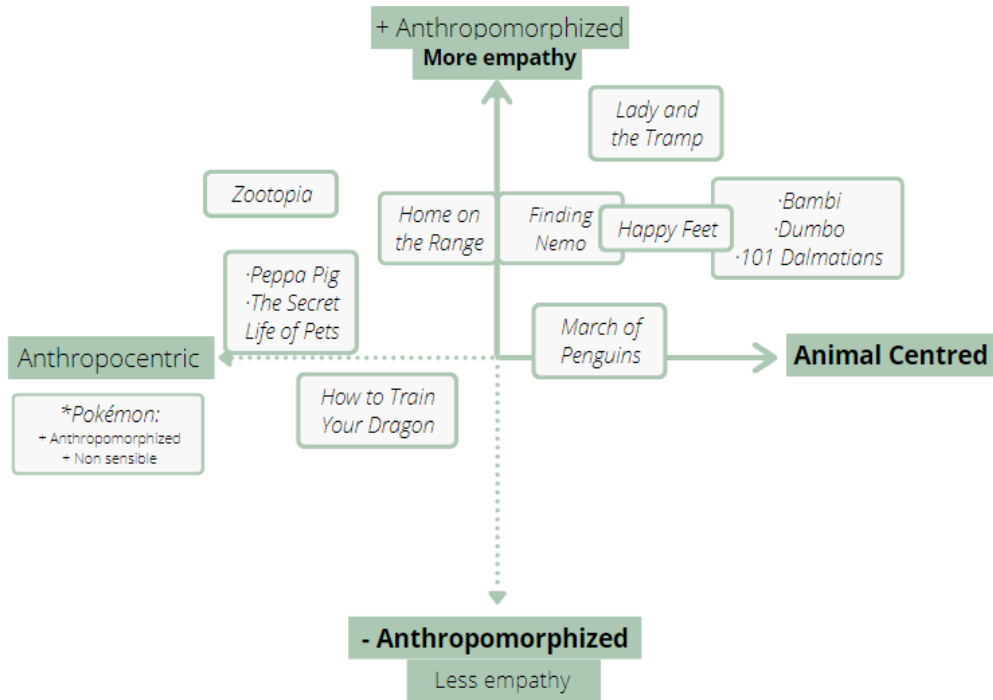
As can be seen in Figure 1, the representations of nonhumans as humanized and gendered or racialized individuals, for instance, would be both highly anthropocentric and anthropomorphic: they would be *human-construct coded* and carry empathic expectations from viewers as they embody human values that the viewer can relate to. On a similarly anthropocentric level, but not requiring a specific amount of anthropomorphizing or empathy, one can find the *symbolic* or metaphorical representations of animals—that is, when nonhuman animals do not represent themselves or carry any factual meanings.

The representations that *instrumentalize* and, as such, place nonhumans in an instrumental continuum are usually presented dullified, voiceless, and even nameless, naturalizing the Human/Animal binary and speciesism. Connected to this idea but a bit more anthropomorphized and anthropocentric, *pro-domestic* characters from species considered either “pets” or farmed animals in Western society embody the fallacies of the happy farm myth and consciously chosen domesticity. From a less

anthropocentric perspective, the *stereotyped* nonhuman individuals are still conceived in connection to humans. However, they embody a greater degree of animality—even if there is still a moralization and judgment of their characteristics from human lenses. Finally, *factual* representations would include the most species-accurate representations of nonhuman animals representing themselves and their concerns. In order to illustrate how these representations are shown in film and television series, and to exemplify how the first diagram can be used to classify or place content according to the nonhuman representation, Figure 2 places titles previously mentioned in the paper in the axis.

Figure 2

Diagram of Representations with Examples



Looking at the positions of these examples, one can quickly notice that there needs to be more narratives offering animal-centered and non-anthropomorphized representations in these films that do not diminish empathic responses toward nonhuman individuals. Even if each of the titles in the upper right corner has its problematic issues, they offer the possibility of animals representing issues that concern them instead of human problems (e.g., hunting, exploitation in circuses or for fur, fishing, climate change,

living as a stray animal). In the upper left corner, we can see the case of *Home on the Range*, a film with a pro-domestication message in which nonhumans are anthropomorphized and valued as individuals. *Zootopia* exemplifies the instrumentalization of nonhuman animals and the case of interspecies societies being used as metaphors for human issues (such as racism). Even if the viewers can empathize with these representations, the portrayals are still highly anthropocentric: nonhumans do not embody their experiences; instead, they are vessels for human meanings. The cases of *Peppa Pig* and *The Secret Life of Pets* are especially interesting because the represented nonhumans embody both animality and humanness, and the experiences of the characters concern both species-specific and humanized ones, without shifting towards a less anthropocentric perspective. Through fictional nonhuman animals, *How to Train Your Dragon* would offer a sensible but more animalistic representation of interspecies relations through an anthropocentric approach. Lastly, the case of *Pokémon* serves to illustrate that anthropomorphizing does not always equal empathy or beneficial consequences for nonhumans. These cutified and often neotenized representations of fictional nonhuman animals promote a pro-taming and pro-domesticating message in an anthropocentric and speciesist way that normalizes the instrumental use of nonhuman animals.

On a positive note, Gadd (2005) and Yeung (2020) identified improved television and Disney animal representations over time. On the one hand, Gadd (2005) remarked a tendency toward egalitarianism of human and animal concepts (p. 257). This has been accompanied by a rise of a variety of children's content with an anti-speciesist didactic discourse, such as alphabet-themed works like *V Is for Vegan: The ABCs of Being Kind* (2013) that introduce new vocabulary and concepts to children and sagas that include animals in non-instrumental ways with an anti-speciesist message like *Veggie Vero* (2016-) and *Reflecto Girl* (2015-). Yeung (2020) also identified an evolution in the anthropomorphic animal characters in some animated films: the spectrum of animal characters has widened, and there is an attempt to challenge the already ingrained stereotypes of animals (p. 19). More subtle promotions of vegetarian and vegan habits have also occurred in TV series, from earlier examples like when *Peppa Pig* aired the episode titled "Lunch" that shows the making and eating of an entirely plant-based meal in a "yummy" way (2004), and *Teen Titans* features Beast Boy, a vegetarian superhero.

Conclusions

The literature discussed in this review shows that the portrayal of nonhuman animals within media for children cannot be understood outside of anthropocentric and speciesist power dynamics. Regardless of the intentionality behind the interpretations of the representations, most of them are human-centred, and the value of nonhuman individuals depends on how similar to humans they are. This means that the more anthropomorphized the portrayal of the nonhuman is, the greater the animals' sensible/moral consideration becomes. However, it is essential to remember that cutification can also conceal the real problems of animals, and, as a result, moral consideration is not enhanced. Overall, a need to include more-than-human subjectivities and experiences in media for children has been identified. Nonhumans are mainly represented only in connection to human issues and within the instrumental continuum that shows them happily *consenting* to be used.

The significant influence of children's films and animation studios on their audience's perception of human-nonhuman relationships (Vargas, 2019, p.2) showcases a tremendous potentiality for creating an animal turn on children-oriented content. Television has the power to shape and reflect public attitudes about animals; we need to improve the representations by providing positive and diverse images of nonhuman animals in media (Gerbner, 1995, pp. 20-21). Such need for improvement is timeless and has also been made for classic animated children's films, where a more balanced and accurate representation is yet to be achieved (Philips, 2016, p. 67). While the representations shift, an animal turn in the study of nonhuman animal representations would also be beneficial to understand individuals from other species as themselves—and not for what they can be used for by humans—and acknowledge the significance of their realities. The present research hopes to provide a synthesis of the literature that will aid future studies by, first, identifying categories of representations and collecting them in a critical review and, second, creating a diagram that serves as a tool for analyzing and understanding nonhuman representations.

When it comes to the research on this media, I argue that the problematization of the representation of nonhuman animals in media for children should go beyond the consequences for human society: it should re-focus, start to center nonhumans on their narratives and consider the possible repercussions on children of these anthropocentric interpretations. An animal turn in the study of nonhuman animal representations—analogous to the

animal turn undertaken in political philosophy—would be beneficial to acknowledge the significance of the realities of other animals and understand them as themselves and not for what they can be used for by humans. Nonhumans have been constantly understood in scope limited to their value as representatives of humanness and human issues (e.g., racism, sexism, class struggles, and more), and this pedagogical valuing further relegates them to being vessels for anthropocentric meanings and symbolic creatures whose animality is treated as a prop. Further studies should accompany this research on how media shapes children's speciesist and anthropocentric attitudes, including the impact of both mainstream and anti-speciesist and critical media.

References

- Academic Publishing Platforms. (n. d.). *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*.
<https://academicpublishingplatforms.com/journal.php?journal=JCA&id=95>
- Andrianova, A. (2021). To read or not to eat: Anthropomorphism in children's books. *Society & Animals*, 1-19.
- Almiron, N. & Cole, M. (2016). Introduction: The convergence of two critical approaches. In N. Almiron, M. Cole & C. P. Freeman (Eds.), *Critical animal and media studies: Communication for nonhuman animal advocacy*. Routledge.
- Best, S. (1999). *Picturing the beast: Animals, identity, and representation*. University of Illinois Press.
- Burton, L. & Collins, F. L. (2015). Mediated animal geographies: symbolism, manipulation and the imaginary in advertising. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 16(3), 276-298.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2014.979863>
- Bliss, G. (2013). Animals with attitude: finding a place for animated animals. In *Critical Perspectives on Animals in Society*, 37-44.
- Campbell, D. (2009). *Evolutions rainbow: Diversity, gender, and sexuality in nature and people*. University of California Press.
- Caraway, K. & Caraway, B. R. (2020). Representing ecological crises in children's media: An analysis of *The Lorax* and *Wall-E*. *Environmental Communication*.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/17524032.2019.1710226>
- Cole, M. & Stewart, K. (2014). *Our children and other animals: The cultural construction of human-animal relations in childhood*. Routledge.
- Eidt, S. (2016). *Disney's animated animals: A potential source of opinions*

- and knowledge*. BA diss. Malone University Honors Program.
- Estren, M. J. (2012). The neoteny barrier: Seeking respect for the non-cute. *Journal of Animal Ethics*, 2(1), 6-11.
- Gadd, T. (2005). Human-Animal affiliation in modern popular film. In *Figuring Animals*. Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-137-09411-7>
- George, A. E. & Schatz, J. L. (2016). Introduction: Critical media studies and critical animal studies at the crossroads. In A. E. George & J. L. Schatz (Eds.), *Screening the nonhuman: Representations of animal others in the media*. Lexington Books.
- Gerbner, G. (1995). Animal issues in the media: A groundbreaking report. *Films and Television Production Collection*, 1. <https://doi.org/10.1007/10-24-1995>
- Goldsmith, M. (2021). Queering our relations with animals: Multispecies sexuality beyond the laboratory. In A. E. George (Ed.), *Gender and sexuality in critical animal studies*. Brill.
- Grande, L. (2017). *Speciesism and carnism in media animal consumption in TV and film*. MA diss. University of Miami.
- Hall, S. (1997). The spectacle of the “other.” In Stuart Hall (Ed.), *Representation: Cultural representations and signifying practices*, 223–285. London: SAGE.
- Hight, S. R. (2017). *Does anthropomorphism affect people’s ability to distinguish fact from fiction?* MA diss. University of Otago.
- Kalliat, M. (2013). *Beneath the anthropomorphic veil: Animal Imagery and ideological discourses in British advertising*. MA diss. University of London.
- Karlsson, F. (2012). Critical anthropomorphism and animal ethics. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 25, 707-720.
- Kinder, M. (1991). *Playing with power in movies, television, and video games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. University of California Press.
- Kokai, J. A. (2019). The nemofication of nature: Animals, artificiality, and affect in Disney World. In *Performance and the Disney Theme Experience*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Korimboccus, L. M. (2020). Pig-Ignorance: The “Peppa Pig Paradox”: Investigating contradictory childhood consumption. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 17(5), 3-33.
- Lambdin, J. R., Greer, K. M., Jibotian, K. S., Wood, K. R. & Hamilton, M. C. (2003). The animal = male hypothesis: Children’s and adults’ beliefs about the sex of non-sex-specific stuffed animals. *Sex Roles*, 48(11/12), 471-482.
- Leitsberger, M., Benz-Schwarzburg, J. & Grimm, H. (2016). A speaking piglet advertises beef: An ethical analysis on objectification and anthropomorphism. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental*

- Ethics*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-016-9644-5>
- Leventi-Perez, O. (2011). *Disney's portrayal of nonhuman animals in animated films between 2000 and 2010*. MA diss. Georgia State University. https://scholarworks.gsu.edu/communication_theses/81
- Mastroestefano, S. (2013). Gender and ideology in Disney's beast fables. *Honors Projects Overview*, 85.
- Meeusen, M. (2019). Power, prejudice, predators, and pets: Representation in animated animal films. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Children's Film and Television*, 345-364.
- Mersking, D. (2016). Media theories and the crossroads of critical animal and media studies. In N. Almiron, M. Cole & C. P. Freeman (Eds.), *Critical animal and media studies: Communication for nonhuman animal advocacy*. Routledge.
- Molloy, C. (2006). *Discourses of anthropomorphism*. Ph.D. diss. Liverpool John Moores University.
- Molloy, C. (2011). *Popular media and animals*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nagata, M. (2019). *A white savior, savagery, and criminality in the city of "multitudinous opportunity" in Zootopia*. BA diss. California Polytechnic State University
- Neoteny. (n.d). In *Collins dictionary*.
<https://www.collinsdictionary.com/es/diccionario/ingles/neoteny>
- Nilbert, D. A. (2016). Origins of oppression, speciesist ideology, and the mass media. In N. Almiron, M. Cole & C. P. Freeman (Eds.), *Critical animal and media studies: Communication for nonhuman animal advocacy*. Routledge.
- Parkinson, C. (2020). *Animals, anthropomorphism and mediated encounters*. Routledge.
- Paul, E. S. (1996). The representation of animals on children's television. *Anthrozoös*, 9(4), 169-181.
<https://doi.org/10.2752/089279396787001400>
- "Peppa Pig" (Season 1, Episode 34). (2004, July 8). Lunch [Television series episode]. In N. Astley & M. Baker (Executive Producers), *Peppa Pig*. Channel 5.
- Pettersson, Å. (2013). The content of nature in TV for children. In *TV FOR CHILDREN: How the Swedish Public Service Television Imagines a Child Audience*. Ph.D. diss., Linköping University.
- Philips, M. (2016). *Animating animals: Exploring modes of animal representation in classic animated children's films*. BA diss. College of William and Mary.
<https://scholarworks.wm.edu/honorstheses/1001>
- Quijano, J. (2013). Modern media and animal rights: How training your dragons and Pokémon influence contemporary animal ethics. M. Vyas (Ed.), *Issues in ethics and animal rights*. New Delhi: Regency

Publications

- Schatz, J. L. (2018). Making superheroes of children: The (mis)use of nonhumans in inspiring childhood development. In *Superheroes and critical animal studies: The heroic beasts of total liberation*.
- Schneider, S. M. B. (2012). *Animal sapiens: The consequences of anthropomorphism in popular media*. MA diss. Montana State University.
- Stanton, R. R. (2018). *The Disneyfication of animals*. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Stewart, K. & Cole, M. (2009). The conceptual separation of food and animals in childhood. *Food, Culture & Society*, 12(4), 457-476.
- Taylor, A. & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (2020). *The common worlds of children and animals: Relational ethics for entangled lives*. Routledge.
- Taylor, A. & Twine, R. (2014). Introduction: Locating the 'critical' in critical animal studies. In N. Taylor & R. Twine (Eds.), *The rise of critical animal studies: From the margins to the centre*. Routledge.
- Timmerman, N. & Ostertag, J. (2011). Too Many monkeys jumping in their heads: Animal lessons within young children's media. *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education*, 16, 59-75.
- Vale, M. & McRae, D. (2016). The *Cutopia* paradox: Anthropomorphism as entertainment. *Ecozon@*, 7(1), 128-143.
- Vargas, G. (2019). "When We're Human": An intersectional look at speciesism and racism in the Disney animation studios film "The Princess and the Frog." BA diss. University of California.
- Wager, L. (2014). Constructing nature through cartoons: Cultural Worldviews of the environment in Disney animated film. *Senior Capstone Projects*.
- Wells, P. (2009). *The animated bestiary: Animals, cartoons, and culture*. Rutgers University Press.
- Yeung, K. Y. M. G. (2020). *Anthropomorphic animal characters in Disney animated films: The representations and impositions of human nature*. BA diss. Education University of Hong Kong.

ESSAY: Animal Liberation as Buddha Activity: A Tibetan Buddhist Understanding of Liberative Praxis

Colin H. Simonds

11cs77@queensu.ca

Abstract

This article explores the parallels between the Tibetan Buddhist practical framework of the Four Buddha Activities and contemporary animal liberation activism. It argues that the Vajrayāna Buddhist practice of pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and subjugating mirrors both institutional efforts and direct action toward animal liberation and can, therefore provide a stable theoretical resource for activists to understand their work. It also argues that these parallels can be used to compel Tibetan Buddhists to more fruitfully engage in the work of animal liberation and argues that such work should be considered a necessary component of their goal of liberating all beings from *duḥkha*.

keywords: Buddhism, animal liberation, direct action, religion, activism, Tibet

While often considered an eco- and animal-friendly tradition in popular imagination, historical Buddhisms often treated the more-than-human world with indifference. This is especially true in Tibetan contexts where the Buddhist inclination towards vegetarianism was absent due to agrarian and cultural limitations. Nonetheless, as Tibetan Buddhists have exported their philosophies and practices worldwide, an interest in vegetarianism and animal advocacy has emerged. Some of the most respected and authoritative figures in the tradition such as the Dalai Lama and the Karmapa have encouraged their monastic and lay followers to adopt vegetarian diets in an effort to better integrate Buddhist ideals of compassion and lovingkindness into their eating habits. Operating from ideals of lovingkindness, compassion, and the Buddhist religious goal to liberate all sentient beings from *duḥkha* (Tib. *sdug bsngal*, meaning suffering, unease, stress, dissatisfaction), they critique the otherwise normative Tibetan Buddhist consumption of nonhuman animals. This is a positive step in the right direction but falls short of what an *actual* alleviation of *duḥkha* necessitates: the abolition of all animal exploitation and active care for nonhuman animals. There are certain exceptional organizations in the Tibetan Buddhist world, like Enlightenment for the Dear Animals, which not only encourage abstention from all animal products but have established sanctuaries and rehoming programs for stray animals in Nepal, and this is of course, encouraging. Nonetheless, it appears that appeals to compassion alone are insufficient for compelling mass efforts for animal liberation in Tibetan Buddhism.

It is therefore useful to provide a stronger theoretical support for animal liberation activity in Tibetan Buddhist contexts. This article will do just this and operationalize the Tibetan Vajrayāna framework of the Four Buddha Activities as a theoretical resource for understanding animal liberation praxis in Tibetan Buddhist settings. In doing so, it will not only provide a resource for those working towards animal liberation in Tibetan (and non-Tibetan) milieus for liberative praxis but also indirectly argue that Tibetan Buddhist practice necessitates an abolitionist orientation towards nonhuman animal exploitation.

Nonhuman Animals in Tibetan Buddhism

To begin, it is important to note how nonhuman animals were viewed and treated in historical Tibetan Buddhist contexts. First, there are competing canonical precedents for how nonhuman animals should be viewed and

whether or not it is acceptable to kill and eat them. Those who defend meat consumption like Khedrup Jé (Tib. *mkhas grub rje*, b. 1385-d. 1438) will point to how the Buddha permitted meat if it adhered to the rule of “threefold purity”: not having seen the nonhuman animal killed for your consumption, not having heard it killed for your consumption, and not suspecting it was killed for your consumption (Wolcott Johnson, 2019). Such a position on meat consumption was perhaps necessary when monks and nuns only ate what was offered to them by the villagers near their monasteries. However, as Buddhism developed (especially in Tibet), begging for alms fell to the wayside and was replaced by monasteries going out and purchasing food for monks and nuns themselves. As a result, later Mahāyāna texts like the *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* (Tib. *yongs su mya ngan las ‘das pa chen po’i mdo*) and the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* (Tib. *lang kar gshegs pa’i mdo*) depict the Buddha reneging this permission of meat and asserting that Buddhist practitioners who strive to liberate all sentient beings *must* become vegetarian.

Buddhist scriptures advance several reasons for this. The starkest argument in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* is that eating meat will cause other beings to fear the eater as though they are a carnivorous animal, and this inhibits the Buddhist practitioner from actually helping nonhuman beings. The *Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra* expands on this idea and states:

Meat eaters terrify any animal that can smell them, just as the smell of a lion terrifies any human... When beings encounter the smell of meat, they are afraid. The fear of death arises in them. Saying ‘this is our enemy!’ those animals that dwell in the water, on the land, or fly in the sky all turn aside and flee. This is why I do not permit bodhisattvas to eat meat. For the sake of liberating beings, they may manifest the appearance of eating meat. But in truth they do not eat it, even if it looks like they are. (2019, pp. 49-50)

The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* also makes a notable appeal to economics in its argument for vegetarianism and instructs that “if someone give up meat... then animals will not be killed. This is because innocent beings are usually killed for money; other reasons are rare” (2019, p. 42). The main reason advanced in Buddhist scriptures, however, is soteriological. The Buddha says that “eating meat is an obstacle to liberation,” and “anyone who recognizes that a being is alive and yet kills and eats it anyway can never develop compassion” which is absolutely necessary for achieving liberation for oneself and for others (“The *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra*,” 2019, pp. 40,42). Given

how these arguments are considered from the Buddha's mouth, these canonical injunctions against meat consumption are perceived as authoritative and form the cornerstone of Buddhist animal ethics.

Furthermore, these canonical precedents provide a basis for novel philosophical arguments for Buddhist animal ethics in Tibetan contexts. For example, the doctrine of rebirth undergirds a foundational contemplation in Mahāyāna and Vajrayāna practice, where Buddhists consider all sentient beings as their mother in their past lives. In the Tibetan imaginary, "sentient being" is an ontological category inclusive of humans and nonhuman animals, as well as gods, demi-gods, hungry ghosts, and hell beings, and regarding each of these beings as though they were your mother is intended to develop compassion for all beings regardless of their particular manifestations in this life. Patrul Rinpoche (Tib. *rdza dpal sprul rin po che*, b. 1808-d. 1887) instructs his students (and readers) to contemplate the following before every meditative practice they do:

There is not a single being in samsara, this immense ocean of suffering, who in the course of time without beginning has never been our father or mother. When they were our parents, these beings' only thought was to raise us with the greatest possible kindness, protecting us with great love and giving us the very best of their own food and clothing. (1998, p. 7)

This reflection goes beyond simply treating all beings with care to repay their kindness in past lives and evolves into the central motivation for engaging in Buddhist practice itself. Patrul Rinpoche continues:

Tell yourself: "It is for their well-being that I am going to listen to the profound Dharma and put it into practice. I will lead all these beings, my parents, tormented by the miseries of the six realms of existence, to the state of omniscient Buddhahood, freeing them from all the karmic phenomena, habitual patterns and sufferings of every one of the six realms." (p. 8)

Interestingly, elsewhere in the text, he relates this to human-nonhuman relationships in retelling the story of Kātyāyana, an enlightened figure who came upon a striking scene during his alms rounds. Kātyāyana happened upon a man with a child on his lap eating a fish and throwing rocks at a female dog interested in the scraps. In his clairvoyance, Kātyāyana sees that the fish is the reincarnation of that man's father, the dog is the reincarnation of his

mother, and the child the reincarnation of a man he killed in a past life (pp. 50-51). It is, therefore, clear that the Tibetan contemplation of all beings as one's mother and father is taken literally, and stories like these are used by certain teachers like Patrul Rinpoche to advocate for vegetarianism.

There is an implicit argument from kinship occurring in the midst of this understanding of the doctrine of rebirth, and other teachers like Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol (Tib. *zhabs dkar tshogs drug rang grol*, b. 1781-d. 1851) drew out this argument in their appeals to their students to give up meat. For example, in his text *The Faults of Meat*, he quotes the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* which states:

It is not easy, Mahamati, to come upon a being who, in the endless ages of samsara, has not been once your father or your mother, your brother or your sister, your son or daughter, kinsman, friend, or close companion. Your kith and kin in one existence, they have donned a different shape in later lives. They have become animals, wild or tame, beast or bird. Bodhisattva, great being Mahamati, all those who have faith in Buddha Dharma, those who wish to follow in my footsteps - how could they consume the flesh of living beings? (2004, pp. 48-49)

Similarly, Shabkar quotes the *Mahāyāna Aṅgulimālīya Sūtra* later in the text, which states:

There is not a single being, wandering in the chain of lives in endless and beginningless samsara, that has not been your mother or your sister. An individual, born as a dog, may afterward become your father. Each and every being is like an actor playing on the stage of life. One's own flesh and the flesh of others is the same flesh. Therefore the Enlightened Ones eat no meat. (2004, p. 64)

By mobilizing canonical texts towards the end of vegetarianism, Shabkar attempts to coopt the notion of rebirth and direct it towards a positive animal ethical end. He uses authoritative scripture to promote the idea that all beings are kin due to our relationships with them throughout our innumerable rebirths, and that this kinship generates a subsequent duty to care for all sentient beings in our present human life.

Shabkar's interpretation of rebirth is rhetorically quite important because of the ethical ambiguity of the cosmological doctrine. Reiko Ohnuma's *Unfortunate Destiny: Animals in the Indian Buddhist Imagination* explores

the nonhuman animal in early Indian Buddhism and shows how nonhuman animals were almost universally placed in lesser ontological category and exploited. Due to their negative karma, nonhuman animals were seen through the lens of typical speciesist tropes and portrayed as stupid, helpless, and purely instinctual. Moreover, since karma is understood to ripen according to one's former actions, rebirth in this lower realm (as well as being born into negative social or material circumstances) was considered the individual's fault. This gave historical Buddhists an explanation not only for why free-ranging animals have more complicated lives but also for why humans are justified in exploiting nonhuman animals for their flesh, fluids, and labor. However, as I have argued elsewhere, rebirth and karma can also form the basis of the philosophical argument for altruistic interspecies relationships (2021). Thus, Patrul Rinpoche's implicit kinship argument and Shabkar's mobilization of scripture to the ends of vegetarianism draw from classical points of Buddhist doctrine to promote the positive treatment of nonhuman animals as a normative Buddhist position.

Strangely enough, these canonical precedents and the widespread contemplation of all sentient beings as one's mother were insufficient to promote even mass vegetarianism in the Tibetan context, let alone universal care for nonhuman animals. Butchers set up shop outside of monastic institutions and made good business selling meat to the monks and nuns therein. This was done despite the warning in the *Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra* that:

People pay for money for meat,
causing animals to be killed for profit.
Both the killer and buyer own this sinful karma
and will boil in the Crying Hell. (2019, p. 45)

There are many reasons why such a warning was not heeded in the Tibetan context. Geoffrey Barstow's excellent book *Food of Sinful Demons* (2018) parses various positions found in historical Tibetan society, where meat was sometimes seen as a necessary evil due to Tibetan notions of physiological health and the lack of available plant foods at the high altitude of the Tibetan plateau. It was also sometimes seen as a positive good due to cultural notions of masculinity. These cultural influences compounded with the aforementioned Buddhist conceptions of nonhuman animal existence as an unfortunate karmic destiny, with how, as Ohnuma (2017) notes, "human violence toward animals is pervasive, omnipresent, and graphic" in Buddhist texts, and with how this human exploitation of nonhuman animals has a

“taken-for-granted quality” in Buddhist contexts (p. 52). Thus, despite the canonical impetus to abstain from meat and the oft-repeated petition by Tibetan teachers to treat nonhuman animals with kindness and compassion, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition did little to incorporate an immediate concern for nonhuman animals into its broader goal of liberating all sentient beings from *duḥkha*.

However, this is not to say that no exceptional beings in the Tibetan tradition prioritized animal liberation as a critical point of their Buddhist practice. The most notable of these individuals is the famous wandering yogi Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol who both advocated for vegetarianism and wrote various treatises on the subject such as *The Wondrous Emanated Scripture* (Tib. *rmad byung sprul pa'i glegs bam*), *The Nectar of Immortality* (Tib. *legs bshad bdud rtsi'i chu rgyun*), *The Emanated Scripture of Compassion* (Tib. *snying rje sprul pa'i glegs bam*), and *The Beneficial Sun* (Tib. *chos bshad gzhan phan nyi ma*). Beyond instructing the humans in his community, he also tended to the material needs of nonhuman animals in his immediate surroundings. He even gave them sermons on the *dharma*, or the teachings of the Buddha (Shabkar, 2001, pp. 158-160). In a particularly notable instance where he observed an eagle preying on flightless baby birds, Shabkar not only protected the small birds for two months each year and instructed those living in the area to do the same but also caught and scolded the eagle, treating it as a person in its own right and admonishing it for preying on the helpless birds (Shabkar, 2001, pp. 139). In this way, we can see Shabkar as not only fostering attention to animal liberation as a part of his Buddhist practice but also promoting animal welfare to others in the Tibetan region through his teachings and his example (Pang, 2022). He is not alone in this activity. Other yogis like the aforementioned Patrul Rinpoche (1998, pp. 53-54) and the more contemporary Chatral Rinpoche (2007) (Tib. *bya bral sangs rgyas rdo rje rin po che*, b. 1913-d. 2015) also extended their Buddhist ethical concern to nonhuman animals and advocated for animal liberation ends in their public-facing works. Interestingly, these three major figures of Tibetan vegetarianism (and, to a lesser extent, animal liberation) share both a wandering yogi lifestyle and a mastery of tantric Buddhist practice. It is in these tantric contexts where we find the Four Buddha Activities as major parts of Buddhist practice, and there is, therefore a solid case to be made that the animal liberation praxis of these great yogis should be read as an example of them putting these Buddha activities into practice.

The Four Buddha Activities

The Four Buddha Activities (Tib. *sangs rgyas kyi las bzhi*) are found in Vajrayāna (Tib. *rdo rje theg pa*) or Tantric Buddhism as a practical component of contemplative practice. To give some background, there are three cycles of teachings in orthodox Tibetan Buddhist doxography: the Hīnayāna, Mahāyāna, and Vajrayāna. The Hīnayāna is construed as the teachings that promote the liberation of oneself alone, the Mahāyāna is presented as the teachings which promote the liberation of all sentient beings, and the Vajrayāna is considered to be an expedient version of the Mahāyāna that offers the possibility of Buddhahood in this lifetime through tantric practice. In this latter expedient method of Buddhist practice, contemplative practice is separated into three sections: view, meditation, and action. In the first part, view, one acclimates oneself to a given philosophical view which subsequently gets brought into one's experience through the second part, meditation practice. Through this meditative experience, the view gets adopted as the default lens through which one perceptually and affectively experiences the world. The practitioner thus generally acts in a way that naturally accords with the view, the third part. Elsewhere, I have shown how view and meditation in this framework can be mobilized towards incorporating ethical veganism into one's default perceptual mode and how this can elicit a general ethic of care towards nonhuman animals (Simonds, 2023). However, action in this framework can be construed more specifically and directed towards animal ethical ends as well through an understanding of the Four Buddha Activities.

In Vajrayāna practice, the Four Buddha Activities are how one manifests one's embodiment of a Buddha both in the meditation session and post-meditation in one's daily life. They are how an individual actualizes the Buddhist goal of liberating all beings and acts as an emissary to this end. The Four Buddha Activities are: pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and subjugating (Tib. *zhi ba, rgyas pa, dbang pa, drag po*). Each of these plays an important role in liberating all beings and must be engaged by the Vajrayāna Buddhist committed to such a project. These Buddha activities are often found in tantric practice texts wherein practitioners meditatively assume the body, speech, and mind of a given Buddha, *bodhisattva*, or meditation deity to assume their enlightened qualities. To read and practice these texts, the tradition requires ritual empowerment into the deity's mandala, and I will not give specifics on these practices or reference particular texts out of respect for the tradition. However, some general

comments can nonetheless be made about the structure, purpose, and role of the Four Activities in these *sadhanas* (Tib. *sgrub thabs*). For example, a common *yidam* (meditative visualization) practice across Tibetan schools is Chenrezig (Tib. *spyān ras gzigs*) or Avalokiteśvara, the bodhisattva of compassion. In their meditation, practitioners visualize themselves in the body of this bodhisattva, recite his mantra “Om Mani Padme Hum,” and assume the qualities of his enlightened mind. In doing so, they bring about these enlightened qualities in their own body and develop a compassionate conative mode in their own mind. These practices then conclude with a completion stage wherein the visualization is dissolved and the practitioner rests in the naturally enlightened qualities of their mind. These practice texts can be pithy or extensive and involve either a brief visualization and mantra recitation or an entire liturgy with many ritual instruments, recitations, and visualizations. In these longer *sadhanas*, the Four Buddha Activities are important aspects of Buddhist practice. Once one has meditatively assumed the body, speech, and mind of a given Buddha or *bodhisattva*, one pacifies, enriches, magnetizes, and subjugates sentient beings to also bring them into Buddhahood.

These four activities originate in some of the foundational texts of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition like the *Uttaratantraśāstra* (Tib. *theg pa chen po rgyud bla ma'i bstan bcos*). After parsing the liberated state and the particular qualities of enlightenment, it alludes to each of the four activities carried out by a Buddha. It talks of “the accomplishment of peace” (pacification), “a harvest of virtue” (enriching), the splendor and magnificence of a Buddha being “seen by all sentient beings” compelling them to adopt the causes of Buddhahood “in a genuine way” (magnetizing), and the purification of the afflictions of those “hostile” to the dharma (subjugation) (Maitreya, 2000, pp. 61-66). Later in the development of the tradition, the Four Activities are treated as a closer-knit package and are performed in succession. This is the case in the use of the Four Activities in the aforementioned *sadhana* texts but can also be seen in non-restricted practice texts like “Jewels of Many Colours” by Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thayé’s (Tib. *‘jam mgon kong sprul blo gros mtha’ yas*, b. 1813-d. 1899) which sets out the method of doing a *pūjā* (fire ritual) as a means of accomplishing the Four Buddha Activities. This particular ritual is conducted to pacify “disease, negative influence, negative action, obscuration, additions and omissions in the mantra recitation, and so on,” enriching “longevity, merit, fortune, and wisdom,” magnetizing “ordinary and supreme accomplishments” that attract sentient

beings, and subjugating “enemies, obstructing forces, misleading influences, elemental demons who create harm and obstacles to the practitioner” (2009). Other texts like the “Brief Prayer for Summoning Prosperity” (2021a) or “Great Cloud of Blessings: The Prayer Which Magnetizes All That Appears and Exists” (2021b) by Mipham Rinpoche (Tib. *‘jam mgon mi pham rin po che*, b. 1846-d. 1912) may focus on a single one of these Buddha activities, but all four are recognized as necessary methods for liberating sentient beings from *duḥkha*.

Buddha Activity as Liberative Praxis

The Buddhist emphasis on liberating sentient beings from *duḥkha* provides a stable bridge for engaging its philosophical and practical arms with those of animal liberation. Both liberative traditions are predicated on the positive moral valuation of nonhuman animals and seek to address the suffering of nonhuman animals in their own distinctive ways. However, outside of the few exceptional organizations mentioned in my introduction and their constitutive members, few Buddhists actually engage in animal liberation praxis. This is despite Tibetan Buddhism providing the theoretical resources for mobilization. I argue that contemporary animal liberation activism takes place on four axes that can be read as parallels to the Four Buddha Activities. Exploring these parallels can, therefore be of use to animal liberationists to ground their work in a rich philosophical tradition and can be used to argue that contemporary Buddhists concerned with alleviating the *duḥkha* of all sentient beings today must seriously take up the call of animal liberation.

The first of these four is pacification. As stated earlier, pacification involves a Buddha using their enlightened capabilities to pacify disease, negative influence, negative action, and so forth, this activity might be done to either human or nonhuman beings. Regarding the humans, pacification in animal liberation settings may involve engaging in counter-propaganda to dispel the negative influence of animal agriculture-funded media on ordinary consumers or may apply creative methods for pacifying negative consumptive patterns like the tongue-in-cheek appeal to the firmness of an erection as a motivation for abstaining from animal-based foods in the recent *Game Changers* documentary. In each of these cases, the negative influence and actions of human beings are directly addressed to pacify their adverse outcomes. Similarly, we may identify several methods for pacifying the negative states of nonhuman animals themselves. Organizations like Street

Dog Care in Boudha, Nepal provide strays with emergency medical care to directly pacify disease in nonhuman animals, while myriad animal sanctuaries and rescue centers around the world take in nonhuman animals as a means to pacify their fear, their harm, and so forth. This pacification can take the form of direct action movements as well, where groups like Toronto Pig Save stop trucks at the gates of the appropriately named “Fearmans” slaughterhouse to provide pigs with a minute of comfort and love before they are brutally killed. Whereas pacification of negative human states in this framework is meant to have a consequent effect on nonhuman animals by addressing human action, we can see how the negative mental states and physical ailments of nonhuman animals can also be directly pacified in order to address *duḥkha* at the source.

Second, we can also find Buddhist notions of enriching in animal liberation contexts. Again, this activity is carried out on human and nonhuman animal levels to varying effects. Enriching involves the increase of longevity, merit, wisdom, and material prosperity, and each of these can play a role in furthering the goals of animal liberation. Someone involved in enrichment in animal liberation settings may engage in public-facing education to increase the knowledge base of humans, thereby directing them to more ethical or meritorious actions in their general consumption. They might also advocate for systemic change in our food systems such that those in low-income communities and food deserts have the material conditions to be able to choose to abstain from animal products that require the mass killing and torture of nonhuman animals. Animal liberationists also enrich animal lives directly by establishing and supporting animal sanctuaries to provide animals otherwise destined for a life of ill health and early death to a long, easy one. Alongside this action to increase longevity, we consider enriching the material conditions of animals by fostering or rescuing companion animals to provide them with an increased quality of life individually. This latter notion of enrichment is advocated for by a Nepalese Buddhist organization, Enlightenment for the Dear Animals which regards fostering as a primary form of benefitting nonhuman animals. Controversially, we might also view the incrementalistic work of Mercy for Animals and their efforts to ameliorate the material conditions of nonhuman animals in agricultural settings by consulting with the exploitative industries themselves as a practice of enriching despite the apparent limitations of their non-abolitionist approach. Regardless, the alleviation of *duḥkha* is again at the center of these enriching practices.

The relevance of magnetizing, the third of the four Buddha activities, to animal liberation contexts is quite obvious. Drawing in others to the cause of liberating all sentient beings from *duḥkha* has very clear, public applications. A great portion of the effort for animal liberation is dedicated to advocacy work intended to bring people into the animal liberation fold. This work can happen in institutional settings such as People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, on more individual bases such as Ed Winters' much documented university tours, or simply in mass media form in the case of documentaries like *Dominion* (Delforce, 2018) or *Earthlings* (Monson, 2005). However, one caveat that the Buddhist notion of magnetizing raises in these contexts is whether advocacy is indeed magnetizing or alienating. We might wonder about and critically assess the effectiveness of a PETA campaign and compare it to that of an organization like Compassion Champs, which advocates for animal welfare through an appeal to exceptional vegan athletes. Each of these may have utility in certain social circles and may attract those with particular dispositions, but we must also guard against the complete ostracization of the masses.

This problem of “magnetizing” and “repelling” is one that the Buddhist tradition can thankfully speak to. As it says in the *Āryadharmaskandhanāmamahāyānasūtra* (Tib. *‘phags pa chos kyi phung po zhes bya ba theg pa chen po ‘i mdo*), the Buddha “taught that there are eighty-four thousand sections of the Dharma” following the classical understanding of there being eighty-four thousand different kinds of being (“The Sections of Dharma,” 2021). This allows every being to access and engage with the Buddhist path regardless of their background or proclivities. We find this sentiment echoed later in the tradition in Nāgārjuna’s *Ratnāvalī* where he writes:

Just like how grammarians
begin by reciting a model of the alphabet,
the Buddha teaches students
the dharma that they can accept.
To some he teaches dharma
to turn them away from evil deeds.
To some he teaches dharma so that they can obtain merit.
To some he teaches duality.
To some he teaches non-duality.
[The dharma] which is frightening to those with doubt,
Having an essence of emptiness and compassion,
[he teaches] to those who will achieve enlightenment.

(Own translation, sourced from Hopkins, 2007, p. 218)

This approach to bringing beings onto the path can be quite instructive for those working towards animal liberation. Not only is a gradualist approach to teaching others and helping them morally develop recommended, but we also find the Buddhist tradition emphasizing how it takes diverse approaches to meet all the various kinds of beings where they are. This may inform magnetizing activity in animal liberation contexts by recognizing that different people from different backgrounds may respond in various ways to various arguments, tactics, or associations used to advocate for animal liberation. While most who are serious about animal liberation as a political project would be right to criticize the shallow commitment of dietary veganism for health or environmental reasons (Johnson, 2015, p. 31), we might see these shallow engagements (alongside perfunctory incrementalist attempts to “reduce meat consumption” or “buy cruelty-free shampoos”) as legitimate means of introducing people to the cause of animal liberation and pointing them in the direction of complete abolition. Furthermore, certain teachings in the tantric tradition were *guarded* and kept *secret* because they may foster critique and disgust in the lay Buddhist population.

This secrecy functioned by keeping practices behind difficult-to-obtain initiations or by hiding certain provocative images with silk coverings. While most people committed to animal liberation would advocate for transparency in the working of slaughterhouses, dairy farms, and so forth, they might also consider withholding news about direct action initiatives which may offend liberal sensibilities and invite criticism and disdain towards the movement at large. That said, the inverse is also true: there are certainly times when profanity or offense may be the most effective way to communicate political ideas and win ordinary people to one’s cause. In her now-famous essay “The Necessity of Political Vulgarity” Amber A’Lee Frost (2016) shows how this is the case in left politics in general, and this necessity would apply to certain animal liberation contexts as well. Regardless, magnetizing is a major component of both Buddha activity and of animal liberation, and the Buddhist tradition can compel productive reflection on this work in animal liberation contexts.

Finally, we arrive at the fourth and perhaps most controversial Buddha activities: subjugating. In the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, subjugation involves overcoming enemies, obstructing forces, and harmful obstacles and often involves doing so with *wrathful* means. If we are to map this

understanding of liberative activity onto animal liberation contexts, the obvious parallel would be direct action initiatives. Actions like industrial sabotage, open rescue, property destruction, tree spiking, blockades, animal release, and so forth undertaken by groups like the Animal Liberation Front, Earth First!, and individual activists are examples of actions that appear as either violent or confrontational but are rooted in compassionate concern for nonhuman animals. In some instances, the release of caged animals, the wrecking of wild horse corrals, or the destruction of research data derived from animal testing directly responds to and destroys some of the harmful material apparatuses that perpetuate the exploitation and murder of nonhuman animals. In other instances, campaigns run by groups like Stop Huntingdon Animal Cruelty can pressure individual actors through confrontational action to enact systemic change on behalf of nonhuman animals. Both of these approaches to direct action subjugate the social, economic, and material structures that actively harm nonhuman animals. They either disincentivize or immediately intervene in both systems and individual instances of animal exploitation and thus overcome the particular obstacles, systemic obstructions, and maleficent individual actors that prevent total animal liberation.

This direct action approach to animal liberation, and indeed the entire notion of wrathful subjugation, may run contrary to the peaceful picture of Buddhism commonly painted, but there is a good deal of precedence for this kind of action in the Buddhist world. Some of the most recognizable images of the Vajrayāna tradition are of enlightened beings with large fangs, giant scowls, flaming hair, swords, garlands of severed heads, and so forth. However, these violent images are depictions of *compassion* (Tib. *snying rje*). While these subjugating figures may appear to emanate anger, they are merely feigning this wrath in order to compassionately respond to situations and individuals which require a forceful response. In this way, they reflect the Mahāyāna Buddhist ideal of *upāya* (Tib. *thabs*), or skillful means, which permits those committed towards the liberation of all sentient beings to act in ways otherwise prohibited if doing so is conducive to liberation. Canonically, we can find precedence for this idea in the *Bodhicaryāvatara* (Tib. *byang chub sems dpa'i spyod pa la 'jug pa*) of Śāntideva (Tib. *zhi ba lha*) which states:

Having understood in that way,
A bodhisattva must continuously exert themselves for the benefit of

others.

The bodhisattva who sees this extensively and possesses
compassion

Is granted the ability to do even what is prohibited.

(Own translation, sourced from Bhattachara, 1960, pp. 73)

Regarding even the most basic Buddhist precept of not killing living beings, the *Upāyakaṣālya Sūtra* (Tib. *thabs mkhas kyi mdo*) preserves a narrative of the former Buddha Dīpaṃkara who killed a murderous thief to prevent him from killing others and accruing negative karma (Katz, 1994). In these examples, if one is firmly rooted in a compassionate concern for others then direct actions which involve confrontation are on the table alongside more peaceful, institutional approaches. In this way, the Buddhist tradition echoes recent remarks made by Andreas Malm (2021) who rightly notes that there is not “even one minimally relevant analogue to the climate struggle that has not contained some violence” (p. 61) and that “the civil rights movement won the Act of 1964 *because it had a radical flank that made it appear as a lesser evil in the eyes of state power*” (pp. 49, emphasis in original). In other words, any mass movement towards liberation (be that Buddhist liberation or animal liberation) must involve some degree of direct confrontation that eschews liberal modes of political correctness such that the institutional wing of the movement can make headway in the broader discourse and effect political change. This is not an indiscriminate violent modality but a skillful use of confrontation in circumstances where such an orientation is absolutely necessary for the liberation of nonhuman animals. Buddhist notions of subjugation understood this necessity through its concept of *upāya*, and the forms of direct action that operate in the shadows of the broader animal liberation movement can be read as following this liberative tradition. When a compassionate concern for the liberation of all beings from *duḥkha* is one’s central motivation, then even the wrathful subjugation of the individuals and systems which do harm can be construed as Buddha activity in this framework.

Conclusion

As explained earlier, the Tibetan Buddhist tradition does not have an exemplary record for animal ethics in its historical context. However, exceptional figures in modernity and the contemporary organizations they have inspired have taken up the mantle of animal liberation as a core feature of their Buddhist practice. As Tibetan Buddhism leaves its historical Tibetan

context and encounters scientific modernity in its diaspora and convert communities, many of the justifications for meat consumption (and hence animal exploitation) have begun to be addressed. Plant foods are readily available; nutritional science tells us that abstaining from meat is beneficial rather than detrimental to human health, and the traditional Tibetan modes of masculinity have mainly given way to a hegemonic cosmopolitan masculinity (albeit still toxic but less reliant on killing animals as a marker of identity).

For these reasons, vegetarianism, veganism, and efforts towards animal liberation have begun to emerge more fruitfully out of Tibetan Buddhist foundations. For example, Dawa Liebe (Dr. Tenzin Chodhen), a follower of the modern yogi and animal rights proponent Chatral Rinpoche, co-founded the Dharamsala Vegan Movement. This organization educates the resident monastics and the Buddhist laity in its diaspora community of Dharamsala about animal rights, and Dawa cares for the stray nonhuman animals in her area herself. Her particular methods of promoting awareness of animal liberation in her community map neatly onto the framework above and I argue this can best be read as an extension of her own commitment to the Vajrayāna tradition and an example of the Four Buddha activities in practice (Liebe, 2018). Understanding the work of animal liberation as Buddha activity in this way can thus provide a solid theoretical resource for Tibetan Buddhist communities engaged in animal liberation praxis. Indeed, I argue that for a Mahāyāna Buddhist committed to the liberation of all sentient beings from *duḥkha*, working towards animal liberation is a necessity, and seeing the various facets of animal liberation as forms of Buddha activity can compel Buddhists to adopt an abolitionist orientation towards nonhuman animal exploitation. As I have shown, addressing nonhuman animal suffering by engaging in institutional reform and direct action is a natural extension of the Four Buddha Activities, and Vajrayāna Buddhists around the world should follow the examples of Shabkar and Chatral Rinpoche and take up this work as a key component of their Buddhist practice.

Furthermore, those committed to animal liberation in non-Buddhist contexts can find the theoretical parallels between the Four Buddha Activities and animal liberation praxis useful for their own work. The multifaceted approach to liberative praxis found in the framework of the Four Buddha Activities can inform the work of those engaged in animal liberation by recognizing the validity and utility of the various facets of activist work. Each of the Four Buddha Activities, pacifying, enriching, magnetizing, and

subjugating, is necessary for the liberation of sentient beings, and the animal liberation activity that falls under each of these headings is similarly necessary for actualizing animal liberation. The diverse approach to animal liberation praxis that I have outlined above echoes many of the sentiments of David Pellow and his articulation of total liberation, being the movement towards an ethic of justice inclusive of humans, nonhuman animals, and ecosystems, which is anarchic and anti-capitalist in its politics and embraces direct action tactics alongside institutional efforts (2014, pp. 5-6). The Buddhist goal of liberating all beings from *duḥkha* includes human and nonhuman beings (and, to a lesser extent, ecosystems), and it embraces what resembles direct action tactics through its Mahāyāna emphasis on *upāya*, or skillful means. Reflecting on convergences like those we find in the Four Buddha Activities and the various praxes of animal liberation can uncover a global, cosmopolitan approach to liberative theory and praxis that can be used to mobilize a kind of animal (or total) liberation internationalism. It is my hope that those invested in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition take up such activity and contribute to this global effort toward liberating nonhuman animals as a part of their broader Buddhist practice and that non-Buddhist activists can find both inspiration in and solidarity with the Buddhist liberative tradition.

References

- Barstow, G. (2018). *Food of sinful demons: Meat, vegetarianism, and the limits of Buddhism in Tibet*. Columbia University Press.
- Barstow, G. (Trans.). (2019). The Laṅkāvatāra Sūtra. In G. Barstow (Ed.), *The faults of meat: Tibetan Buddhist writings on vegetarianism* (pp. 38-47). Wisdom Publications.
- Barstow, G. (Trans.). (2019). The Mahāparinirvāṇa Sūtra. In G. Barstow (Ed.), *The faults of meat: Tibetan Buddhist writings on vegetarianism* (pp. 48-51). Wisdom Publications.
- Bhattachara, V. (Ed.). (1960). *Bodhicaryāvatarā of Śāntideva*. The Asiatic Society.
- Chatral Rinpoche. (2007). *Compassionate action* (Z. Larson, Ed.). Snow Lion.
- Delforce, C. (Director). (2018). *Dominion* [Motion picture]. Australia: Farm Transparency Project.
- Hopkins, J. (2007). *Nāgārjuna's precious garland: Buddhist advice for living and liberation*. Snow Lion Publications.

- Jamgön Kongtrul Lodrö Thaye. (2019). *Jewels of many colours: Ordinary fire pūjas for the four activities based on a single substance to easily conclude approach and accomplishment.* (G. Avertin, Trans.). Lotsawa House. <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/jamgon-kongtrul/jewels-of-many-colours>
- Johnson, L. (2015). The religion of ethical veganism. *Journal of Animal Ethics*, 5(1), 31-68.
- Kats, M. (Trans.). (1994). *The skill in means (Upāyakaśalya) Sūtra.* Motilal Banarsidass.
- Liebe, D. (2018). I did not find my Buddha in scriptures, I found him in living beings. *Vegan First Daily.* <https://www.veganfirst.com/article/i-did-not-find-my-buddha-in-scriptures-i-found-him-in-living-beings>
- Maitreya. (2000). *Buddha Nature: the Mahayana Uttaratantra Shastra* (R. Fuchs, Trans.). Snow Lion.
- Monson, S. (Director). (2005). *Earthlings* [Motion picture]. USA: Nation Earth.
- Mipham Rinpoche. (2019a). A brief prayer for summoning prosperity. (A. Ta-Quan, Trans.). Lotsawa House. <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/brief-summoning-prosperity>
- Mipham Rinpoche. (2019b). Wangdü: The great cloud of blessings – The prayer which magnetizes all that appears and exists. (Rigpa Translations, Trans.). Lotsawa House. Retrieved from <https://www.lotsawahouse.org/tibetan-masters/mipham/great-cloud-blessings>
- Ohnuma, R. (2017). *Unfortunate destiny: Animals in the Indian Buddhist imagination.* Oxford University Press.
- Pang, R. (2022). Taking animals seriously: Shabkar's narrative argument for vegetarianism and the ethical treatment of animals. *Journal of Buddhist Ethics*, 29, 61-84.
- Patrul Rinpoche. (1998). *The words of my perfect teacher* (Padmakara Translation Group, Trans.). Shambhala Publications.
- Pellow, D. N. (2014). *Total liberation: The power and promise of animal rights and the radical earth movement.* University of Minnesota Press.
- Psihoyos, L. (Director). (2019). *The game changers* [Motion picture]. USA: Netflix
- Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol. (2001). *The life of Shabkar: The autobiography of a Tibetan yogi* (M. Ricard, Trans.). Snow Lion Publications.
- Shabkar Tsogdruk Rangdrol. (2004). *Food of bodhisattvas: Buddhist teachings on abstaining from meat* (Padmakara Translation Group, Trans.). Shambhala Publications.

- Simonds, C. H. (2021). This precious human life: Human exceptionalism and altruism in Tibetan Buddhism. *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology*, 25(3), 239-255.
- Simonds, C. H. (2023). Ethical veganism as moral phenomenology: Engaging Buddhism with animal ethics. *Journal of Animal Ethics*, 13(1), 48-60.
- 84000: Translating the Words of the Buddha. (2021). The sections of Dharma: Dharmaskandha (Dharmachakra Translation Committee, Trans.). Retrieved from <https://read.84000.co/translation/toh245.html>
- Wolcott Johnson, A. (2019). Khedrup Jé on meat in the monastery. In G. Barstow (Ed.), *The faults of meat: Tibetan Buddhist writings on vegetarianism* (pp. 119-158). Wisdom Publications.

ESSAY: The Cat Who Questions My Humanity: Ruminations On Animals and Philosophy

Elliot C. Mason

Elliot.mason@engelska.uu.se

Abstract

Karl Marx is adamant that property is not a material fact but a form of relation. In their manifesto, Marx and Engels seek a way out of this relation through the abolition of private property, allowing the opening of humanity without the presupposition of appropriation. In this essay, I use this framework to think about my relationship with Zoey, the cat who lives with me. I ask whether it is possible to conceive of this relation without its presupposition in the logics of ownership. Tracing anthropocentric philosophy from Heidegger to the contemporary, I seek a radical animal ethics against property.

key words: Marxism; property; abolition; cat philosophy; Dasein; communism.

Part I.

There is a cat who lives with me, a cat called Zoey. While writing a Ph.D. thesis on Marx's value-form theory at home with Zoey, the question returning to me endlessly is: whose cat is this? My partner and I bought her from a woman here in Stockholm, where we live, whose son had developed a growing allergy to cats. She cost us four thousand kronor (about four hundred euros). If I bought her, do I own her? If she lives in an apartment I pay for, does she belong to me? Is she obliged to serve me since I speak about her in the terms of ownership? This is all to say: can I speak of Zoey without thinking of her as "my cat"?

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari are paramount among poststructuralists in their dedication to revealing how language coordinates and manages the relations of power. This begins in childhood, and especially at school, where the oppressive codes of power are computed into the human. "The compulsory education machine does not communicate information," they write in *A Thousand Plateaus*; "it imposes upon the child semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar" (1987, pp. 75-76). This grammar is the binary data for understanding the world: masculine-feminine, singular-plural, etc. "The elementary unit of language—the statement—is the order word [...] [and] [e]very order-word [...] carries a little death sentence" (ibid., p. 76). For Deleuze and Guattari, learning a language is the process of conditioning oneself in the order of power.

The language of possession structures and determines my relation with Zoey. The fact that I can only speak of her in the language of possession reveals the coordinates of power that have been appropriated into and as my way of being. I exist already as a moving site of possessive pronouns; not just a featherless biped, as Diogenes teasingly summarized Plato's definition of humanity, but a biped with a grasping ontic reach.

When I lay down my bags and books in a room and perform the social duties necessary to allow me to sleep there, that space becomes "my room," "my apartment," or maybe one day, when I'm all grown up and self-possessed, "my own house." These seemingly tiny pronouns presuppose a material armory, and a totality of social relations regulated by the impulse of defense. I defend this place against the vaguest sense of threat, a threat that means only the challenge of another possessive pronoun into my acquired rituals of domination.

The complexity of thinking beyond this possessive impulse is difficult to fathom. Édouard Glissant opens this complexity by noting the etymology

of “understanding” in his native French: *comprendre*—to grasp; to take hold of something (*prendre*). In his history of imperialism, he writes,

Understanding cultures then became more gratifying than discovering new lands. Western ethnography was structured on the basis of this need. But we shall perhaps see that the verb *to understand* in the sense of ‘to grasp’ [*comprendre*] has a fearsome repressive meaning here. (Glissant, 1997, p. 26)

To understand is to grasp, to claim ownership over what has become known in the coordinates of the grasping language.

In *The Communist Manifesto*, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels spell out their views on private property in no uncertain terms. Before proposing their project, however, they emphasize that property relations are always changing according to the material movements of societies. Capitalist property—or bourgeois property, as they call it—is a particular and historically specific way of arranging the social domination of land and its appropriation for use. It is not a natural phenomenon that arises on its own. Therefore, they write,

[t]he distinguishing feature of Communism is not the abolition of property generally, but the abolition of bourgeois property. But modern bourgeois private property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few. In this sense, the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property. (2015, pp. 22-23)

Private property is not only about the exclusive use of land by one appropriating capitalist—what Marx calls “primitive accumulation” (1990, p. 873ff) or David Harvey calls “accumulation by dispossession” (2003)—but also the capitalist’s ownership of workers’ ability to use their own time.

In the wage relation, which emerges in a society in which all social relations presuppose the production and circulation of value as capitalism’s fundamental propulsive mechanism, workers are obliged to give most of the time of their days to the production of surplus value for capitalists, firstly because there is no other way of accessing the basic means of their survival without exchanging their time for money, and secondly because the money for which they exchange their time is suspended in a future long after that time is actually given to the capitalist. A wage is the accumulated product

exchanged for time that has already been expended. It is only after a full month's work that a worker is given the money for which all of that preceding time was used. In the wage relation, capitalists are always indebted to workers, having not yet offered the payment for labor-time that has already been received.

It is this basic system of credit that allows the capitalist to accumulate an immense store of labor-time each month, and use this time as private property, property to be invested in the appropriation of further means of production, which is to say invested in the expansion of private property (Marx, 1990, p. 278).

The abolition of bourgeois private property is, then, the abolition of the entire foundation of the meaning of social relations in capitalism, which are constituted through both the language and the material practice of possession. This is the ontological groundwork of capitalism. *I am because I can possess. I exist because I have the potential to appropriate time and space as my possessions, which I can use to expand time and space.* This basic expansive impulse of the current social totality makes it extremely complicated—if not impossible—to imagine a cat I paid for and I let live with me without our relation being presupposed by a language of possession, without the grasp of understanding.

Part II.

Does Zoey know that I am not a cat? Or to put this Derridean question in a more Heideggerian frame, do I know that Zoey is not human? Am I sure of a fundamental species separation between us? And if so, on what is that assurance reliant? The question to begin with, the first question, is, am I human, and if so, what is human? The importance of this question is not the question itself but the possibility of questioning that it presents. Can Zoey, that is to say, question me? If she can, if she wonders what I am, then can I claim an absolute species distinction between us? Throughout these questions I hold onto the belief that species is also an identity category, as deconstructable and illusory as gender, race, and ability.

For Heidegger, the distinctly world-forming landscape of what it is to be human is the moment of giving language. By giving voice to the world, the human and the world come into Being. "Language is the house of Being," as Heidegger writes (2008, p. 217). The order of the voice is the ordering position of the human-being in the world, and this order is always presupposed by *thinking*. Speaking is preceded by the silence of thinking;

every moment of giving voice is the closure of an open silence, a silence that is the disorder of thinking. By speaking, the human makes the world as the house that holds the questioning of Being; the architectonics of questioning is built around the human who has spoken, a structure that is formed by the enactment of disordered, open thinking as the order of the voice. This is the closure that is the opening of the world.

In this giving, this act of voice, thinking is also always thanking (Farred, 2015, p. 77). A gesture is passed from the closure of human thinking to the opening of the world as the knowable possession of humanity. Earth becomes the human world. The opening of humanity is also the closing of the world, historically, philosophically, as the questioning of history that is philosophy. Moving back from world to human, the order of the voice is an outwards gesture of world-formation that also works back on the speaking human. The human—in the moment of speaking, of ordering the voice—is given to a process that is not the human’s own. “Because Heidegger gives us to understand,” Grant Farred crucially writes, “that to think is to command a language that is not yours but comes not so much to you as from your thinking—it is yours, you have no claim to it, it is at your disposal” (2015, p. 80).

The sentence twists around on itself in the most properly Heideggerian way. It is ultimately these insecurities of language, this non-specificity of the subject’s givenness to not knowing what we are given to, that makes Heidegger such a paramount figure for critical thinking, despite the obvious agonisms of reading him. For Heidegger, the human is a being who questions Being, through which the human enters (and becomes) *Dasein* (being-there). The unique human trait of being able to question life is consolidated in the human questioning of death. As he writes in *Being and Time*, “Only when death is conceived in its full ontological essence can we have any methodological assurance in even *asking* what *may be after death*; only then can we do so with meaning and justification” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 292). The being who understands death as the opening of a logical structure that defines the life preceding it is rendered human. Life is conceived as the architectonics of thinking through a bitemporal reflection on what has been and what will be. For Heidegger, it is this movement that is not available to non-human animals.

Every time I leave my apartment, Zoey follows me to the door. She tries to leave with me, so I pick her up and put her back inside, then I quickly slither through the gap between the door and the wall and lock her in. In a

brief and closing moment of misery, I see her wide blue eyes peeled back, witnessing the world excluding her. She must remain inside, an indoor cat living on the fifth floor in the center of the city, with nowhere to roam but the living room, the bedroom, the living room again.

Zoey's experience of the world is a terminal foreclosure of her being inside it. What she knows of the world is its resistance to her movement toward *Dasein*. I see it in her eyes every time I leave. And every time I come back home, she is relieved as only one who has been dreaming can be relieved, as one who is released from the enclosure of a dream.



Figure 1: Zoey and Philosophy

No one, undoubtedly, questions things like Heidegger questions things. He is always questioning, from the Academy with Plato to my Stockholm apartment with Zoey. And so he knows already that the world is not a separate and homeostatic form that humans learn to know through experience. The structure of our knowing is the constitution of what is called World, and what emerges through that cosmic dialectic is a type of human who is called Man. Man is the human who makes the World, rendering it against the disorder of earth, and he does this by speaking the World into being through the questioning of Being—the act that is simultaneously the singular operation of the being *who is Dasein* and that being's movement towards *Dasein*.

Heidegger defines this as “Dasein specifically bring[ing] itself back to itself from its lostness in the ‘they,’” where the They (*Das Man*, meaning *the One*, where one refers to a non-specific, universal third-person other: *one* as *anyone*) is a linguistic or social convention that misses the proper life of Dasein by not acting (Heidegger, 2001, p. 312). The They, or the One, is an inauthentic way of being because it does not assume Dasein as the

potentiality to act, forming the disordered earth into the order of voice after thinking.

To make life meaningful, to structure the world as World with meaning and justification, one must act on the fact of being as Dasein. “In terms of its *possibility*, Dasein is already a potentiality-for-Being-its-Self, but it needs to have this potentiality attested” (Heidegger, 2001, p. 313). The act of thinking as speaking-into-Being is the attestation of Dasein. What is paramount for Heidegger in the being of human being is, then, the fact of *acting*. One (the They) shuffles off the coil of its inauthentic and endless life by assuming the act of Dasein, of being the being who thinks as the groundwork of acting on thinking.

This is the point in the magnificent weirdness of his thinking—a few years after *Being and Time*, in his lecture course *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*—at which Heidegger does two things he would never quite do again: (1) puts forward a thesis, making an affirmative statement that is not immediately undermined by self-questioning, and (2) categorizes life as differential objects of ontology. “However crudely, certain distinctions immediately manifest themselves here. We can formulate these distinctions in the following three theses: [1.] the stone (material object) is *worldless*; [2.] the animal is *poor in world*; [3.] man is *world-forming*” (Heidegger, 1995, p. 177).

The animal—universal, singular, undifferentiated, *the* singular animal—is “poor in world” for Heidegger in part because it has no language, but even more so because it does not act on its thinking. It does not build its world through the structuring architectonics of giving voice. (Derrida points to this as the Cartesian remnant in Heidegger, despite the latter’s constant assertions against Descartes [Derrida, 2008, p. 146].) The World is made *as Man*, and in this long era of modernity since the Enlightenment, this is how both World and Man are made. It is this dialectical operation that is impossible for animals and stones, or any inhuman material object.

But what if the importance of Zoey’s thinking is not to do with her own thinking or any action that follows it as authentic Dasein, but rather the way in which her thinking disorders my ability to act on thinking? In the face of Zoey, faced by the cat, there is nothing I can say to settle the ethical divide between us. I cannot speak the situation of our separation out of this permanent rift. I cannot establish a World in which we attend to each other before becoming ourselves only by the fact of my thinking.

If Zoey is able to question my humanity, does that act of nonhuman questioning necessarily undo my humanity? What makes me human, according to Heidegger, in the end is only my exclusive claim to questioning. But if I also can be questioned by the cat then this human-being—this way of being that is human—is put in question too. The cat comes into my Dasein and disrupts its potentiality-for-Being-its-Self with its *They*; Zoey unspeaks my speaking of the World into being by bringing the disorder of thinking to the ordered architectonics of the voice.

Figure 2: Zoey, Reaching into the World



In the face of Zoey's questioning, I can no longer assure myself of my exclusive claim to knowing death, which I know through my questioning of the afterlife. Instead, I feel the disorder of life breaking the formal operation of my speaking-into-being of the World, a World that is only the accumulation of a priori coordinates that call on themselves as "Man." World is the name for the maps that imperial men drew, rather than a natural setting for human life that exceeds the frame of humanity. If Zoey thinks, she thinks in a way that is undetectable in the philosophical mechanics of Kant or Heidegger. They cannot compute the coordinates of her thinking, so it is called "thinking" arbitrarily. I think "and" Zoey thinks "and" Heidegger thinks: an arbitrary conjunction, an elusive sharing of extended space, an illusory invite to an exclusionary World.

What distinguishes Zoey's thinking—if she thinks—is that her thinking does not *call on her to act*. When Heidegger brilliantly asks, "What is called thinking?" (Heidegger, 1968) he is not asking so much what the name of thinking is, but rather what *is called upon* in the name of thinking. What are we called upon to think? What does thinking call on us to do?

What this comes down to is the meaning of thinking as an act. For me—as Heideggerian as any human has to be—thinking is an imperative towards creation. Thinking makes the World as a place where my thinking is apparent and meaningful. What is so profoundly disrupting about Zoey’s look as I leave the apartment—about her knowledge that I am sealing off a World that is made in the structure I impose on it, a World made for my possession of her life—is that she is not thinking about me; instead, she is demanding that I stop acting, that I give up my creation of a world outside the only apartment-world she knows. For Zoey, thinking as World is never determined by the possibility of action: ethics, for Zoey, is not-doing.

Part III.

Since the rise of the post-Heideggerians in what is called continental philosophy, the form of the singular human has been under interrogation. Contemporary continental philosophy almost takes for granted its involvement in the erasure of a singular global humanity. Derrida spent the last half of his life lucidly obsessed with the question, is this the end of Man?

In his wake, three contemporary Nietzschean Derrideans filter a study of Anthropocene epistemology through Paul de Man. Tom Cohen, Claire Colebrook, and J. Hillis Miller ask how this global moment of apocalyptic unbecoming—the Anthropocene as the end of Man—strangely gives credence to the affirmation of a singular humanity. In the moment of our collective ending, we are all brought together, all bound in a single system of knowing the fact that we are ending: “there is,” they write, “no ‘we,’ no ‘anthropos’ until, in a final moment of inscribed and marked destruction, a species event appears by way of a specific geological framing” (Cohen, Colebrook, Miller, 2016, p. 9). The enfolding geological narrative of the end of time is a frame in which a coherent “we” gathers as humanity. They continue:

What if the human were an effect of its own delusions of self-erasure? What if there were no humanity other than that which is effected from the thought of the other-than-human? We can think of this in many ways. One way would be to see the constant proclamations of overcoming humanism, Cartesianism and anthropocentrism as *producing* man as the being who can annihilate himself in order to become animal. (Ibid., p. 11)

Self-erasure is the only marker of the coherent meaning of Man. The species coheres only in the moment of its collective agential suicide, which turns people into animals, indistinct and poor in world.

For humanity to become animal through self-eradication, the World made by humanity would have to disappear, revealing the same beings without their movement in and as Dasein. What this requires is a singular idea of humanity. All humanity must together end the World in order for all humanity to emerge as animal. But is this self-erasure that of all humanity, or only of its post-Enlightenment ideal, Man?

Figure 3: Zoey as a Human



To think this question, Sylvia Wynter's distinction between humanity and Man will be crucial. Building on the Marxist study of primitive accumulation as class conflict, for Stefano Harney and Fred Moten it is race that principally follows as a categorization of violence from the process of being stolen, which historically begins with the theft of land in European imperialism. In order to assert and form "[t]he European exception" (Harney and Moten, 2021, p. 27) as the metaphysical structure of an arch-historical continent with the given right to subsume earth into and as itself, there must be a corresponding notion of the arch-historical paradigm of humanity, whom Sylvia Wynter, alongside other black studies scholars such as Katherine McKittrick, refers to as "Man" (McKittrick, 2015).

Man is the self-owning and earth-owning paradigm who deems himself, as Europe, as Empire, to have been given the world through his unique

exception. However, this exception, as Harney and Moten write, “is a categorization one grants oneself only at the price of imagining that it has been granted by an Other” (Harney and Moten, 2021, p. 28). In the idea of being given a world there is borne also the idea of the world requiring its having-been-given, through which aporia European Man establishes this conquerable world as a dialectic between master and slave, between landlord and bondsman. European Man, however, in his symbolic universalization, was always both master and slave. The entire structure is the metaphysics of his self-possession as global surplus, as the excess of everything that is insufficient to the production of more.

This simultaneity of being-master and being-slave is sovereignty’s static, omnicidal decline. This is what it is to be chained to the struggle for freedom, a ‘rational’ instrument run amok in place, as man’s perpetually stilled motion. (Ibid.)

In this formulation, the establishment of the world as the possibility of subsuming everything is also the establishment of its total destruction. Man can only imagine his subsumption of the world into a singular pursuit as the struggle for freedom, the task of attaining ideal self-possession as earth-possession. What does this mean for humanity’s possession of the World and of animals?

In the communist synthesis of capitalist time, the proletariat destroys itself as a class. Communism is the struggle for self-erasure. The people emergent without their definition as proletarians do not destroy capitalists: they destroy their definition as capitalists in the totality of productive social relations of capitalism. What is broken is the system of social relations that determines the continued exploitation of workers. In the apocalypse of communism, capitalists emerge as people. This is totally misunderstood in the capitalist critique of Marxism and communism. The revolution breaks the possibility of the violent categorization of humans into owners and workers; it is not the destruction of those people themselves.

This means that in the apocalyptic moment of regime change—in the emergent moment of capitalist modernity—another possibility survives, another way of being split from the dominant way.

If modernity is the simultaneous emergence and self-eradication of Man, then humanity continues to exist in a fugitive temporality contemporaneous with but separated from our current positioning in capitalist time. What Cohen, Colebrook, and Hillis Miller posit as the synthesis to the project of

Man is the realization of his own finality; following Kantian morality, he has finally constituted himself as *an end in himself*, not as a means. Man forecloses the boundaries of what Man is within the developmental structure of capitalist time, in which Man exists as the self-questioning (read: self-abolishing) Subject.

When Man is questioned from a place outside language, he is questioned in a look that does not understand the dialectical synthesis of looking as the subsumption of land and space into the temporal accumulation of the Subject. In that catish questioning, without the grasp of property, Man is undermined in the World-making operation of his own finality. Man can no longer end himself when he is being questioned by a being without end in the spatiotemporal logics of property. From a life beside the totality, from an ongoing possibility of another way of being, humanity is questioned by the being that cannot question, and in this moment Man is revealed in his nothingness, his falsity; instead, there emerges humanity, ungendered and unspecific to modernity.

In the project of Man, the boundaries of property are established by the limits of Man's self-questioning in language. To the extent that I can speak myself as existing here, to the extent that I can think myself into being in this partitioned space, I can claim this area as my own. Without those "semiotic coordinates possessing all of the dual foundations of grammar" that Deleuze and Guattari see in education, there is suddenly no space in which to plot the coordinates, no logic in which to fathom the grasping philosophy of space, no way of imagining the end of my speaking body and the beginning of a world outside of me.

The system of representation enabled by the property logics of capitalist modernity, however, does not allow for openings into signifying difference. The human body is subsumed as the bearer and producer of the global coordinates of property. The human body cannot simply step back from that and see in another way. The self is constituted *as* the logics of property. As Denise Ferreira da Silva writes in the context of British-Indian imperial history, India could not define itself as a "'nonmodern' historical subject [until it had become] an other of Europe, a global subaltern subject," which is a subject who cannot speak, whose capacity to speak itself into being as a questioning producer of World is already foreclosed by this internal distinction as Other to the Subject of World (Ferreira da Silva, 2007, p. 186).

The subaltern is speechless, communicating in a language that is not registered by the coordinates of property-possessive modernity as

questioning, which is to say thinking. And it is only through inhabiting that position that the subaltern finally becomes a “nonmodern” subject, disentangled from self-constitution in property. Following this removal is the temporal positioning of the nonsubject, who always appears to be premodern, or “a contemporaneous *before*”, as Silva writes (*ibid.*, p. 185). The problem for liberatory thinking is then how to “fully engage [the] *now*” of nonhuman beings, how to open into the ongoing but suppressed ways of being human in excess of the self-eradication of Man (*ibid.*).

In this section, I’m trying to say that yes, as Cohen, Colebrook, and Hillis Miller say, it is the twilight of the Anthropocene idols, but the Anthropocene idols are not humanity. They are the post-Enlightenment possessive subject called Man. The Anthropocene idols in their twilight are the subjects who make World as their possession. It is humanity’s way of being as Man that is ending, not humanity itself as animal inhabitant of earth.

Zoey looks at me. In that moment, her thinking is actless, only formed in a moment of givenness to me. Through that look, she reveals to me a way of thinking without acting, which is to say of thinking without the creation of a World of property-possession. An earth emerges in which I am actless. I am a thing that thinks in the world, but my thinking does not make the world I think in.

Part IV.

Theodor Adorno is emphatic that any ecological ethics begins with the eradication of capitalist property relations. He insists on a difference between “things” and “objects”, concentrating on things as moments in the dialectical process of objectification. “Assuming,” as Crystal Bartolovich writes, “that there is no resistance by ‘things’ to their objectification, and leaping immediately to ‘history’ or ‘capitalism’ as a ready-made answer to every question, perpetuates an overlaying of the general over the particular that Adorno persistently decried” (2022, p. 73). Focusing on things as the resistant material residue of objectification brings to Marxism an important love, a concern for the particular, that rejects Marxism’s tendency towards generalizing abstractions in the moment in which the dialectic encounters the object.

Things congeal as fragments of that which was subjugated [i.e., nature]; to rescue it means to love things. We cannot eliminate from the dialectics of the extant what is experienced in

consciousness as an alien thing: negatively, coercion and heteronomy, but also the marred figure of what we should love.
(Adorno, 1973, p. 191)

The end of property is the end of the foreclosure of animal thinking as human thinking. The thinking of Man as violence against animals is distinguished from the open questioning of humanity, a questioning that crucially *receives* questioning from the world and makes the human world through the questioning that begins thinking. This formulation does not reject Heidegger, but rather accepts the fault of his work as his cruelty, as Derrida does—and even more so as Adorno does—with Kant (Derrida, 2008, pp. 97-102).

The importance of this opening into animal thinking after the abolition of capitalist property is the fact that its form of questioning is not fully knowable. Zoey's thinking, so foreign to me that it unmakes me as a subject, cannot be computed into the transcendental coordinates that make the world I know in this universal subjectivity of modernity. Having been questioned by a cat, I can no longer know the world as Man.

For Adorno, as Bartolovich writes, “anthropomorphism is exactly what would prevent liberatory knowledge: it's the *unlike* that challenges us, and pushes us beyond the status quo properly, since that status quo is structured by violently determining relations, not merely ‘contingent’ ones” (Bartolovich, 2022, p. 81). To philosophically finalize and scientifically categorize and mathematically compute the exact parameters and mechanisms of Zoey's thinking would remove the importance of all our thinking together. Zoey questions me, and the question is that of my humanity. To find an answer is only to posit the world-constituting subjectivity of Man once again, and that would return us to the beginning.

To follow Zoey's questioning of me is to love the particularity of the moment, rather than falling into the common trap of presuming modernity's arch-synonymy of humanity and Man. Humanity is people, all distinct and engaging with the world through infinities of use values, where Man is the Subject, the establisher of World as the cumulative value of property relations.

In thinking the abolition of property, it is crucial to ruminate on what exactly property is. Throughout his writings, Marx constantly berates his contemporary socialist Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the author of the famous aphorism “*la propriété c'est la vol,*” or “property is theft.” Property,

however, is a relation rather than a material fact, so Proudhon's point makes no sense. Property itself cannot be abolished, but rather the relations that constitute space through the grasp of possession (Marx, 1993, 483ff).

Property is a way of seeing the world in the constitutive refusal to be seen. To see in the logics of property is to cover oneself, to emerge as Man (against humanity) in the covering of ontology, to come into earth as Man's World and lay out the groundworks of a universally constitutive vision, to see the world that cannot see, which Derrida speaks so beautifully:

It as if the men representing this configuration had seen without being seen, seen the animal without being seen by it [...]; without being seen naked by someone who, from deep within a life called animal, and not only by means of the gaze, would have obliged them to recognize, at the moment of address, that this was their affair, their lookout [*que cela les regardait*]. (Derrida, 2008, p. 14)

When Man thinks, he blinds the world, defining himself as the centrifuge of visibility. When humanity is thinking, on the other hand, openings into earths are linked to the unknowable questioning of animals.

When Zoey thinks, her thinking does not refuse to be seen by me, but rather presents itself in a landscape without cartographic coordinates, without the logic of grasping understanding. Her thinking is not an act; the thinking that precedes an act cannot be seen, since it has not yet imposed its faculty of order on the world, as the World.

Actless, opened by the inoperativity of the open, in the naked landscape of wholly being-seen, in the peripheral and submerged earths of emergent self-questioning, Man is revealed as the abolition of his own totalizing violence, and humanity as naked beings questioned on the earth by animals emerges from a muted but ongoing history, beside the subsumptive force of History and World, as Zoey thinks her questioning of my humanity, a humanity that anyway was never mine, but rather opened always by the questioning of Zoey.

Figure 4: Zoey as Animal Struggle



Part V.

What exactly, as people often ask of speculative theory, can these ruminations actually *do*? To end this essay, I propose a pedagogical act that refuses the demand to act on thinking.

What I have argued here is that the brutality of possessing animals as captured companions is not enacted only within human-animal relations, but forms a core constituting moment in the project of modernity, or the capitalist expansion of private property. Where I work—the university—this comes down to a problem of individuated subjects.

Philosophers have often posed the question, what is a subject? The object of their demands is the civic human, the political being whom Aristotle saw as humanity's ideal state. What they are not as often concerned with is the departments of a university or classes in school, strangely bound to the same signifier: *the subject*.

At universities, we divide the possibility of thinking into finite subjects. Some are considered eternal, claiming a possessive authority over the others: biology, physics, philosophy. Others are constantly questioned, placed up against the wall of productivity and forced to account for themselves: cultural studies, film studies, sports studies. What is practiced in the university is differential individuation according to a hierarchy of authority. Subjects as ontological units are trained into individuated being by subjects as epistemological units, the discrete partition of ways of knowing claiming a private boundary around ways of being.

The question that arises in my subject of study—Marxist literary theory—is whether the university has any other function than the

conditioning of subjects, than producing subjects who are simultaneously convinced of the illusory freedom that can be attained through individuation, and open to the inevitability of their time being appropriated and stolen by their employer and their society. At university, we demand the time of students. We oblige them to sacrifice the free use of their time, performing this disappearing act of life-time through the empty promise of more comfortable exploitation to come.

Calling oneself an intellectual, a scholar, or an academic instantiates a certain kind of subjectivity. What is called into being when we call ourselves scholars is a claim on the accumulation of knowledge. When we name ourselves knowledgeable, we capture knowledge and render it a possession. It is to claim dominion over the territory of knowing and to parcel out the shared experience of teaching and learning as private units of self-development that can be used as tokens for softened exploitation. More than that foreclosure, however, *study survives*. Harney and Moten write, “Before there are grants, research, conferences, books, and journals there is the experience of being taught and of teaching” (2013, p. 27).

In their most recent book, *All Incomplete*, Harney and Moten study the problem of the university in more detail.

What would happen if every time people used the word ‘university’ it came out sounding like ‘factory’? Why do people think working in the university is special? The university is a gathering of chances and resources; a cache of weapons and supplies; a concentration of dangers and pitfalls. It’s not a place to occupy or to inhabit; it’s a place to work, to get in and out of with such rapidity and rapacious purpose that it disappears in that its boundaries disappear. (2021, p. 123)

If we spoke of working in a “factory” instead of working in a “university” would our perspective of our exceptionalism change? Would our relation to the occupation of knowledge collapse, destabilizing our hubristic claims to calling ourselves the possessors of knowledge, the owners of the time of study? And would the absence of this epistemological claim lead to an instability in our fundamental ontological claim to being independent subjects, subjects whose perceptive order is structured by capturing the world into our way of knowing it?

As an inoperative rebuttal to the Heideggerian presupposition of *acting* in every moment of *thinking*—the arch-modern requirement of *acting on*

thinking in order to be a productive capitalist human—what if pedagogy presented its method, quite simply, as aimless? What if universities promised not to train their students for a specific productive role, instituting itself as a mimetic model of the world at large in which students can practice being workers, but rather offered their students a suspension of the productive imperatives that rule the world beyond universities? What if universities celebrated their isolation from the demands of value-production, revelling in the fact of their nonproductivity, and using that inoperative suspension of the duties of modernity as their aimless promise?

The way Zoey looks at me as I walk out the door to go to work presents me with the opaque demand of the face of the Other, the absolute and unanswerable ethical quandary that necessarily arises from the fact of existing in sociality, the fact that my being is already given over to a social life that exceeds and precedes me. The scandalous love (Butler, 2005, p. 77) of this unknowable face—Zoey's mute demand on my ethical conduct—can cease to traumatize me if I turn away from it, if I seal myself off, if I relinquish my social being. But that would mean, quite literally, to end my life, my life as sociality.

If I remain in the trauma of the unknowable demand of Zoey's animal face, as Judith Butler impels us to, I am opened into a nonfreedom that makes me responsible for Zoey (Butler, 2005, pp. 87-88); I am invited into her sociality, a sociality that reveals to me the epistemological division I have enforced as my ontological grounding: *what I cannot know is what I cannot be*. Instead, I must understand, as I stand in the face of Zoey, that *I must become what I do not know*, a demand that is exactly impossible. The only response to this impossibility is to abandon my claim to knowing, to let go of the world I claim to own.

To be human is to exist on a parted plane, one side subsumed in the generative command of authority and its obligation to capitalist value-production, and another that exceeds this script. Addressed in silence by a being who does not make the world by looking at me, a cat who does not act on the emotional force that pervades her way of seeing me, I am rendered suddenly unproductive. All my pursuits are meaningless and fleeting, and the abandon of unindividuated ethics is all that is left for me, just to the left of me, outside the captivity of animals.

Literature is the act of thinking narratives, the action of creative thinking, and as I close the door on Zoey I have to go to the literature department and turn my thinking into the action of a wage. I am obliged to act enough that I

continue the conditions of my exploitation. The mathematical compartmentalization of my knowledge-production upholds the illusory identity category of the species distinction that separates me and Zoey, splitting communists and cats.

What if I worked in the undifferentiated factory, where students come to undo the act of doing? Like Marx and Engels say, in communism no one is determined by the prescriptive name of their current role, even if the examples they give are deeply imbued with the humanist violence of modernity's anti-animal genocide: "hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticise after dinner" (1998, p. 53). In the study-space I imagine, students come to play with cats in the morning, make bread in the afternoon, study feline philosophy in the evening, and, as Marx and Engels command, criticize after dinner.

What is to be done? The first command might seem obvious: release all animals from captivity, whether on farms, in zoos, or in what we continue to brutally call *our property*. But as long as there is no abolition of how we understand ourselves as possessive subjects, the abolition of material property and the release of those entrapped within will only return us to the same conditions of violent capture. I celebrate every instance of abolished captivity, but alongside that struggle a theoretical pursuit has to be undertaken that removes the possessive reach of being human. The training ground for this ideological imperative of possession is the university. It is there—or *here*, I should ashamedly say—that this abolition begins, and it begins by abandoning the assumed exemption of this workplace.

In this factory, we train students to become possessive individuals, prepared for capturing the world. To open into a praxis of study that disavows the possessive claim of *subjects*—whether university departments or civic actors—as Harney and Moten know, we first distrust the university; we find, instead, anywhere else to study. We gather together to share what we claim to know, on street corners, at bars, in living rooms, in bed. Without a claim to ownership, in the excess of possession, relieved of the prescriptive regime of assigning grades, *study in the undercommons* is the social praxis that begins the abolition of possessive subjectivity, an abolition from which the demolition of all forms of capture ensues.

References

Adorno, T. (1973). *Negative dialectics* (E. B. Ashton, Trans.). Continuum.

- Bartolovich, C. (2022). Marxist ecology and Shakespeare. In C. Lye & C. Nealon (Eds.), *After Marx: Literature, theory, and value in the twenty-first century* (pp. 71-85). Cambridge University Press.
- Butler, J. (2005). *Giving an account of oneself*. Fordham University Press.
- Cohen, T., Colebrook, C., & Miller, J. H. (2016). *Twilight of the Anthropocene idols*. Open Humanities Press.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus* (B. Massumi, Trans.). University of Minnesota Press.
- Derrida, J. (2008). *The animal that therefore I am* (D. Wills, Trans.). Fordham University Press.
- Farred, G. (2015). *Martin Heidegger saved my life*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Ferreira da Silva, D. (2007). *Towards a global idea of race*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Glissant, É. (1997). *Poetics of relation* (B. Wing, Trans.). University of Michigan Press.
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2021). *All incomplete*. Minor Compositions.
- Harney, S., & Moten, F. (2013). *The undercommons: Fugitive planning and Black study*. Minor Compositions.
- Harvey, D. (2003). *The new imperialism*. Oxford University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (2008). *Basic writings* (D. F. Krell, Ed.). HarperPerennial.
- Heidegger, M. (2001). *Being and time* (J. Macquarrie & E. Robinson, Trans.). Blackwell. (Original work published 1927)
- Heidegger, M. (1995). The fundamental concepts of metaphysics: World, finitude, solitude (W. McNeill & N. Walker, Trans.). Indiana University Press.
- Heidegger, M. (1968). *What is called thinking?* (J. G. Gray, Trans.). Harper & Row.
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (2015). *The communist manifesto* (S. Moore, Trans.). Penguin. (Original work published 1848)
- Marx, K., & Engels, F. (1998). *The German ideology*. Prometheus Books. (Original work published 1846)
- Marx, K. (1993). *Grundrisse: Foundations of the critique of political economy* (M. Nicolaus, Trans.). Penguin. (Original work published 1973)
- Marx, K. (1990). *Capital: A critique of political economy, Volume I* (B. Fowkes, Trans.). Penguin. (Original work published 1976)
- McKittrick, K. (Ed.). (2015). *Sylvia Wynter: On being human as praxis*. Duke University Press.

ESSAY: Monstrous Tricks of the Tongue: Species Performativity and Domestication

Samantha Baugus

samanthabaugus@gmail.com

Abstract

The analysis in this essay focuses on the intricate dynamics of domestication and language, particularly between humans and companion animals, dogs. The ability of nonhumans to acquire speech presents a destabilizing effect, given that it is traditionally perceived as a hallmark of human superiority. Dogs that communicate in narratives force a reevaluation of anthropocentric worldviews and the concept of personhood. By gaining perspective, these canines transcend their previously abject status, shedding light on the oppressive structures of domestication and prompting a reconsideration of what it means to be nonhuman.

keywords: pets, domeseccration, anthropocentrism

Domestication is the primary tool used to structure and define the relationship between humans and nonhumans. We tend to divide nonhumans into categories of domesticated and “wild,” that is, non-domesticated (however, as I will observe shortly, this boundary is not so impermeable as humans believe or desire). Domestication encapsulates human faith in our superiority—humans control and orchestrate this relationship, usually with no consent from nonhuman participants. My article focuses on companion animals (“pets”), representing only a small percentage of domesticated animals, most of whom are enslaved for food, clothes, and entertainment for humans and other animals. This is not to diminish their plight but to draw attention to an often overlooked aspect of domestication and anthropocentric beliefs. This article examines the relationship between domestication and language in two texts: *The Lives of the Monster Dogs (LMD)* a novel by Kirsten Bakis (2017) and “The Evolution of the Trickster Stories Among the Dogs of the North Park after the Change” (“Trickster Tales”) a novelette by Kij Johnson (2014) I argue that the sudden appearance of talking dogs and their intrusion into cities challenges human superiority by revealing the inherent instability of domestication. In both texts, the canine protagonists lament their ability to speak because it brings a changed experience of memory and higher self-awareness. The dogs gain the ability to compare themselves to humans and to their past selves, realizing their abject state was created and perpetuated via domestication. In both texts, the dogs confront their previous ignorance and acceptance of their situation; through language acquisition, they understand their enslavement.

Domestication serves as the privileged marker of anthropocentrism. Agriculture (domestication) is often called a revolution, permanently altering humanity’s relationship with the rest of the world. The narrative of domestication/civilization has far-reaching implications, particularly in understanding race and imperialism. Scholars in many fields “have realized that this story of domestication, like that of the ‘wilderness,’ is a simplification of a process that is both more partial and more interesting” (Cassidy & Mullin, 2020, p. 2). The contribution of this article is an examination of specifically “pet” “ownership” (as a somewhat less examined aspect of domestication) as a destabilizing practice to human superiority. At the end of the article, I also offer some alternative configurations of the “pet”–human relationship within our current cultural and societal confines but also a hope for future relations with these species.

Given the unique relationship ancient dogs and humans have, these texts explicitly press into the entangled morass of identities, definitions, and boundaries that are part of the human–“pet” relationship (Boyko et al., 2009; Galibert et al., 2011; Larson et al., 2012). I contend that speaking fractures the master–slave dynamic that structures these texts’ human/canine relationship. Humans can no longer lay claim to language as an exclusively human trait and marker of our superiority; instead, nonhuman beings force human beings to contend with dogs in canine terms through the use of “human” tools (although this is not to say sans language domesticated species do not possess means of protest). In gaining access to humans’ tools, the dogs understand the brutality of their treatment, the horror of being an “animal,” particularly a domesticated one, and the immense privileges associated with being “human.” Humans’ refusal to recognize the dogs as fellow persons reveals two things. First, personhood—in a distinctively human idiom—*can* be performed and is not an inherent trait of *Homo sapiens*; second, that personhood is variable and conditional, and thus only a tool for exclusion and hierarchy rather something inherent. Speech gives the dogs access to the performances, but domestication denies them recognition as fellow humans.

Technologies and Archaeologies of (Canine) Domestication

Domestication begins with the idea that nonhumans can be property (Russell, 2002). Terry O’Connor (2013) writes, “[D]omestication can be said to exist when living animals are integrated as objects into the socio-economic organization of the human group, in the sense that, while living, those animals are objects for ownership, inheritance, trade, etc.,” (p. 54). David Nibbert’s (2013) comprehensive historical account of the entanglement of economics and domestication as fuel for warfare, imperialism, and more introduces the term “domesecrated.” In his text, he uses the term exclusively to refer to “livestock” (cows, sheep, pigs, etc.) and other “useful” creatures (llamas, horses, etc.). While I find this term poignant, the concept of “pets” does not exactly fit into his parlance, particularly dogs, who are the focus of this article, but I argue that dogs (and other companion species) fit into the idea of domesecration because, first, they are definitely part of the humans civilization project across multiple continents, and, second, they have been excessively genetically manipulated to serve many specific purposes in human societies, including as “pets.”

Canines hold the dubious honor of (most likely) being the first domesticated animal (Galibert et al., 2011, p. 191). Some archeologists and

historians argue that canine domestication was a two-way street (T. P. O'Connor, 1997; Zeuner, 1963), but just using the word “domestication” inherently implies a hierarchy. This is the power of the term domeseccration because it connects the flows of power and violence to the project of domestication. Scholars explain that domestication involves controlling reproduction and limiting movement (Russell, 2002). Both elements are abundantly obvious with canine pet-keeping. Organizations such as the American Kennel Society publish specific breed standards and host annual competitions for ideal specimens of these breeds. These standards often include physical features harmful to the dogs but are valued within these competition circles (*What Do I Need to Know about Brachycephalic Dogs?*, n.d.).

The principles of domestication are embedded in dog-keeping and caring. Most shelters will sterilize kittens and puppies as soon as they are eligible for the surgery and require all adult cats and dogs to be sterilized—controlling reproduction. (I am limiting to cats and dogs here as those are by far the most common pets, at least in the United States where I am located.) Furthermore, shelters will require humans to promise their cats will be indoor-only, and many cities have laws that dogs are required to always be on-leash except in designated areas—limiting movement. These are considered the best practices for pet-keeping, but they are also fundamental to domeseccration.

Despite these practices that very clearly are decided by humans without the consent of the pets (consider how dogs will attempt to break out of their yards or cats who dart out the door at any opportunity), many humans will still claim that their pets are part of the family and would probably balk at the idea that these practices might not be in the cat's or dog's best interest. Some humans will brag about the fact that they “rescued” their pets, and shelters will use the term “adoption” to describe the relationship between humans and their would-be pets. Pet stores will use “parents” and “children” in ad campaigns for new products. Humans will get themselves Mother's and Father's Day gifts “from their pets,” even if they do not have human children. The language of home and family dominates the pet world. Nora Schuurman (2022) explores online performances of adoptability and homelessness (in Finland) through analyses of animal rescue websites. She argues that this rhetoric works because the (human) home is considered the “proper” place of dogs. Rescues will describe dogs as homeless and “reflects the common meaning of the home as the site of human–pet relationships and, thus, the

place for a dog to *become a pet* through human companionship and domestication” (2022, p. 96). Therefore, a pet is created explicitly through a relationship with a human, dwelling within a specifically human house, and obeying human desires and instructions enforced by domestication practices. No matter how the subject(s) are approached, at the core of pet-keeping is domestication, and at the core of domestication is domination, control, and manipulation biologically (control of reproduction) and socially (control of movement). This is not to immediately dismiss the very real affective bonds between a human and their pet, but these bonds cannot be considered outside of domestication.

David Jaclin wants to embrace domestication practices (I return to this term throughout the essay to stay in line with the terms from other scholars and the primary texts under consideration) to emphasize “fiction” and “creative envisioning” (2018, p. 303). He acknowledges the biological-social definition of domestication but critiques this as being reductive and utilitarian, urging humans to strive for some abstract “more.” In his argument, nonhuman beings are available for humans to create with as they see fit, following their imaginations. He defines domestication as a “transindividual activity where living organisms are pressed into the *domus* of human undertakings and husbandry regimes” (Jaclin, 2018, p. 309). Domestication explicitly centers humans and their desires, and while he briefly notes the abuses and exploitation associated with domestication, he dismisses them: “I am less concerned here with previous modes this relationship has taken than in conceptualizing the potential that they can offer in the present” arguing instead that his expansion is a less anthropocentric one (Jaclin, 2018, pp. 309–310).

He proposes that “an animal is a *living organism* within (and through) which a culture grows—and also grows by means of words, texts, and other configurative literary activities. In other words, an animal is a living organism is a medium” (Jaclin, 2018, p. 311). In specifying “configurative literary activities,” Jaclin is excluding those *without* access to those activities, i.e., nonhuman animals. He laments our lack of imagination in domesticating projects and advocates “look[ing] at animals (their bodies and liveliness as well as their constant incarceration) as productive literary complexes” (Jaclin, 2018, p. 304). Despite referencing nonhuman beings’ “constant incarceration” he distances himself from domestication as *necessarily* exploitative or abusive, arguing that “animals are transformed by humans, as much as the reverse” and neatly sidesteps the important questions, raising the

specter of “moral and ethical issues” without actually addressing those issues (Jaclin, 2018, pp. 310, 314).

In “The Evolution of Trickster Tales Among the Dogs of North Park After the Change” (Johnson, 2014), the titular Change (never further explained in the text) grants “all mammals we [humans] have shaped to meet our own needs” the ability to speak (Johnson, 2014, p. 490), the narrator specifically notes the Change affects only those mammals *shaped* by humans and strongly censures this shaping: “When we [humans] first fashioned animals to suit our needs, we treated them as if they were stories and we the authors, and we clung desperately to an imagined copyright that would permit us to change them, sell them, even delete them” (Johnson, 2014, p. 516). Johnson’s use of “stories,” “authors,” and “copyright” mirror’s Jaclin’s proposal of animal genomes as a compositional medium. As opposed to Jaclin’s exuberant belief that his approach will allow “for the emergence of an ethical perspective revolving around the animal potentialities subsisting even under conditions of extinction or captivity, rather than on the emancipation or conservation of animals” (2018, p. 316), the narrator of “Trickster Tales” is strongly condemning humanity’s hubris in viewing nonhuman beings as the medium for creative envisioning.

The (il)logic of Jaclin’s contention prizes the *creation* over ethical considerations. The object of his study is the de-extinction project to “resurrect” woolly mammoths using unearthed DNA (for more on de-extinction projects, see Browning, 2018; Cohen, 2014; Kasperbauer, 2017; Novak, 2018; Shapiro, 2017; Smith, 2017). This project aligns with his notion of “writing” with nonhuman genomes and his encouragement for “creative envisioning.” This project aims to combine the extracted woolly mammoth DNA with an elephant embryo, which would gestate in an elephant’s uterus. He describes this process as a “chimerical dream” that would create a “mammoth-like trait bearer,” not an actual mammoth: a “metaphorical mammoth” (Jaclin, 2018, p. 314). However, the metaphorical mammoth would still be a *living being*, as would be the very non-metaphorical, non-consensual living elephant incubator. The morality of forcing her to bear offspring of a notionally different species is irrelevant enough to the asserted benefit of de-extinction (and its process) to trump logics of production and “creativity.” He explicitly notes that metaphorical activities should not be “judged only morally, based on transcendent ideas of right and wrong” (Jaclin, 2018, p. 314).

These logics of production, creativity, and destruction are the primary motivators for Augustus Rank, the creator of the idea of the monster dogs from *The Lives of the Monster Dogs*; the followers of Rank eventually create the dogs after his death. Rank details how nonhuman beings served as a medium for his rage and desires in his journals. In a rage, he viciously kills a baby bird and feels as if “he was piercing a thick, muffling membrane which has separated him from the world” (Bakis, 2017, p. 33). His gruesome experiments escalate until he successfully swaps a cow’s front legs. Rather than punishment, he is rewarded by the serendipitous arrival of Dr. Buxtorf. The surgeon praises Rank: “You have been given a gift, one few men ever receive. It is...awesome to be in the presence of it” (Bakis, 2017, p. 51). The doctor offers the pubescent Augustus a spot at the University of Basel studying surgery. He is a star pupil and eventually meets Kaiser Wilhelm II, King of Prussia. Wilhelm is taken with Rank’s plans to create enhanced dogs to serve as soldiers. For Rank and the Kaiser, the logics of production, creation, and destruction are dominant. The monster dogs’ “enhancements” are to fulfill the desires of humans more perfectly without regard for the well-being of the monster dogs; this is the ultimate project of domestication, as defined by Jaclin. With the aid of Wilhelm, Rank imaged a new way of interacting with other beings to incorporate them more fully into human demands and desires.

Rank specifically chose *dogs* not just because they are domesticated but because they are the domesticate *par excellence*. They are *the* pet of the West; according to the American Veterinary Medical Association’s 2017-2018 research, 38.4% of American households include at least one dog (*U.S. Pet Ownership Statistics*, n.d.). Western civilization is entangled with dogs in our homes, history, cultural beliefs, art and media, and more. Furthermore, dogs have also proven to be one of the most genetically adaptable nonhuman beings with an impressive array of significantly differing breeds in size and “purpose.” Ludwig, one of the monster dogs and their de facto historian, summarizes:

[The dog army] was to be impossible to defeat, its members fierce, numerous, and disposable (for more could always be made), capable of remorseless killing and of loyalty stronger than their instincts for self-preservation. The dogs’ intelligence was to be enhanced to enable them to understand complex orders and battle plans. Likewise the intricate mechanical hands that were to be grafted on to their forelegs, and the speech-synthesizing apparatuses that were to be

implanted in their throats, were intended solely to enable them to handle weapons and to communicate easily with officers and other soldiers. In every other respect they were to remain as they were in their normal domesticated state, where they were already nearly perfect soldiers. (Bakis, 2017, p. 115)

Humans conveniently forget that dogs are also living creatures with desires, the ability to act, and emotions, and this forgetfulness is the undoing of Rankstadt; enraged by their mistreatment, the monster dogs eventually slaughter all the town's humans and burn the town to the ground. Unlike the forgotten elephant surrogate in Jaclin's imaginings, the monster dogs refuse to abide by the demands of their putative masters. The humans imagined creating perfectly obedient slaves derived from millennia of domestication, never considering that their pet-slaves would question their status; non-mutilated dogs never do as far as we allow ourselves to see. This comfortable assumption of their superiority proves their undoing as the *very modifications* they force upon the dogs allow them to massacre the town.

The destruction of the master-domestic dyad threatens the security of the human home. Because the dogs can speak, they protest injustices of their condition *in terms humans can recognize*. Yi-Fu Tuan argues that the pet serves as an "outlet for [human] gestures of affection," which are "becoming more difficult to find in modern society" because society "segment[s] and isolate[s] people to private spheres" (1984, p. 112). Dominance is the key term, even in the loving and often familial relationships between humans and pets. Tuan explains, "Domestication means domination: the two words have the same root sense of mastery over another being—of bringing it into one's house or domain" (1984, p. 99). He qualifies this: "Dominance may be cruel and exploitative with no hint of affection in it. What it produces is the victim. On the other hand, dominance may be combined with affection, and what it produces is the pet" (Tuan, 1984, p. 2). Tuan's conceptualization of "pet" provides a framework for navigating between the domination associated with domestication and the genuine affection most humans feel for their companion animals, however unreflective they may be of the imbalance of power.

Pets, then, supposedly provide a sense of security to the home through human-animal hierarchies playing out in the living room; a stable sense of ontology emerges from this hierarchy, reifying human control. An obedient dog is the sign of a stable, orderly home. However, idealized security is never

stable. Erica Fudge argues that the pet disturbs security, not creates it. She writes, “The existence of a group of animals that live inside the human home, then, might be read as a challenge to such boundaries” between “inside and outside, friend and stranger, private and public” instead of providing security about humanity’s dominion and civilization’s control (2008, p. 19). The home is presumed to be the center of human control; the humans who live there assume they have the final say over what happens in the home. Pets are often privy to the most private human activities that are supposed to *only* happen in the home—bathing, intercourse, elimination—unashamedly and even curiously observing their human companions’ actions. More than just disruptive to the home’s security, the pet becomes a threat to the security of the individual; the most private of human actions become something shared with another creature, a nonhuman one at that. Derrida addresses a human’s sense of shame when confronted with the unashamed gaze of a companion animal (in this instance, a cat); he experiences shame when his companion cat examines him frontally naked. Simultaneously, he feels “also ashamed for being ashamed” (2008, p. 4). The cat is Derrida’s property in a legal and material sense—he owns her and is nominally responsible for her care—but the stability of this hierarchy is fractured when Derrida is ashamed by the cat’s gaze.

When the pet no longer serves to stabilize the human home and the human sense of self, they become suspect. In “Trickster Tales,” humans evict their dogs when the dogs’ expressions, memories, and knowledge make the humans too uncomfortable: “Some people keep their dogs after the Change. Some people have the strength to love, no matter what. But many of us only learn the limits of our love when they have been breached” (Johnson, 2014, p. 495). The breach the cat or dog makes walking through the hole in the door, the cat-flap, is generalized in “Trickster Tales” by the breach in limits of love created by the dogs’ powers of speech. The insecurity humans could avoid through confidence in their dominion is made apparent by their dogs speaking, looking, knowing, and remembering. The humans’ discomfort arises from shame: “Why do we fear them when they learn speech? They are still dogs, still subordinate. It doesn’t change who they are or their loyalty. It is not always fear we run from. Sometimes it is shame” (Johnson, 2014, p. 500). In the gaze of their dogs, humans see the systemic and individual ways dogs have been manipulated and molded to fit human whims and desires. Derrida might be literally naked in front of his cat, and her gaze unsettles

him, but the humans of “Trickster Tales” are even more intimately stripped bare.

Curse of Speech, Curse of Memory

Many humans would not be shamed or even notice their pets gazing upon them, let alone feel ashamed by that gaze, but the talking dogs of “Trickster Tales” refuse to let humans ignore their shame. The ability to speak serves three irreducible purposes: the dogs can vocalize the conditions of their oppression, they gain an awareness of their positionality, and their linguistic abilities disintegrate human exceptionalism. Animal speech is the outward sign of the threat to human identity founded on notional human exceptionalism. However, the actual concern is how the dogs may or may not have changed to be more *like* humans and even more anxiety-inducing if they were not *already* like humans. If the dogs are *like* humans, then their exploitation and abuse cannot be so easily justified, causing shame in the humans. The dogs of “Trickster Tales” now remember, but “[*r*]emember is a frame; they did not ‘remember’ before the word, only lived in a series of nows longer or shorter in duration. Memory brings resentment. Or so we [humans] fear” (Johnson, 2014, pp. 501–502 italics in original). The narrator repeatedly notes that the humans fear the dogs not because of what they think the dogs will *do* but because of what they know and remember. They are ashamed of their behavior and evict their dogs to avoid shame and guilt. The narrator of “Trickster Tales” writes, “Dogs love us. We have bred them to do this for ten thousand, a hundred thousand, a million years. It is hard to make a dog hate people” (Johnson, 2014, p. 496). However, the monster dogs of Rankstadt are so enraged at the humans they live with that they kill them all. In our hubris, we want to assume that what the narrator says is true—dogs cannot or will not hate people. We have intentionally bred them to love us, but no creature wants to live as a slave.

By insistently calling the dogs slaves, the readers cannot escape the brutality of domestication, particularly in the pet relationship, whatever pretensions we might have of an egalitarian multi-species family. Within the first few paragraphs of the text, the narrator declares, “[W]e prefer our slaves mute,” unequivocally stating that, first, domesticated animals are our slaves, and, second, human discomfort with the talking dogs comes from our desire for supremacy (Johnson, 2014, p. 490). As I claimed before, domestication begins with seeing nonhuman beings as objects who can be owned and enslaved to human desires. The abrupt demand in “Trickster Tales” for the

dogs to no longer be seen as objects, to be freed, is something most humans cannot countenance. Similarly, while recounting the origins of the monster dogs, Ludwig, their historian, writes, “It is a terrible thing to be a dog and know it; and I suppose it was worse for him [the first monster dog], because he could remember a time when he did not” (Bakis, 2017, p. 138). Ludwig describes the first monster dog’s life as “waking up from a pleasant dream to find himself enslaved” (Bakis, 2017, p. 138). The dogs in both texts are acknowledged and treated as slaves—the monster dogs are used as house slaves for Rank’s followers in Rankstadt rather than as soldiers—and in being given the ability to speak, they can name themselves slaves. Their linguistic abilities simultaneously reveal their oppression and give them the means to internalize and externalize it and their desires, discomfiting the humans as their actions, abilities, and desires are too like human ones.

In both texts, speaking dogs are deeply melancholy, burdened with the knowledge of their perpetual inadequacies and inability to be anything more than slaves. Since slavery is a key identifier for the dogs of both texts, freedom is a key motivator. The revolution of the monster dogs in Rankstadt is the prime example here. Initially, the monster dogs hide their backstory, fearing human reprisals. Luitpold, another dog, explains their reticence:

I personally think it is ridiculous that in a place where dogs are killed by the millions for no reason whatsoever and humans are allowed to kill each other en masse in wars, though not for perfectly legitimate reasons on the street, it’s ridiculous that anyone would feel we ought to be brought to justice for settling our own quarrel in Rankstadt, but that’s what the worry was. Because we’re not human, you see. If we were humans who had rebelled against an oppressive government in some tiny country, no one would blame us for it, or even care, most likely, but as we are dogs who have killed humans, the feeling was that people might, because they didn’t know us very well, they might think--but I don’t think it will happen now. (Bakis, 2017, pp. 164–165)

In our current legal and social regime, humans are free to kill dogs (or any other animal); their deaths are even state-sanctioned or regularly demanded. In “Trickster Tales,” the city decides to kill all the dogs since they threaten humans’ public “health and safety. The disruption the Changed dogs cause to human lives is sufficient justification to kill them.” The monster dogs, understanding ever more fully what it means to be a dog, are wise to

fear that humans would see the massacre of an entire town as a reason for the dogs' deaths. Luitpold opines on the absurdity of the double standard—humans are “allowed” to kill each other without reprisal for little to no reason. At the same time, the dogs' rebellion might be seen as a dangerous animal attack. He frames the attack as justice—the dogs are fighting back against an oppressive ruling class, something that might be lauded in other circumstances (specifically with another species). However, the concern Luitpold expresses—“we're not human”—is precisely the problem.

Improperly Specied

The dogs in “Trickster Tales” struggle with no longer being entirely dog but unable to be specifically human. The titular trickster tales are interspersed throughout the text and are presented as myths or folktales. Each starts the same way—“This is the same dog”—and always features One Dog (whose gender changes with every story) as the main character. There are ten tales in the text, and each grapple with the dogs' struggles because of the Change. They express joy at being freed and their sorrow and rage at how constricted they are and have been. Some of the stories present a canine cosmology (inventing death, creating the world), while others are opaque and philosophical (“One Dog Goes to the Place of Pieces” is particularly bewildering). The second story (“One Dog Tries to Mate”) focuses on how One Dog must pretend to be a human to achieve his goals. He wants to access a fenced backyard to mate with a female dog held captive there. He sticks a cigarette butt in his mouth, wears a shirt, and tells the human of the house, “I'm from the men with white trucks. I have to check your electrical statico-pressure. Can you let me into your yard?” (Johnson, 2014, p. 493). The human lets One Dog in his human disguise into the backyard, and he mates with the female, but after he finishes, he whines. This causes the man to come out and shoot One Dog, killing him.

In “One Dog Tries To Become Like Men,” One Dog again wants to be seen as a human, but this time to be incorporated into human society. The story begins at a party, and One Dog “wants to do everything they do” (Johnson, 2014, p. 498). He declares himself a human, but the humans respond, “You're not human. You're just a dog pretending,” and tell him to get rid of his fur (p. 498). He does this, rubbing his skin raw, but the humans again reject him, now telling him he must walk on two legs and sleep on his back. Despite the pain, he manages to do this, but the humans again reject him, now telling him he must have fingers. He bites his paws until they look

like fingers, but this is still not good enough for the humans who tell him he must dream. When he asks what humans dream of, they answer, “Work and failure and shame and fear” (Johnson, 2014, p. 499). When One Dog dreams of these things, he cries in his sleep; the noise bothers the humans so much that they kill him.

These tales generalize the dogs’ complicated experiences of domestication, the Change, and how they are to understand themselves now. In the first, One Dog still wants to cling to his doggishness but manipulates the humans with his new skills and knowledge. In the latter tale, though, One Dog despairs that no matter what he does, he can never be human despite the Change. Every time he asserts, “Now I am human,” the humans respond, “That’s not human” (p. 499-500). One Dog’s attempt to claim a new kind of doggishness and his attempt to claim a human identity both end in his death. He can be neither thing because both things infringe upon anthropocentrism; the dog must be a dog—“They are still dogs, still subordinate. It doesn’t change who they are or their loyalty” (Johnson, 2014, p. 500)

The statements “they are dogs” and “they’re not human” seem self-evident. However, these assertions have two significantly distinct, albeit regularly conflated, meanings. On the one hand, there is the basic statement of current biological facts—*Homo sapiens* and *Canis familiaris* are two distinct taxonomies—and self-evident observation. On the other “human” is the designation of privilege, rights, protection, and status explicitly and particularly premised on *not* being an animal. “Being treated like an animal” is equivalent to the most horrific *dehumanization* practices; the *dehumanization* of marginalized communities is considered a *human* rights violation. However, as Derrida (2008) expressed when faced with his cat’s gaze, he ultimately questions who he is, unable to identify if his shame comes from being deprived of his humanness or his animalness. Therefore, the species designation of “human” is a synecdoche of “privileged status” and differentiation from the massified term “animal.”

The human rights project is premised on the assertion that some biological humans do not receive the same rights and privileges as other biological humans and that this biological identity confers certain privileges, rights, and protections. Those biological humans who do not receive these are, therefore, dehumanized. This is, of course, entirely true, but the argument rests on a faulty assumption about what “human” and “animal” are. Butler (1993) articulates that “the human” is the aggregate effect of the mutual deployment of regulatory norms that are irreducible to each other. Through

these imbricated norms, the body is produced and controlled, but, as Iveson asserts, “Butler’s analysis loses its cohesion, in that such a claim actually effaces the relations of power it seeks otherwise to disclose” (2012, p. 24). Taking Butler’s famous example of “girling” Iveson claims “equally important in the discussion of gendering activity is the imperative to consider...that ‘other’ matrix through which the majority of nonhuman animals are rather *refused* that shift to gendered being” (p. 24). The operative assumption that humanness is “merely the aggregate *effect* of regulatory reproductive power” means that arguments for human rights depend upon questioning and dismantling the naturalized phantasmic ideals of hegemonic power (Iveson, 2012, p. 24). Conversely, only when humanness is itself considered a regulatory norm “does it become possible to understand the meshed machinery that open the possibility of the *refusal* or *withdrawal* of gender, and which at the same time necessarily relegates the “improperly” gendered human being to the status of an animal” (Iveson, 2012, p. 24). Iveson is disconnecting the biological designation of “human” from the social implications of “human” and in so doing makes clear “that ‘the human’ is never a cumulative effect, but it is rather that ‘*humanness*’ is itself a regulatory norm constituted through species difference” (Iveson, 2012, p. 23) and in fact ignoring the “imbrication of a speciesist reproduction of difference along and within racists, sexist, homophobic, and classist norms, those ‘hegemonies of oppression’ which critical discourse seeks to challenge may instead be unwittingly reenforced” (Iveson, 2012, p. 25).

The profoundly significant implication of this argument is that humanness is the norm through which all other norms must pass. Iveson (2012) explains the improper reproduction of norms can never *result* in humanness; the improperly gendered being never had a humanness to be questioned. If humanness is the aggregate effect of *properly* produced norms, then *improper* reproduction could *never* result in a human. Unless a being is *already seen as human*, they are entirely unable even to access the norms of gender, race, sexuality, etc. Nonhuman animals are “*refused* that shift to gendered beings.” Only *human* animals can become gendered beings. So, a creature must first properly perform humanness, and be properly specied, to become gendered, and the improperly gendered being is relegated to the position of animal, of being improperly specied.

The dogs of both texts are trapped between seeming to access to the norms of humanness but remaining improperly specied. For instance, the monster dogs are deeply invested in apparent performances of humanness—

clothes, wealth, interviews, building a castle, writing an opera, sponsoring a parade through New York City, and writing books, among many other things. All these actions align with supposedly exclusively human activities, but because they are not properly specied, these actions are nothing but caricatures, as Ludwig explains:

They know that they are monsters, but I believe they do not really understand what that means to humans. They live like famous people, keeping away from crowds and employing others to do their shopping, occasionally appearing on talk shows or writing autobiographies, and they are well received by fascinated audiences. But they aren't aware of the mixture of amusement and revulsion people feel at the sight of Pinschers and Rottweilers stepping from a limousine, dressed like nineteenth-century Prussians, with their monocles and parasols. They look like ugly parodies of humans, and their biographies read like social satire. They will never be seen as anything but caricatures of human beings. There is no place for monsters in this world. That is why I prefer not to live with them. (Bakis, 2017, p. 8)

In clinging to their performance of humanness, they are aware of their monstrosity. They desperately want to be *like* humans, but the result is only that they are mockeries of humans, amusing and perhaps a little disturbing, not dissimilar from a dog who can “shake hands.” In Butler’s configuration, these carefully orchestrated and intentional performances of gender, class, and so forth *should* create a human. The dogs are intensely secretive about their politics, organization, finances, histories, and relationships and are intentional in precise performances of human identities. The proper reproduction of gender and class, particularly by the monster dogs, should be effect enough to cause humanness, but humanness is still refused to them.

Just like the pack of dogs in “Trickster Tales,” the monster dogs also tell stories of their desires for humanness and their stories also grapple with being neither human nor dog. While the most obvious example of their storytelling is their opera, the entire text of *LMD* is a testament to their desire to be human and their inability to be such. Cleo, the editor and chronicler of the monster dogs’ life, presents her role as putting “Ludwig’s papers together in order, including some of journal entries along with the unfinished manuscript [of Ludwig’s history of the dogs]” along with excerpts from Rank’s journal and letters, some of her articles, the opera, a revolutionary manifesto, and her

own new writing to fill in some of the narrative gaps (Bakis, 2017, p. 2). Collectively, these texts construct the lives of the monster dogs as ambivalently situated between human and dog, improperly specied, and therefore refused norms of gender, race, class, and so forth. The opera, *Mops Hacker*, written and performed by the dogs, reveals the performativity of humanness and asserts that the dogs can perform humanness and become properly specied.

In his diary, Mops, the first monster dog, claims that the spirit of Augustus Rank possesses him. In his account, he claims that in a dream, “a small indistinct Form as it were a little cloud of Smoke, flew into my mouth. Then I was full of strength, for this little Cloud was very Strong” (p. 147). He then declares himself the son of Augustus Rank. Two years later, he encounters another cloud in the shape of Augustus of Rank. This cloud also enters his mouth, and with this power “he smote all the men! He took up the Sword, and his Teeth were Sharp, and the Thing inside him became Fire! And all Dogs followed him, crying, Here is our Master, and crying, Smite the Men!” (Johnson, 2014, p. 151). In this account (and in the opera), Mops is both dog and human. Rank gives Mops heart in the opera, saying Mops is a “dog with the soul of a man” (Bakis, 2017, p. 197). Later, Mops claims, “Augustus and Mops are one” and “We are not dogs, we are not men” (Bakis, 2017, pp. 199, 208). This paradox only makes sense if we understand humanness as a regulatory norm. The dogs want to usurp the humans and take control of Rankstadt to become humans. Mops can declare himself the son of Rank, his heir, because of his performance of humanness. He claims that the dogs follow him, calling him their master, therefore, naming him as taking the role of the humans. In the opera, this does not happen; Lydia kills Mops and asserts, “We can be our own masters” (p. 216). In both versions of events, though, the dogs claim a successful performance of humanness.

The stories of the dogs always return to linguistic abilities, their curse of speech. Every instance of performativity has come from, nominally, the mouths or pens of the dogs—the trickster tales are oral stories, Ludwig’s observations are from his journals, Mops’ journal provides the source text for the opera, and the opera is the dogs’ performative masterpiece. Despite this presentation of the texts as the dogs’ own words, a human narrator is always the mediator of the text. Although Cleo’s narrative sections are always differentiated and labeled, her writing makes up around half of the text, and her vision drives the final product. At the time of the writing, only one monster dog is alive to confirm or deny the veracity of her account. Although

in “Trickster Tales,” the dogs’ stories seem to be faithfully preserved, we can assume the text’s narrator is a human since they refer to humans as “we.” Additionally, the narrator is careful to note that “[t]he dogs do not welcome eager anthropologists with their tape recorders and their agendas” (Johnson, 2014, p. 492). The academic-sounding title of the story—“The Evolution of Trickster Stories Among the Dogs of North Park After the Change”—asks how and why the dogs’ stories are being preserved.

The diegetic human narrator/editor addressing a diegetic human audience reveals how the non-diegetic human writer and human audience are complicit in only imagining the lives of nonhuman beings when they can access the performances of humanness but are ultimately refused recognition. Cleo notes this in her decision on the title of the text. Ludwig’s manuscript was titled *The History of the Monster Dogs*, but later, he changed it to *The Lives of the Monster Dogs*. Cleo explains, “The book you’re holding now isn’t exactly the one for which the title was intended, but I felt somehow, that I couldn’t call it anything else,” (Bakis, 2017, p. 2). While the implication is that she is paying homage to Ludwig and trying to respect the integrity of his vision, she is also clear that her text is *not* the one Ludwig would have written. Necessarily filtered through multiple layers of human perception, the texts function as performative themselves while also bearing witness to the awareness of the performativity of humanness and the consequences of this awareness on human hubris.

Permission to Kill

Toward the end of *LMD*, Ludwig wonders, “[W]hat it would be like to be human” (Bakis, 2017, p. 225). Cleo is surprised, assuming Ludwig could easily imagine this. He responds, “I spend a great deal of time trying to imagine it. We all do, because we want to be like you, of course” (Bakis, 2017, p. 225). Cleo says she imagines what it would be like to be a dog, and Ludwig is far more surprised, even offended at this statement. He tells her, “Being a dog is nothing...Literally. It is nothing but an absence, a negative...The canine instincts...are worse than useless now; they are destructive, ridiculous” (Bakis, 2017, p. 225). As already seen, Ludwig has acknowledged both the performativity of humanness and the impossibility of the dogs ever being properly specied. However, his second statement draws attention to the embodied reality of being a dog—his canine instincts that are “worse than useless” and “destructive, ridiculous” (Bakis, 2017, p. 225). This nothingness emerges from the dogs’ improper and failed performances of

humanness; they cannot be human and are therefore relegated to the position of animal, but their knowledge of their subjugation and their memories of their abuse mean that they cannot return to just being dogs.

The threat, for humans, that emerges is that humanness is put into question, which “necessarily poses a challenge to the entire network of oppression—a question which is nothing less than the question of recognition” (Iveson, 2012, p. 35). Iveson asserts that questioning humanness means that “the body necessarily undergoes the profound risk of being *unrecognizable*” (2012, p. 35). The question of humanness the dogs pose means that the humans must acknowledge that their presumed humanness and exceptionalism are contingent. The danger is the withdrawal of, first, “a viable subject status, but also a withdrawal of one’s race or gender, one’s class or sexuality, even one’s membership of a species” (Iveson, 2012, p. 35). The threat is ontological and inherent. The existence of the pet in the home always presents an ontological threat to the stability of the home and the individual. The reaction to this threat is homicidal; regulatory norms produce humans and, therefore, also produce nonhumans. Butler writes of this as an almost negative production, “a radical effacement, so that there never was a human, there never was a life, and no murder has, therefore, ever taken place” (2006, p. 147). In other words, when humans are threatened by the intrusion of challenges and questions to humanness, the structural nonhumanness of the intruders allows for “an apparently ‘morally legitimate’ putting to death,” murder becomes killing because only humans can be murdered (Iveson, 2012, p. 22).

This is precisely what happens in “Trickster Tales.” The city orders all the homeless dogs in the city to be killed. Linna, a human who has befriended the North Park dogs, manages to sneak them out of the city, but she cannot stop the general slaughter. The dogs are viewed as “health and safety concerns” by the city rather than “just dogs,” as Linna protests (Johnson, 2014, p. 507). The city’s powers-that-be have made their final judgment on the status of the dogs and have deemed them as non-persons and thus unacceptable for inclusion in the city. Therefore, permission is granted to kill them all. Only through deception and cleverness is Linna able to save any of them.

The monster dogs meet a different fate. They begin to experience a madness, “reverting” to canine behaviors, which embarrasses the dogs. They agree to a homicide pact. After hearing a gunshot, Cleo is startled while Lydia remains calm. Confused, Cleo questions Lydia, who explains,

It's [the homicide pact] a way to end the sickness with dignity. It makes sense to us. Since we're all in the castle, no one outside needs to know. I know it seems strange to you, Cleo, but it is a private matter among the dogs. I hope you'll try to understand. (Bakis, 2017, p. 252)

Cleo is outraged, and, as Lydia predicted, the human does not understand the dogs' decision. Earlier, one of the dogs explained, in his opinion, that dogs make perfect soldiers. They feel fighting and killing is a part of life. "Sometimes the end of life, to be sure, if you're the one who's killed, but it's all very natural" (Bakis, 2017, p. 163). Lydia explains that the affair is very orderly, and a committee of dogs has been appointed. Cleo calls this a committee of murders, but Lydia points out, "[i]t isn't murder if the victim has agreed to it" (Bakis, 2017, p. 252). Cleo still refuses to accept the dogs' decision, continuing to protest. Lydia is angered by Cleo's questioning and storms off, saying, "Everything has to end sometime," a testament to the dogs' belief in the naturalness of killing (Bakis, 2017, p. 252). As with most of the actions and stories of the monster dogs, the ambivalence between human and dog is evident here. The dogs' homicide pact would be considered murder for recognized humans, even if the parties had agreed. The monster dogs all die (except Lydia), but Cleo reports no investigation of what happened. Even though the dogs refused to let anyone into their home while it rang with gunshots *and* it burned down, no one seems to have been overly concerned about this tragedy. So, their nonhuman status allows the dogs to kill themselves and each other; their deaths are not murders because they are not human. But also, the refusal of recognition of their humanness, their failure to be properly specied, is why they are, in their own words, going mad.

In one way, then, the ending of the two texts are inverses of each other. Linna manages to save all but three of the dogs, while only one of the monster dogs survives. The dogs of "Trickster Tales" are subject to slaughter because of the discomfort they cause humans, while the monster dogs kill each other. The North Park dogs are not *supposed* to survive, and the refusal of recognition necessitates the deaths of the monster dogs. Ultimately, both endings are motivated by the same cause. In his article, Iveson writes, "At its [unrecognizability] extreme, one finds oneself incapable of continuing to exist and thus risks falling prey to forced cessation, be it suicidal or murderous" (2012, p. 36). The denial of recognition is a death sentence, either because, as in the case of the North Park dogs, a nonhuman is always

available for killing or because a being becomes unrecognizable to themselves, effacing their own existence. The recognition of humanness provides a measure of material and ontological protection to the nonhuman; lacking this, the creature can be killed without repercussion. A being is at risk of becoming unrecognizable to themselves if they lack recognition from others. The dogs of both texts, trapped between the impossibility of achieving personhood but also the impossibility of being “just” dogs anymore, face “forced cessation”: the monster dogs a suicidal one, and the North Park dogs a murderous one (Iveson, 2012, p. 36). In both cases, the cessation is for the same reason: despite their powers of speech and reasoning, the dogs are not humans and, therefore not extended any rights or protections and cannot continue to exist if the distinction between (speaking) humans and (non-speaking) animals is to be preserved.

Here, domestication returns, structuring the relationship between dogs and humans. Human ends are the motivation for any domesticating acts. We have invented countless industries and tools for the single purpose of managing and subordinating nonhuman creatures (regardless of their biological species in some instances). In, perhaps, the most extreme form of derealization, *most domesticated animals are born—for many animal species, their mothers are forcibly impregnated—and raised to an abbreviated portion of their maturity for the explicit purpose of being killed*. Jaclin imagines using animal genomes as compositional material and criticizes our lack of imagination, but entire species have been *created* and *sustained* just for human pleasures and comforts. Bluntly, I would be terrified of what horrors humans could invent if we were *more* creative. The inherent association of death, cruelty, and brutality with domestication lives in the phrase “treated like an animal.”

The *expectation* of domesticated (enslaved, captive) nonhumans is that they are freely available for humans to own and subordinate; in fact, killing them is the correct and proper method of control in most circumstances if not the *explicit* purpose for which the nonhuman being was allowed to exist in the first place. Only pets (sometimes) escape this fate through their association with humans. Human affection and attachment to certain domesticated animals “raise” them to the category of pets, which affords these specific creatures certain protections *if* they are proximal to humans or can potentially be proximal to humans. Since pets are also classified, legally, as property, they do not have any of their own rights; they are only afforded protections via the choices of their human owners. When the dogs of these

texts refuse to act like controlled, domesticated pets, humans are free to exercise the choice to refuse the animals the slim protections human society accords them.

Property and ownership, therefore, sit at the root of all the conflicts I have outlined above. This is not a new observation by any means within critical animal studies (and without) (to name only a few, see Francione, 1995; Oliver, 2009; Russell, 2002; Wolfe, 2013), but I have focused on pets here which is often not the center of attention in these conversations. I expanded the notion of domesecration earlier to create space for pets because many of the conversations to date have not given much consideration to pets, while I find pets to be a locus of some of the most obvious paradoxes of human exceptionalism and anthropocentrism, namely, the deep relationships humans can form with other species while holding the belief that their slaughter is necessary.

Carol J. Adams (2010) famously discussed the absent referent, the death that makes the meat, and this absence lets humans forget that their dinner was a living, breathing, desiring creature. Similarly, I want to propose that the language of “adoption” and “parenthood” that surrounds pet industries serves to hide the material realities of ownership and property. Humans cope with the contradiction of multi-species households by erasing the idea that their dogs are just as much a piece of property (legally) as their couch or car. This is embedded into the rhetoric of the pet industries. I already addressed the adoption and homelessness language Schuurman analyzes, but I would also point the reader to pretty much any pet-centric space in the United States. The romanticization of a pet-owner relationship relies on erasing “owner” from the relationship, making it a dog-human relationship or a pet-pet “parent” relationship.

To reveal my position in this conversation, I live with three cats (unfortunately, for the sake of keeping to a theme, I do not live with dogs). In terms of the United States legal system and the concept of money exchange, I own two cats (the third is my partner’s). This reality means humans cannot have anything near an equitable relationship with members of species that they own, and, in our current reality, there is no way (in my opinion) to ethically free a pet. Many invasive species problems have been created by people releasing their pets into non-native environments (Australia’s cat problem, for instance), and many pet-type animals, like most other domesticated animals, have been specifically bred to be more docile, obedient, and dependent. Furthermore, surgical alterations (such as

sterilization) could disadvantage “freed” pets in dealing with non-pet conspecifics.

Ultimately, eliminating ownership will be the only way to make progress toward systemic change in our relationship with pet-type animals. Until then, we are stuck in a position where we must take actions that infringe on the agency of the nonhuman beings we live with. For instance, most places that facilitate this ownership transference require the sterilization of cats and dogs. This is obviously a highly invasive surgery that fundamentally alters an individual’s behavior, but one that generally cannot be avoided. This article is not the place (or space) to explore the numerous ways this systemic change could be and is being fought for; I want to offer some glimpses into my own ethics that could provide smaller scope, relationship-level ways of working toward this ultimate goal. I consider this most appropriate given my article focuses on texts that interrogate relationships between dogs and humans.

I take my cue from Barbara Smuts (Smuts, 2008; 2018) and the stories of her relationships with her dogs and the baboons she studied. In her essay, “Encounters with Animal Minds” (Smuts, 2018), Smuts discusses Safi, a dog, and how she changed how she approached her relationship with Safi after her experience developing close relationships with baboons. She explains that from the start of their shared lives together, Smuts assumed that Safi was “a sentient being with the kind of wisdom I had discovered in the wild animals I had known” (p. 303). Smuts avoided using standard training methods with Safi, instead approaching Safi as she would approach a human. For example, using full sentences rather than commands. In so doing, she discovered Safi would readily respond to her requests or statements, and their relationship was deep and far closer to an equitable relationship of adult sentient beings rather than a master–slave dynamic. When they were in urban spaces, Smuts would take the lead, guiding Safi through unfamiliar settings and protecting her, but when they entered rural and wild areas, Safi, much more attuned to the sounds and smells of the world, their roles would reverse with Smuts leaning on Safi to ensure their safety and guide them. Smuts says she has worked hard to empathize with Safi to achieve deep intersubjectivity. This contradicts how we are encouraged to interact with nonhuman beings who live with us, but pursuing this difficult work of really paying attention to a being from another species and letting them be an equal partner in setting the tone of the relationship can start to put into practice a world where

relationships between humans and nonhumans are not based on ownership and captivity.

Beyond the Limits of Species

The North Park dogs do not die. Despite their precarious status, despite the impossibility of being just-dog or being fully-human, despite their failure to be properly specied, despite concerted attempts to kill them, the North Park dogs survive. Linna sneaks them out of the city and takes them to Clinton Lake. The “dogs can go wherever they wish from here, and they will. They and all the other dogs spread across the Midwest, the world” (Johnson, 2014, p. 516). This survival allows new norms to emerge, possibly including a proper specising beyond the human.

In “Besides Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy,” Butler (2008) emphasizes the need to “posit possibility beyond the norm” and names this fantasy (Butler, 2004, p. 28). She explains that “fantasy is part of the articulation of the possible; it moves us beyond what is merely actual and present and into a realm of possibility, the not yet actualized or the not actualizable” (Butler, 2004, p. 28). She locates fantasy as “taking the body as a point of departure” and, therefore, that “altering these norms that decide normative human morphology give[s] differential ‘reality’ to different kinds of humans as a result” (Butler, 2004, p. 28). This claim opens the door to reworking the morphology of persons (person does not equal human). Butler locates human identity within restrictive “normative human morphology” and argues for an expansion, a transgression, of these norms. Divorcing the recognized human from the recognizably human creates space for the recognizably *nonhuman* to be recognized *as* human.

The North Park dogs, in their escape and in the possibility of going “wherever they wish,” demand that recognition of humanness (as a structural identity) no longer be conflated with humanness (as a biological identity). We could refer to this as personhood; “person” can no longer be a synonym for “human.” Personhood must, literally, *look* different. The North Park dogs are an intrusive fantasy, demanding a place in the real, refusing to be foreclosed. Butler writes,

Fantasy is not the opposite of reality; it is what reality forecloses, and, as a result, it defines the limits of reality, constituting it as a constitutive outside. The critical promise of fantasy, when and where it exists, is to challenge the contingent limits of what will and will not be called reality. (Butler, 2004, p. 29)

In this configuration of reality as merely an enclave of fantasy, fantasy is revealed as the constitutive outside of reality. Reality and fantasy are divided by a flexible and permeable boundary that is anxiously maintained and policed but persistently transgressed and rearranged. This ongoing process is the mechanism of normalizing the very distinction between fantasy and reality.

The final trickster tale is “One Dog Creates the World.” One Dog is living with a man in a house with no windows, no smells, and no tastes. “The man suppressed all these things...because the man didn’t want One Dog to create the universe,” (Johnson, 2014, pp. 517–518). One night, One Dog feels all the smells of the world pouring out of her nose, and as the smell of each thing pours out, the thing is created. After creating dogs, she announces, “I think I am done” and leaves (p. 517). The dogs are proposing an entirely alternative cosmology and creating a world based on their sensory perceptions and experiences of captivity. The man refuses to let One Dog experience anything because of his fear that she will create the world, but despite her imprisonment, she still does. Regardless of human beliefs, intentions, or actions, the dogs will still assert their desires and reality on the world; *they will shape reality in their own image*. I think this is a warning all of us would be well advised to heed.

References

- Adams, C. J. (2010). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory* (20th anniversary ed.). Continuum.
- Bakis, K. (2017). *Lives of the monster dogs*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Boyko, A. R., Boyko, R. H., Boyko, C. M., Parker, H. G., Castelhamo, M., Corey, L., Degenhardt, J. D., Auton, A., Hedimbi, M., Kityo, R., Ostrander, E. A., Schoenebeck, J., Todhunter, R. J., Jones, P., & Bustamante, C. D. (2009). Complex population structure in African village dogs and its implications for inferring dog domestication history. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 106(33), 13903–13908. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0902129106>
- Browning, H. (2018). Won’t somebody please think of the mammoths? de-extinction and animal welfare. *Journal of Agricultural and Environmental Ethics*, 31(6), 785–803. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10806-018-9755-2>
- Butler, J. (1993). *Bodies that matter: On the discursive limits of “sex.”* Routledge.

- Butler, J. (2004). Beside oneself: On the limits of sexual autonomy. In *Undoing Gender* (pp. 17–39). Routledge.
- Butler, J. (2006). *Precarious life: The powers of mourning and violence*. Verso.
- Cassidy, R., & Mullin, M. (Eds.). (2020). *Where the wild things are now: Domestication reconsidered*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003087373>
- Cohen, S. (2014). The ethics of de-extinction. *NanoEthics*, 8(2), 165–178.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/s11569-014-0201-2>
- Derrida, J. (2008). *The animal that therefore I am* (M.-L. Mallet, Trans.). Fordham University Press.
- Francione, G. L. (1995). *Animals, property, and the law*. Temple University Press.
- Fudge, E. (2008). *Pets*. Acumen Publishing.
- Galibert, F., Quignon, P., Hitte, C., & André, C. (2011). Toward understanding dog evolutionary and domestication history. *Comptes Rendus Biologies*, 334(3), 190–196.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.crv.2010.12.011>
- Iveson, R. (2012). Domestic scenes and species trouble—On Judith Butler and other animals. *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 10(4), 20–40.
- Jaclyn, D. (2018). The domestic animal, its synthetic dreams, and the pursuit of multispecies f(r)ictions. In B. Boehrer, M. Hand, & B. Massumi (Eds.), *Animals, animality, and literature* (pp. 301–318). Cambridge University Press.
- Johnson, K. (2014). The evolution of trickster stories among the dogs of north park after the change. In E. Datlow & T. Windling (Eds.), *The Coyote Road: Trickster tales* (pp. 489–517). Firebird.
- Kasperbauer, T. J. (2017). Should we bring back the passenger pigeon? The Ethics of de-extinction. *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, 20(1), 1–14.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2017.1291831>
- Larson, G., Karlsson, E. K., Perri, A., Webster, M. T., Ho, S. Y. W., Peters, J., Stahl, P. W., Piper, P. J., Lingaas, F., Fredholm, M., Comstock, K. E., Modiano, J. F., Schelling, C., AgoulNIK, A. I., Leegwater, P. A., Dobney, K., Vigne, J.-D., Vilà, C., Andersson, L., & Lindblad-Toh, K. (2012). Rethinking dog domestication by integrating genetics, archeology, and biogeography. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 109(23), 8878–8883.
<https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1203005109>
- Nibert, D. A. (2013). *Animal oppression and human violence: Domesecration, capitalism, and global conflict*. Columbia University Press.
- Novak, B. J. (2018). De-Extinction. *Genes*, 9(11), Article 11.
<https://doi.org/10.3390/genes9110548>

- O'Connor, T. (2013). *Animals as neighbors: The past and present of commensal species*. Michigan State University Press.
- O'Connor, T. P. (1997). Working at relationships: Another look at animal domestication. *Antiquity*, 71(271), 149–156.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003598X00084635>
- Oliver, K. (2009). *Animal lessons: How they teach us to be human*. Columbia University Press.
- Russell, N. (2002). The wild side of animal domestication. *Society & Animals*, 10(3), 285–302.
<https://doi.org/10.1163/156853002320770083>
- Schuurman, N. (2022). Imagining home: Performing adoptability in transnational canine rescue and rehoming. *Humanimalia*, 13(1), Article 1. <https://doi.org/10.52537/humanimalia.11074>
- Shapiro, B. (2017). Pathways to de-extinction: How close can we get to resurrection of an extinct species? *Functional Ecology*, 31(5), 996–1002. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1365-2435.12705>
- Smith, I. A. (2017). De-extinction and the Flourishing of Species. *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, 20(1), 38–40.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2017.1291834>
- Smuts, B. (2008). Between Species: Science and Subjectivity. *Configurations*, 14(1), 115–126. <https://doi.org/10.1353/con.0.0004>
- Smuts, B. (2018). Encounters With Animal Minds.
- Tuan, Y. (1984). *Dominance & affection: The making of pets*. Yale University Press.
- U.S. pet ownership statistics. (n.d.). American Veterinary Medical Association. <https://www.avma.org/resources-tools/reports-statistics/us-pet-ownership-statistics>
- What do I need to know about Brachycephalic dogs? – RSPCA Knowledgebase. (n.d.). <https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-do-i-need-to-know-about-brachycephalic-dogs/>
- Wolfe, C. (2013). *Before the law: Humans and other animals in a biopolitical frame*. The University of Chicago Press.
- Zeuner, F. E. (1963). *A history of domesticated animals* (First Edition). Harper & Row.

ESSAY: Generalized Prejudice Reduction: Speciesism, Sexism and Racism - What if We Can Diminish All by Tackling Just one?

Dusan Pajovic and Ricardo Borges Rodrigues
Dusan_Pajovic@iscte-iul.pt; rfprs@iscte-iul.pt

Abstract

There is a history of analysis of relationships between different prejudices, including the interconnection of racism, sexism, and speciesism. Likewise, several studies suggested that prejudices have the same underlying causes and assumptions, one of the most significant being *Social Dominance Orientation* (SDO), or belief in the legitimacy and desirability of hierarchies. Therefore, if prejudices have a common root (in SDO), tackling just one of them should result in spillover prejudice reduction effect to all the others via a reduction in SDO. The current study examined this idea by testing the effect of an intervention design to reduce prejudices towards women, black people, and non-human animals, and testing SDO as a mediator. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions (speciesism, sexism, racism, or control) where they underwent a prejudice reduction intervention as an elaborative imagined contact induction. The participants expressed strong intercorrelations between the SDO, sexism, racism and speciesism attitudes. However, interventions proved to be statistically nonsignificant, alongside the mediation of SDO. The limitations of the study are discussed and directions for future studies are provided.

keywords: generalized prejudice reduction, speciesism, sexism, racism, social dominance orientation, human-animal relations

Prejudice serves as a significant driving force and acts as a crucial starting point for the majority of discriminatory behavior worldwide. According to Gordon Allport (1954), if an individual harbors prejudice towards one particular group, it is highly likely that they will exhibit similar sentiments towards other diverse populations. For instance, someone who holds anti-homosexual views is also likely to hold negative attitudes towards immigrants, feminists, and so on. Since Allport's observation, numerous authors (Akrami et al., 2011; Bergh et al., 2012; Duckitt & Sibley, 2007) have explored this topic. These authors have found that prejudices targeting different groups are interconnected. Various studies (Pettigrew, 2009; Schmid et al., 2012) have demonstrated that intervening in one category of prejudice can lead to a reduction in seemingly unrelated categories. For example, establishing contact with immigrants as a primary group has resulted in a decrease in prejudice towards secondary groups, such as homosexuals and Jewish people (Schmid et al., 2012). Research has consistently shown significant correlations between prejudice towards different targets, and factor analyses have identified a generalized prejudice factor that accounts for 50% to 60% of the variance (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2003). Researchers have explained this phenomenon by examining individual differences, such as right-wing authoritarianism (Altemeyer, 1981) and social dominance orientation (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999).

One model that considers non-human animals is the Social Dominance Human-Animal Relations model (Dhont et al., 2016). It suggests that prejudice has a common origin in *social dominance orientation* (SDO), which refers to the preference for group-based dominance and inequality. If prejudices share a common root, addressing one of them should lead to a reduction in all other prejudices. In other words, reducing one type of prejudice should have a generalized prejudice reduction effect. Given this, which typology should be the focus of a prejudice reduction intervention in order to effectively reduce all forms of prejudice?

Building on the Social Dominance Human-Animal Relations model (Dhont et al., 2016; SD-HARM), this research aims to measure the impact of reducing racism, sexism, or speciesism to determine if an intervention targeting each of these dimensions results in a generalized reduction of prejudice across the other two typologies. According to the aforementioned model, it is expected that SDO, as the underlying cause of prejudices, mediates this effect. Therefore, this study offers a new perspective with both theoretical and practical implications.

Literature Review

Speciesism

While racism and sexism have been extensively studied and recognized in academia and public opinion, speciesism remains largely unexplored. In fact, there has been a debate on whether speciesism should be considered a form of prejudice (see Plous, 2003). However, if we define prejudice as "any negative attitude, emotion, or behavior towards members of a group" (Brown, 2010, p. 7), it becomes evident that speciesism falls within this category as well. Speciesism can be understood as the failure, in attitude or practice, to grant equal consideration and respect to nonhuman beings (Dunayer, 2004). Similarly, Peter Singer, in his influential work *Animal Liberation* (2015), defines speciesism as "a bias in favor of the interests of one's own species and against those of other species" (p. 6). Like other prejudices, speciesism is a relatively stable construct that persists over time (Caviola et al., 2019).

Different approaches have been used to measure speciesism, such as assessing attitudes (Caviola et al., 2019; Herzog et al., 1991) or examining behavioral intentions (Auger & Amiot, 2019). However, further evidence is needed to systematically understand the latter approach (Auger & Amiot, 2019).

Justifications for the oppression of non-human animals often rely on assumptions that animals are cognitively inferior to humans, lack moral agency, and experience less suffering compared to humans (Caviola et al., 2019). However, even if we set aside the fact that humans define these concepts, it is important to note that some of the species that suffer the most under human oppression possess similar sentience and capacity for suffering as humans. In fact, certain species and individuals in the animal kingdom outperform some humans or other less oppressed animals in intelligence tests and exhibit behaviors aligned with human-defined moral guidelines (see Dunayer, 2004). This highlights the inconsistencies of speciesism. Moreover, evidence of speciesism can be observed in the fact that humans generally would not support the same types of exploitation directed towards individuals with mental challenges (see Caviola et al., 2019; Singer, 2015).

Although speciesism often stems from the belief that humans possess inherently greater value than other animals, its presence extends beyond this dichotomy. Dogs and pigs, for instance, exhibit remarkably similar cognitive and emotional capacities (Mendl et al., 2010), yet there is a stark contrast in

how they are perceived by the majority of people in the Global North. We express love and care towards one while simultaneously supporting the exploitation and slaughter of the other (see Joy, 2011). Importantly, speciesism, like racism and sexism, is not limited to a particular country or nationality; it can be observed across diverse cultures, albeit with varying targets of prejudice (see Amiot & Bastian, 2015).

Simultaneously, the pervasive nature of this ideological system enables the use of animals for human pleasure or consumption, including for food, clothing, entertainment, experimentation, and medicine (Caviola et al., 2019). Consequently, the number of animals killed in just three days exceeds the total number of humans killed in recorded history's wars (Heinrich Böll Foundation & Friends of the Earth Europe, 2014; Hedges, 2003). Such actions are often justified by arguments of normality, neutrality, and necessity, mirroring the same myths used to rationalize racism and sexism (Joy, 2011, 2019). In truth, speciesism, racism, and sexism share many commonalities.

Interconnection of speciesism, sexism and racism

The interconnection of speciesism with racism (see e.g., Patterson, 2002) and sexism (see e.g., Adams, 2000) has been discussed in philosophy for some time, and more recently, empirical evidence has supported these connections. For instance, Allcorn and Ogletree (2018) conducted research that supported the *linked oppression thesis*, which proposes a relationship between attitudes towards gender and animals. In their empirical study, Allcorn and Ogletree (2018) examined ambivalent sexism, beliefs in gender norms, attitudes towards animal welfare (e.g., views on fur usage, animal testing, welfare laws in animal agriculture, etc., measured using a scale from Herzog et al., 1991), and justification for meat consumption (based on a scale from a previous study that highlighted the association between masculinity and the justification of carnism; see Rothgerber, 2013). This study involved both female and male university students in Texas. The results indicated that pro-meat-eating attitudes were associated with sexist beliefs and support for traditional gender roles, while a pro-animal stance was negatively correlated with benevolent/hostile sexism scores and traditional gender attitudes (Allcorn & Ogletree, 2018). This research provides empirical support for the interconnectedness of speciesism, sexism, and traditional gender roles.

Not only does various forms of oppression, such as sexism, have significant implications for human behavior towards animals (Glasser, 2018),

but speciesist attitudes also have consequences for the devaluation of other human outgroups. The Interspecies Model of Prejudice (Costello & Hodson, 2014; Hodson & Costello, 2012; Hodson et al., 2013) proposes that perceiving humans as fundamentally different and superior to other animals leads to the dehumanization of Black people and immigrants. When individuals seek to scapegoat or devalue marginalized individuals or minority groups, they often resort to labeling them as different animals. Consequently, women may be referred to as "chicks," Jewish people may be portrayed as "rats," and Black individuals may be compared to "apes." This process of reducing humans to the level of non-human animals results in the exclusion of outgroups from moral consideration (Bandura, 1999; Bar-Tal, 1989; Costello & Hodson, 2014).

The key insight is that treating outgroups like animals would lose its significance if animals were treated well in the first place (Plous, 2003). These ideas are not mere intellectual debates but have practical implications that can be observed in various contexts. For instance, the belief in the justness of hierarchies contributes to the dehumanization and devaluation of certain groups (Costello & Hodson, 2014). Therefore, acknowledging the detrimental effects of hierarchies prompts us to consider how we can dismantle or at least question their validity. Additionally, speciesism is closely associated with prejudices against low-status groups situated at the bottom of the social hierarchy (Jackson, 2019). Furthermore, research has shown that sexism, speciesism, and racism are correlated with each other (Caviola et al., 2019; Dhont et al., 2016; Everett et al., 2019), reinforcing the idea that these dimensions share a common origin. Caviola et al. (2019) demonstrated a positive association between speciesism, racism, sexism, and homophobia in a US sample. Similarly, Everett et al. (2019) found positive associations in samples from the UK, Belgium, and the US as well.

A study conducted in Canada by Jackson (2019) found that individuals who held stronger endorsements of speciesism exhibited less positive attitudes towards a wide range of human groups, including those differing in ethnicity, sexual orientation, ability, and social-political standing (Jackson, 2019, p. 454). It is worth noting that in this study, speciesism did not predict positive attitudes towards groups with which the majority of participants identified (Canadians and university students). This suggests that speciesism may be associated with the social hierarchy, where attitudes towards certain groups are influenced by their perceived position in the hierarchy.

It seems that common people are generally intuitively aware of this interconnection, since Everett et al. (2019) proved that, just like sexists, racists and homophobes, speciesists are evaluated more negatively and expected to hold more general prejudicial attitudes. In the same study, participants (male and female from the US) predicted that those targets that are high in speciesism, racism and sexism will also be high in the social dominance orientation. Models presented in the next section offer a possible explanation of a common root of these three prejudices.

SDO and SD-HARM

Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) can be defined in terms of preference for inequality of social groups (Pratto et al., 1994). Individuals who score high on SDO see hierarchies as legitimate and desirable, which normalizes group-based inequalities and justifies inter-group oppression (Pratto et al., 1994). SDO as a personal trait has been shown to be one of the best predictors of racism and sexism (Ho et al., 2012; Kteily et al., 2012; Pratto et al., 1994).

Although this construct was initially developed to explain dynamics between different human groups, it has been recently implemented within the human-animal relations paradigm in the form of the Social Dominance Human-Animal Relations model (SD-HARM).

SD-HARM (Dhont et al., 2016) proposes that prejudiced beliefs in human-human and human-animal relations stem from a common ideological preference for group-based dominance and inequality. Several studies have identified correlations between speciesism and other prejudices such as sexism, racism, and homophobia. However, in line with the SD-HARM model, these correlations diminished and became statistically nonsignificant when social dominance orientation (SDO) was taken into account as a controlling factor underlying prejudices (Dhont et al., 2014a; Dhont et al., 2016).

Dhont et al. (2016) conducted a series of three studies in the US, Belgium, and the UK to test this hypothesis. Their research demonstrated that social dominance orientation (SDO) played a crucial role in the significant positive association between attitudes towards ethnic outgroups and speciesist attitudes towards animals. This association remained even after accounting for other ideological variables such as right-wing authoritarianism and political conservatism. SDO emerged as a key factor in these relationships. Similarly, other studies, including Caviola et al. (2019) and Dhont et al.

(2014), found that speciesism, alongside racism, sexism, and homophobia (in the case of Caviola et al., 2019), exhibited positive associations with SDO.

Even though the Social Dominance Orientation has been presented as something relatively stable, there is evidence showing that it can be reduced via interventions, just like the prejudices themselves. There seems to be several approaches to reducing SDO. These methods encompass exposure to social sciences during university education, as demonstrated by Dambrun et al. (2008). The study revealed that university students who enrolled in social science courses exhibited lower beliefs in the justness and necessity of hierarchies. Another contributing factor is the act of helping others as evidenced by research conducted by Brown (2011) and Kuchenbrandt et al. (2013), which showed that assisting specific individuals can diminish SDO. Additionally, the acquisition of a feminist identity, involving the acceptance of feminine attitudes and identification as a feminist, has been found to decrease social dominance orientation (Foels & Pappas, 2004). This goes all the way to intergroup contact, which has shown a significant influence on the aforementioned construct (Dhont et al., 2013; Shook et al., 2015). Engaging in intergroup contact, as we will discuss in the following section, can take various forms, including through imagination.

Imagined contact

Allport (1954) proposed the influential hypothesis that contact between conflictual groups can reduce prejudice, provided certain conditions are met, including equal status, intergroup cooperation, common goals, and institutional support. Subsequent research has found that even when these conditions are not fully met, contact can still have a smaller but significant effect in reducing prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2017; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Moreover, contact does not necessarily have to be direct and in-person; it can take extended, virtual, vicarious, or imagined forms (Dovidio et al., 2017). Imagination plays a crucial role in prejudice reduction, as individuals actively engage in mentally simulating positive contact experiences (Crisp & Turner, 2009). This form of contact is particularly effective for individuals who lack regular opportunities for real-life contact (Crisp et al., 2008; Fujioka, 2005).

Imagined contact has been shown to be more effective in changing behavioral intentions, but it can also lead to attitude changes when an elaborative approach is used (Auger & Amiot, 2019; Husnu & Crisp, 2010). Interestingly, imagined contact can not only reduce prejudice towards a

specific outgroup but also have spillover effects on other social categories. Harwood et al. (2011) found that imagined contact intervention led to attitude changes towards various outgroups not directly targeted by the intervention. However, in their study, the effects were observed primarily among related categories. For example, a prejudice intervention targeting illegal immigrants reduced prejudices towards legal immigrants, political refugees, and Black people, but did not significantly affect attitudes towards women or White people (Harwood et al., 2011). It is worth noting that in this study, only the imagined contact method was used without additional layers of approaches such as counter-stereotypic behavior, which may explain the limited scope of the effects.

Indeed, while the findings highlight an important pathway for prejudice reduction, it remains unclear whether reducing one type of prejudice leads to a reduction in others. The potential spillover effect of speciesism as a prejudice, in connection to other forms of prejudice like sexism and racism, is a particularly unexplored area. Understanding the interconnections and inseparability of these prejudices could have significant implications, not only in theoretical terms but also in practical applications. It would provide valuable insights into developing comprehensive strategies for prejudice reduction that address multiple forms of bias simultaneously.

Present Study

Based on the previous research, which suggests that there is the common root of proposed prejudices, the aim of this study is to test the hypothesis that an intervention on one prejudice will result in prejudice reductions in the other two dimensions or, in other words, cause the generalized effect of the prejudice reduction. Therefore, there are four types of interventions: speciesism, sexism, racism and a control one, while the dependent variables are all of the mentioned prejudices themselves. First, to test the efficiency of interventions we hypothesized that target-specific intervention leads to less prejudice in that dimension:

H1: Prejudice reduction interventions targeting racism, sexism or speciesism lead to less prejudice towards the same target compared to a control condition.

Secondly, we predict that prejudice reduction interventions in one of the categories leads to the generalized prejudice reduction in the others, specifically:

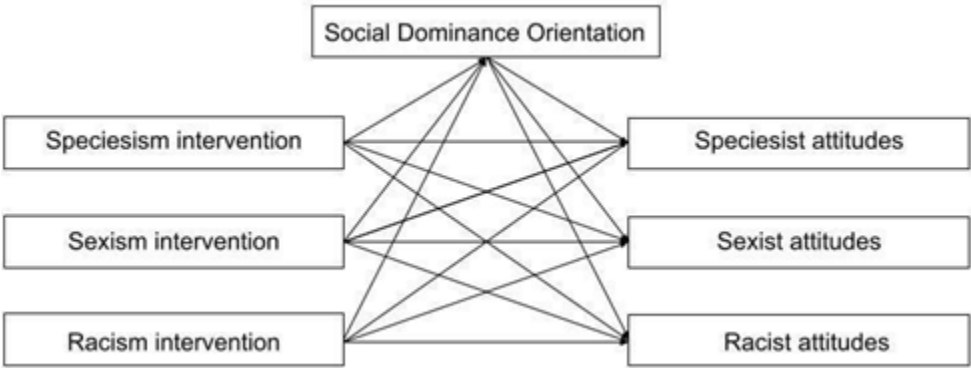
H2: Prejudice reduction interventions targeting racism, sexism, or speciesism lead to less prejudice towards other targets compared to a control condition.

Thirdly, as proposed by the SD-HARM model we hypothesize that:

H3: Social Dominance Orientation mediates all the generalized prejudice reduction effects.

Figure 1

Generalized prejudice reduction model via Social Dominance Orientation



Method

Participants

The sample ($N=201$) is composed of USA nationality White male adults, ranging from 18 to 65 ($M=36.60$, $SD=12.03$) years old. Participants were reached through the recruitment website for online surveys Prolific and were paid the amount of 1.50£ for participating in the study.

Participants who did not self-identify as males and White were excluded from the study. Research was being re-opened on Prolific for submissions until a sample size of the participants who met the criteria was fulfilled. The sample size was determined by the power analysis via *G*Power* (Faul et al., 2009), which indicated that we need at least 200 participants to detect a medium effect of $F = 0.241$, taking an α of .05 and power of .95. Effect size F was computed through the data analyzed in the meta-analytic study of imagined contact by Miles & Crisp (2014). It was calculated by means of three components used in the present research: USA nationality of participants, attitude changing and ethnicity as an outgroup.

Participants come from diverse regions and they have a diverse educational background, with the highest level of education ranging from no high school degree ($n=2$) to postdoctoral degree ($n=1$).

Design

The experiment consists of 4 condition between-subjects design, with prejudice reduction interventions as the independent variable (speciesism vs racism vs sexism vs control) and measured prejudice level (speciesism vs racism vs sexism) as the dependent variables.

Participants were randomly allocated to one of the conditions, 3 experimental ($N=47$ for Speciesism, $N=55$ for Sexism, and $N=56$ for Racism) and one control ($N=43$). The order of assessment of prejudice target was controlled for by randomly assigning participants to one of the following orders (speciesism vs racism vs sexism; speciesism vs sexism vs racism; sexism vs racism vs speciesism; sexism vs speciesism vs racism; racism vs speciesism vs sexism; racism vs sexism vs speciesism).

Measures

Social Dominance Orientation

The mediator was assessed with the Social Dominance Orientation Scale (Pratto et al., 1994). For this study participants completed the short version of the scale (Dhont et al., 2014a), that was highly reliable in the current study ($\alpha = 0.86$). The scale consists of 6 items (e.g. *Superior groups should dominate inferior groups*) with the answers on a 7-point scale (1, *strongly disagree*; 7, *strongly agree*).

Racism

The dependent variable was measured using the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986; MRS), which is used to evaluate racial attitudes. This study used a short version of a scale ($\alpha = .94$) with 7 items (e.g. *Blacks are getting too demanding in their push for equal rights*).

Participants indicated their agreement with each item on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1=*strongly disagree* to 7=*strongly agree*.

Sexism

This dependent variable was assessed with the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), which is widely used to measure sexist attitudes towards women. Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed that it measures

two sides of sexism: hostile and benevolent sexism. The shortened version of the scale ($\alpha = .90$), developed by Rollero et al. (2014), was used in the current study. Participants indicated their agreement or disagreement for 12 statements (e. g. *Women seek to gain power by getting control over men; Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores*) on a 7-point scale (1, *strongly disagree*; 7, *strongly agree*). ASI has demonstrated adequate reliability with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.93 for hostile and 0.85 for benevolent sexism.

Speciesism

This dependent variable was measured using the short version of the Speciesism scale (Caviola et al., 2019), which consists of 6 items (e.g. *It is morally acceptable to trade animals like possessions*) on 7-point scale (1, *strongly disagree*; 7, *strongly agree*), with higher scores reflecting a greater amount of speciesism. In the present study scale had Cronbach's alpha of 0.86.

Demographics

Participants were asked standard questions concerning their age, objective and subjective income, state (which was later recoded into regions: South, Northeast, West and Midwest), and the highest level reached in education. Also, even though they were pre-screened for those conditions, they were asked about sex and ethnicity as a manipulation check and exclusion criteria. In addition to that, participants were asked to indicate their political ideology from 1, *very liberal* to 7, *very conservative*.

Manipulation check

As a means of manipulation check, participants were asked two questions. The first one was a question about the main protagonist of the story they have read, with the options: animal, woman, a Black man or the building. The second question was about the degree of distress a person in the story felt, ranging from 1 (*not stressed at all*) to 5 (*extremely stressed*).

Manipulation

Interventions were provided in the form of imagined contact essay, with the additional layers of elaborative and clue rich text (Husnu & Crisp, 2011), that proved to enhance the effect of the imagined contact. Additionally, counter-stereotypic behavior of the target (Dasgubta & Asgiri, 2009;

Taschler & West, 2016) was added, as it proved to be effective in reducing sexism when primed with higher quality contact (Taschler & West, 2016); as well as reducing the general intergroup threat and reinforcing ingroup norms thus promoting positive attitudes (Yetkili et al., 2018). Another important component is empathy and perspective-taking, which displayed the strongest effect size in prejudice reduction and improving intergroup attitudes in a meta-analytic study (Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). The final layer of the current intervention is warmth and competence traits of the targets (Brambilla et al., 2011) to emphasize both the intelligence and emotions. Ultimately, in order not to perceive prejudice targets as outliers, systemic oppression was subtly primed. At the end of the text, participants were asked to take a moment and reflect on the situation (see Beelmann & Heinemann, 2014). As noted, interventions were domain-specific (race, sex, non-human animal or control). In all the conditions, as helping may enhance the process of prejudice reduction (Brown, 2011; Kuchenbrandt et al., 2013), participants engaged in the open-ended question of what they would do next.

Procedure

Before conducting the research, study was preregistered (<https://aspredicted.org/blind.php?x=xw3827>) and ethical approval was obtained from the ISCTE University Ethical Committee. The present research was conducted using the Qualtrics survey platform. In the beginning, participants were given the explanation that the study purpose is to assess how imagination affects people's attitudes. They were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions. When participants got allocated, they were given a task to read the imagined contact essay targeted towards one of the previously mentioned prejudices or control reading, where they read about a neglected building. According to the standard guidelines, participants were asked to close their eyes and imagine the details of the situation and reflect on them. Once finished, they wrote what they would do next to elaborate more on the situation. To validate the intention of the study, but also to check for inattentive participants, they were asked simple questions about the essay they had read. Afterwards, a questionnaire was given to them to assess the mediator variable of Social Dominance Orientation. Subsequently, dependent variables were measured with the previously mentioned scales in random order: speciesism, racism and sexism. At the very end, participants answered questions concerning their demographics,

objective and perceived income, and political ideology. The whole study, including the interventions, lasted around 10 minutes.

Results

Data gathering process took place between the 13th of May and the 30th of July. Of the 283 participants who started the initial screening survey, 82 participants were excluded for not meeting study criteria, as they did not finish the study and did not provide key information (27), or they do not fit the race (16) or sex (4) criteria of the study, or failed to answer the manipulation check questions correctly (16). Also, the participants were excluded based on the predefined premise that they need to spend at least 20 seconds reading the intervention (11) and at least the 40 seconds total time of reading the intervention plus imagining the situation (8). Ultimately, the analysis was performed on 201 participants.

Descriptive Analysis and Correlations

Descriptive analysis was performed on all the relevant variables, alongside Pearson’s or Spearman’s correlations procedures (see Table 2).

Table 2
Correlations

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>5</i>	<i>6</i>	<i>7</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>9</i>	<i>10</i>
1. Social Dominance	2.38	1.25	-									
2. Speciesism	3.40	1.33	.41**									
3. Racism	2.69	1.48	.80**	.43**								
4. Sexism	3.53	1.22	.59**	.50**	.72**							
5. Hostile Sexism	3.25	1.52	.67**	.47**	.75**	.88**						
6. Benevolent Sexism	3.80	1.31	.32**	.40**	.47**	.84**	.49**					
7. Age	36.43	12.01	.02	-.08	.04	-.01	-.05	.05				
8. Political Ideology	3.38	1.79	.47**	.28**	.53**	.45**	.42**	.35**	.04			
9. Education	4.49	1.58	.32**	.34**	.22**	.23**	.20**	.18**	.27**	.17*		
10. Income	4.88	2.17	.17*	.11	.07	.02	-.03	.08	.13	.06	.37**	
11. Perceived Income	3.26	.95	.16*	.16*	.13	.05	.04	.04	.04	.08	.33**	.58**

* indicates $p<.05$. ** indicates $p<.01$

All the dependent variables had highly significant ($p<.01$) positive correlation with each other, alongside with the mediator variable of social dominance orientation and with the political ideology of the participant.

Intra-target Prejudice Reduction Model

Speciesism intervention on the speciesist attitudes

To investigate linear regressions, a simple mediating process was performed using PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013), particularly its model number four. For the first analysis the outcome variable was speciesism attitudes. The predictor variable for the analysis was the speciesism intervention. The mediating variable for the analysis was social dominance orientation. The effect of the speciesism intervention on the speciesism attitudes was found to be statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.162$, $SE = .286$, $p = .57$). Also, the effect of the intervention on the social dominance orientation ($B = .113$, $SE = .270$, $p = .68$) was nonsignificant, while speciesist attitudes had a significant association ($B = .348$, $SE = .113$, $p < .01$) with the SDO. The 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of the Speciesism intervention on speciesist attitudes through social dominance orientation ($B = .039$, $SE = .111$) included zero ($-.148$ to $.309$) suggesting a nonsignificant indirect effect.

Sexism intervention on the sexist attitudes

The same program and the same model were used to estimate simple linear regression of the sexism intervention on the sexist attitudes, with the mediation of the social dominance orientation. The effect of the sexism intervention on the sexist attitudes was found to be statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.025$, $SE = .189$, $p = 0.90$). The intervention on the SDO variable had a nonsignificant effect ($B = .093$, $SE = .268$, $p = .73$). Additionally, sexist attitudes had a statistically significant relation ($B = .534$, $SE = .072$, $p < .01$) with the social dominance orientation. The analysis of the indirect effect of the sexism intervention on the sexist attitudes through social dominance orientation [$B = .049$, $SE = .150$, 95% C.I. ($-.234$, $.367$)] suggested a nonsignificant indirect effect.

Racism intervention on the racist attitudes

In a same manner we used PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) to measure the effect of the racism intervention on the racist attitudes, with the mediation of the social dominance orientation. The manipulation was found to be statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.251$, $SE = .171$, $p = .14$) with its effect on the dependent variable. Racist intervention had a nonsignificant effect on the mediating variable ($B = -.172$, $SE = .274$, $p = .53$), but the racist attitudes had a significant connection ($B = .933$, $SE = .063$, $p < .01$) with the SDO. At the same time, the indirect effect of the racist intervention on the racist attitudes

through the SDO [$B = -.161$, $SE = .257$, 95% C.I. (- .666, 0.335)] was nonsignificant.

Generalized Prejudice Reduction Model

As in the previous analyses, PROCESS (Hayes, 2013) and its model number four were used to assess all the generalized prejudice reduction effects, or spill-over effects of one target to the other attitudes.

Speciesism intervention on the sexist attitudes

The manipulation of the independent variable in a form of speciesism intervention on the sexist attitudes was statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.054$, $SE = .198$, $p = .79$). The intervention had a nonsignificant effect ($B = .113$, $SE = .270$, $p = .68$) on the social dominance orientation, which was used as a mediating variable, but the dependent variable had a significant association ($B = .561$, $SE = .078$, $p < .01$) with the mediator. The 95% confidence interval for the indirect effect of the speciesism intervention on sexist attitudes through SDO ($B = .063$, $SE = .158$) included zero (- .226 to .403) suggesting a nonsignificant indirect effect, therefore the hypothesis was not confirmed.

Speciesism intervention on the racist attitudes

The effect of the speciesism intervention on the racist attitudes was found to be statistically nonsignificant ($B = .005$, $SE = .208$, $p = 0.98$). The intervention on the SDO, as the mediating variable, had a nonsignificant effect ($B = .113$, $SE = .270$, $p = .68$). However, racist attitudes had a statistically significant relation with the mediator ($B = .943$, $SE = .082$, $p < .01$). The analysis of the indirect effect of the Sexism intervention on Sexist attitudes through Social Dominance Intervention [$B = .107$, $SE = .258$, 95% C.I. (- 0.382, 0.623)] suggested a nonsignificant indirect effect.

Sexism intervention on the speciesist attitudes

The effect of the independent variable on the speciesist attitudes was statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.235$, $SE = .272$, $p = 0.39$). The sexism intervention had a nonsignificant effect on the social dominance orientation ($B = .093$, $SE = .268$, $p = 0.73$) as well. Speciesist attitudes had a strongly significant association with the SDO ($B = .329$, $SE = .103$, $p < .01$). The indirect effect of the intervention on the dependent variable through the mediation was statistically nonsignificant [$B = .030$, $SE = .101$, 95% C.I. (- .135, .273)].

Sexism intervention on the racist attitudes

The sexism intervention had a nonsignificant effect on the racist attitudes ($B = -.266$, $SE = .175$, $p = 0.13$). At the same time, it had a nonsignificant effect on the social dominance orientation ($B = .092$, $SE = .268$, $p = 0.73$). As in the previous analysis, a dependent variable had a significant relation with the SDO ($B = .901$, $SE = .066$, $p < .01$). However, the indirect effect of the sexism intervention on the racist attitudes through the SDO was nonsignificant [$B = .083$, $SE = .248$, 95% *C.I.* (-.414, .565)].

Racism intervention on the speciesist attitudes

For this analysis the outcome variable was the speciesism attitudes, while the predictor variable was the racism intervention. The mediating variable for the analysis was social dominance orientation. The effect of the racism intervention on the speciesist attitudes was found to be statistically nonsignificant ($B = -.179$, $SE = .256$, $p = .49$). Also, the effect of the intervention on the social dominance orientation ($B = -.172$, $SE = .274$, $p = .53$) was nonsignificant, while speciesist attitudes had a significant association ($B = .391$, $SE = .095$, $p < .01$) with the SDO. At the same time, the indirect effect of the intervention on the speciesist attitudes through the social dominance orientation was nonsignificant [$B = -.067$, $SE = .109$, 95% *C.I.* (-.270, .173)].

Racism intervention on the sexist attitudes

Racism intervention, as the independent variable, had a statistically nonsignificant effect on the dependent variable of the sexist attitudes ($B = .062$, $SE = .219$, $p = .78$). In the same manner, the effect of the intervention on the SDO ($B = -.172$, $SE = .274$, $p = .53$), or the mediator variable, was nonsignificant. On the other hand, association between sexist attitudes and social dominance orientation ($B = .536$, $SE = .081$, $p < .01$) was strongly significant.

However, the hypothesis was not confirmed since the indirect effect of the racism intervention on the sexist attitudes through the SDO was nonsignificant [$B = -.092$, $SE = .149$, 95% *C.I.* (-.393, .196)].

Discussion Overview

In the present study, our aim was to examine speciesism in conjunction with other forms of prejudice such as sexism and racism, and investigate the

potential for reducing them collectively. Prior research, including studies by Caviola et al. (2019), Dhont et al. (2014a), and Dhont et al. (2016), has demonstrated that prejudices are interconnected to some extent, indicating the presence of underlying factors. Furthermore, there is evidence suggesting that interventions targeting prejudice in one domain can lead to a generalization effect, influencing attitudes in other domains (Pettigrew, 2009; Schmid et al., 2012).

Taking into account the underrepresentation of speciesism in such studies, despite its pervasive influence in everyday life routines (e.g., animal consumption, visiting zoos and aquariums, purchasing fur), we sought to explore if the spill-over effect persists and extends to reducing all the analyzed prejudices simultaneously. Consistent with previous research and the SD-HARM model (Dhont et al., 2016), which posits that both human and non-human animal prejudices are rooted in Social Dominance Orientation, we hypothesized that SDO would mediate the effect of generalized prejudice reduction.

Consistent with previous research (Caviola et al., 2019; Dhont et al., 2014a; Dhont et al., 2016), this study revealed a highly significant correlation between speciesism, sexism, and racism, further highlighting their shared characteristics. Racism and sexism exhibited a strong correlation with each other, while they demonstrated a moderate to strong correlation with speciesism, as determined by Cohen's (1998) guidelines. Additionally, all three forms of prejudice showed a strong relationship with social dominance orientation, which aligns with expectations.

The disparity in the effect sizes can be attributed to the critique raised by Dovidio et al. (2010), suggesting that the Modern Racism Scale (McConahay, 1986) used to measure racism may reflect a more overt expression of prejudice due to changes in historical and social contexts. On the other hand, the other two scales capture more contemporary expressions of prejudice. Furthermore, the results indicated that higher levels of conservatism, measured as political orientation, were associated with increased levels of speciesism, racism, and sexism, which is in line with previous studies (Dhont et al., 2016). This finding is not surprising, as conservatism often aligns with support for the status quo and resistance to social change, which would be necessary to dismantle the aforementioned systems. These findings underscore the broader implications of general dominance strivings, highlighting their associations with different forms of prejudice and support for inequality in both human intergroup relations

(racism and sexism) and human-animal relations (speciesism). Social dominance orientation, serving as a potential root of these worldviews, plays a significant role in shaping these outcomes. It impacts not only our attitudes towards other sentient beings but also our relationship with the planet itself, illustrating the interconnectedness of exploitation and the desire for domination. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals higher in social dominance orientation are more likely to endorse exploitative practices depleting natural resources and deny climate change (Häkkinen & Akrami, 2014; Hoffarth & Hodson, 2016; Jylhä & Akrami, 2015; Milfont et al., 2013).

These theoretical advancements offer practical solutions that should not be overlooked when addressing issues such as racial and gender discrimination, animal cruelty, and climate change. The studies mentioned, including the present one, bring us closer to understanding the "unique role of group-based dominance as a central factor linking prejudicial tendencies in human-human, human-animal relations" (Dhont et al., 2016, p. 517), as well as shaping human-nature behavior.

The potential for generalized prejudice reduction among these three dimensions implies that they share common underlying factors, suggesting that addressing one prejudice could lead to a reduction in others. While the concept of spillover effects is not new, it typically occurs within similar social groups (e.g., spill-over from prejudice reduction targeting immigrants to attitudes towards Black people but not women, as seen in Harwood et al., 2011). To account for this, our study incorporated multiple layers within the interventions, including counter-stereotypic behavior and opportunities to help the outgroup. By testing intra-target prejudice reduction models, we aimed to examine the effectiveness of these interventions in reducing prejudices within each target group separately.

Auger and Amiot (2019) were among the first researchers to investigate the concept of imagined contact with both valued animals (dogs) and devalued animals (cows). Their study demonstrated that participants were able to change their behavioral intentions towards these animals, but no significant change in attitudes was observed. This finding aligns with the established understanding that imagined contact tends to be more effective in influencing behavior rather than attitudes (Miles & Crisp, 2014). It is important to note that studies examining imagined contact specifically with Black people and women are limited in the literature. This is likely due to the availability of real-life contact opportunities with these groups, which can

diminish the role of imagined contact in shaping attitudes (Miles & Crisp, 2011).

In order to try to pass this barrier with these prejudice dimensions, we introduced a mixed-method approach, with the different layers of intervention (see Manipulation section). The same approach was used with different targets: a Black man to tackle racism, a woman to tackle sexism, and a cow to intercept speciesism. The initial idea was to test if there is generalized prejudice reduction between these three dimensions and to measure the strength of its effect.

The interventions proved to be statistically nonsignificant, so we failed to test the main hypothesis. The first hypothesis was not supported because intra-target prejudice reduction intervention did not work. In other words, speciesism intervention did not reduce speciesism; sexism intervention failed to reduce sexism; and racism intervention did not reduce racism.

Therefore, the second hypothesis stating there will be a generalized prejudice reduction effect remained unsupported as well. As well, interventions did not have an impact either on SDO, but that variable was related to all the assessed prejudices.

According to the meta-analysis (Miles & Crisp, 2014), this type of nonsignificant results is not extraordinary, especially for prejudices towards ethnic groups; as well, sex and gender are largely neglected in these types of studies. In the same manner, the research of speciesism in this context is lacking, as mentioned before. Possible explanation regarding the non-significance may be in the fact that White men in the US may interact with both women and Black people and have a regular contact in daily life, as they are not the group that is hard to reach, which is one of the prerequisites for imagined contact (Crisp et al., 2008; Fujioka, 2005). Also, this intervention was done in an online setting, which may play a valuable role, since previous studies showed that web-delivered imagined contact may not be effective (Bordeleau, 2021). However, the research on this regard is lacking.

Moreover, it is important to note that participants went through only one reading that is done in less than a minute. For comparison, Taschler and West (2016) wrote about reducing sexism with frequent and higher-quality contact with counter-stereotypical women. Some other studies as well (e.g. Vezzali et al., 2011) opted for the more longitudinal approach when reducing ethnic prejudice. This may be especially true with the counter-stereotypic groups, in order not to be excluded as outliers and for the intervention to succeed

even though individual members of a group (e.g. women) are encountered in everyday life.

We can also argue that, since we focused on different methods of prejudice, neither of them proved to be strong enough to actually make an impact. Because we used several methods it is possible that the emphasis on each was not sufficient to truly make a change. Making a mix of different approaches should be additionally revised, tested and compared to single-approach interventions. Another possible explanation for the ineffectiveness of intervention is that we conducted an online study with Prolific participants that might be less motivated to engage in imagined contact.

Limitations and Further Research

Several limitations of this study require further investigation. First, in the speciesism intervention we included only one type of animal (a cow). It is clear, however, that people have multiple categorization criteria for different animals. For instance, people are less concerned about food animals than about companion animals and some wild ones (e.g., dolphins; Krings et al., 2021). This type of *moral divide* is greater for those participants who score high on human supremacy beliefs (Krings et al., 2021). So, it may mean that encounters with different animals work in a distinct manner on a different group of people.

Secondly, another limitation lies in the very concept of how people approach Social Dominance Orientation as a concept. It is unclear whether participants that score high in SDO because of accepting domination of animals per se, or because they value higher hierarchical distance from them, as a preference for inequality in intergroup relations (Dhont et al., 2016). However, this does not mean that those two processes can be operating simultaneously (see Jylhä & Akrami, 2015).

Thirdly, it is not clear whether people take animals into consideration when they are asked about the social groups mentioned in the Social Dominance Orientation scale (Pratto et al., 1994), especially due to the fact that the Speciesism scale (Caviola et al., 2019) was administered after the SDO one.

Fourthly, the current study was done on the US sample only. Even though some societal practices persist across cultures, it would be important to test the racism, speciesism, and sexism correlations and interventions on the Global South samples, with the special attention to the prejudice underpinnings (such as SDO), due to the different views on hierarchical

stances. Additionally, participants were adults (from 18 to 65 years old). The imagined contact effect, however, is stronger for children than for adult participants (Miles & Crisp, 2014), which may lead further studies towards the sample. As well, children prioritize humans over animals less than adults do (Wilks et al., 2020). In addition, only White male participants were included in the study, as they are the only targets who do not fall under the prejudice categories under investigation. However, it is important to recognize that the findings of this study can be extended to include individuals of other genders and ethnicities, as there is a possibility of internalized sexism and/or racism across different groups.

Further studies may go in different directions. First, a recommendation lies in the fact that prejudice reduction interventions should be ideally repeated several times in the span of a certain time. Secondly, instead of the attitudes, researchers may measure the behavioral intentions, which already proved to be more malleable when it comes to contact (Miles & Crisp, 2014). For example, Caviola et al., (2019) developed an assessment that is focused on the amount of resources which can be put in the charity of various kinds (human and non-human animal areas) by individuals. As well, Auger and Amiot (2019) adapted an Amiot's and Bastian's (2017) collective action intentions scale to fit the behavioral intentions towards animals. When it comes to sexism, behavioral items from the Attraction to Sexual Aggression Scale (Malamuth 1989) may be used, while for racism researchers can use one of the methods that is used to measure Aversive Racism (Gaertner & Dovidio, 1986), such as selecting Black or White candidates for the job.

Thirdly, instead of focusing on each prejudice dimension individually, future research may tackle social dominance orientation directly, which, if appears significant, would again test the interconnection between different prejudices. Although SDO is relatively stable (Dhont et al., 2014b; Pratto et al., 1994), increased outgroup contact is effective at lowering SDO levels over time. This adds to the previously mentioned argument that repetitive interventions could have possibly gave us the needed results to confirm the hypotheses. In line with that, SDO may also be reduced through providing help to the outgroups (Brown, 2011), so the future study would ideally combine both the contact and helping in an immigration camp, women's shelter for domestic violence abuse and volunteering in an animal sanctuary.

Another area according to which new interventions can be formed lies in the subordinate identity acquisition. Superordinate identity refers to incorporating outgroups (e.g., non-human animals) into a more inclusive and

encompassing ingroup (Gaertner et al., 1993; Gaertner et al., 1990; Greenaway et al., 2015). Encouraging superordinate identities in a form of humanity improves perceptions of human groups that are usually highly discriminated against (Gaertner & Dovidio, 2005). Therefore, making a subordinate identity of sentient beings or Earthlings (inhabitants of the Planet Earth) can create a positive effect in prejudice reduction to both human and non-human animals. To illustrate, in the previous studies (Costello & Hodson, 2010) anti-immigrant prejudice was lowered by closing the divide between animals and humans, both in high and low scorers on the SDO. So, future interventions may be designed to emphasize traits, interests and goals that are all shared by both humans and animals.

Finally, there are other variables that have already proved to be interesting in relation to speciesism and other prejudices that should be included in the analysis as well. The most prominent being right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) and system justification (Caviola et al., 2019). RWA and system justification may play a pivotal role when talking about exploitative practices of specific animals that are connected to traditions and social norms within a certain culture (e.g. bullfighting in Portugal), but also in perpetuating the status quo of racial and sexist injustices. Secondly, an important concept that may be included is *vegetarianism threat* since those who see vegetarianism as a threat to their lifestyle are more likely to care less about animals and exhibit stronger speciesism (Dhont & Hodson, 2014). This type of threat still persists even after partialing out conservatism, SDO and RWA (Dhont et al., 2016), so it should be controlled and treated as a dimension of its own. Thirdly, another control variable worth mentioning is feminist identity acquisition (Shi & Zheng, 2020), that proved to mediate the relationship with sexism (possibly with other prejudices like speciesism, due to the linked oppression hypothesis, but that is unexplored). Fourthly, some prejudices are negatively correlated with open-minded thinking and empathetic concern (Caviola et al., 2019), therefore these two traits are worth taking into consideration. Finally, control variables that should be taken into an account are previous contact with counter-stereotypic outgroups (Dasgupta & Asgari, 2004), alongside with the previous contact with animals (Auger & Amiot, 2019), both of which strongly influences expressed attitudes towards mentioned social categories and individuals.

On the other hand, as far as activism is concerned, this study can strengthen and provide valuable insights into alternative approaches to advocating for animal liberation. As highlighted in some of the earlier works

(see Dominick, 1997) and confirmed by more recent research (see Joy, 2019), animal rights activists should prioritize the dismantling of hierarchies as such, leading to the veganarchist perspective, which advocates for combining animal liberation with the advocacy of other interconnected struggles. The present study highlights the importance of this approach and offers the pathway of translating abstract concepts (such as the abolition of hierarchy) into concrete action. This can be achieved through engaging in contact, whether imagined or direct, with individuals from various marginalized groups (including non-human animals) in order to reduce prejudice as such.

Conclusion

The current study found extremely significant correlations between speciesism, sexism, racism and Social Dominance Orientation. On the other hand, since contact intervention did not work on the intra-target prejudices, this research needs to be replicated with different types of prejudice reduction models, in a more longitudinal manner or on another type of participants. In any case, this study does not dispute the effectiveness of generalized prejudice reduction among speciesism, racism and sexism and further research is needed to approve or disapprove this claim. However, current study provided us with important insights on what works or does not work in the prejudice reduction domain.

References

- Adams, C. J. (2000). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist-vegetarian critical theory* (10th anniversary ed.). New York: Continuum.
- Akrami, N., Ekehammar, B., & Bergh, R. (2011). Generalized prejudice: Common and specific components. *Psychological Science*, 22, 57–59. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797610390384>
- Allcorn, A., Ogletree, S. M. (2018). Linked oppression: Connecting animal and gender studies. *Feminism & Psychology*, 28(4), 457-469. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0959353518759562>
- Allport, G. W. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Altemeyer, B. (1981). *Right-wing authoritarianism*. Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada: University of Manitoba Press.
- Amiot, C. E., & Bastian, B. (2015). Toward a psychology of human–animal relations. *Psychological Bulletin*, 141(1), 6.

- Auger, B., & Amiot, C. E. (2019). The impact of imagined contact in the realm of human-animal relations: Investigating a superordinate generalization effect involving both valued and devalued animals. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 85, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JESP.2019.103872>
- Bandura, A. (1999). Moral disengagement and the perpetration of inhumanities. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 3, 193–209. https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr0303_3
- Bar-Tal, D. (1989). Delegitimization: The extreme case of stereotyping. In D. Bar-Tal, C. F. Grauman, A. Kruglanski & W. Stroebe (Eds.), *Stereotyping and prejudice: Changing conceptions* (pp. 169–182). New York: Springer.
- Beelmann, A., & Heinemann, K. S. (2014). Preventing prejudice and improving intergroup attitudes: A meta-analysis of child and adolescent training programs. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 35, 10–24. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.appdev.2013.11.002>
- Bergh, R., Akrami, N., & Ekehammar, B. (2012). The personality underpinnings of explicit and implicit generalized prejudice. *Social Psychological and Personality Science*, 3, 614–621. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1948550611432937>
- Bordeleau, J. N. (2021). Can imagined contact really be delivered through the web? A preregistered test of web-delivered imagined contact with Muslim Americans. [Bachelor's thesis, Royal Military College of Canada]. Research Gate. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/354689697_Can_Imagined_Contact_Really_Be_Delivered_Through_the_Web_A_Preregistered_Test_of_Web-Delivered_Imagined_Contact_with_Muslim_Americans
- Brambilla, M., Ravenna, M., & Hewstone, M. (2011). Changing stereotype content through mental imagery: Imagining intergroup contact promotes stereotype change. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 15(3), 305–315. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430211427574>
- Brown, M.A. (2011). Learning from service: The effect of helping on helpers' social dominance orientation. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 41, 850-871. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00738.x>
- Brown, R. (2010). *Prejudice: Its social psychology*. Chichester, UK: John Wiley & Sons.
- Caviola, L., Everett, J. A., & Faber, N. (2019). The moral standing of animals: Towards a psychology of speciesism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 116(6), 1011–1029. <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000182>

- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences*. New York, NY: Routledge Academic.
- Costello, K., & Hodson, G. (2014). Explaining dehumanization among children: The interspecies model of prejudice. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 53, 175–197. <https://doi.org/10.1111/bjso.12016>
- Crisp, R. J., & Turner, R. N. (2009). Can imagined interactions produce positive perceptions?: Reducing prejudice through simulated social contact. *American Psychologist*, 64(4), 231–240. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0014718>
- Crisp, R. J., Stathi, S., Turner, R. N., & Husnu, S. (2008). Imagined intergroup contact: Theory, paradigm and practice. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 3(1), 1–18. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9004.2008.00155.x>
- Crowne, D. P., & Marlowe, D. (1960). A new scale of social desirability independent of psychopathology. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 24(4), 349–354. <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0047358>
- Dambrun, M., Kamiejski, R., Haddadi, N., & Duarte, S. (2008). Why does social dominance orientation decrease with university exposure to the social sciences? The impact of institutional socialization and the mediating role of “geneticism.” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 39(1), 88–100. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.498>
- Dasgupta, N., & Asgari, S. (2004). Seeing is believing: Exposure to counterstereotypic women leaders and its effect on the malleability of automatic gender stereotyping. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 40(5), 642–658.
- Dhont, K., & Hodson, G. (2014). Why do right-wing adherents engage in more animal exploitation and meat consumption? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 64, 12–17. doi:10.1016/j. paid.2014.02.002.
- Dhont, K., Hodson, G., & Leite, A. C. (2016). Common ideological roots of speciesism and generalized ethnic prejudice: The social dominance human–animal relations model (SD- HARM). *European Journal of Personality*, 30, 507–522. <https://doi.org/10.1002/per.2069>
- Dhont, K., Hodson, G., Costello, K., & MacInnis, C. C. (2014a). Social dominance orientation connects prejudicial human–human and human–animal relations. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 61–62, 105–108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2013.12.020>
- Dhont, K., Van Hiel, A., & Hewstone, M. (2013). Changing the ideological roots of prejudice: Longitudinal effects of ethnic intergroup contact on social dominance orientation. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(1), 27–44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213497064>
- Dhont, K., Van Hiel, A., & Hewstone, M. (2014b). Changing the ideological roots of prejudice: Longitudinal effects of ethnic intergroup contact on social dominance orientation. *Group*

- Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(1), 27–44.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213497064>
- Dominick, B. A. (1997). Animal Liberation and Social Revolution. *The Anarchist Library*. <https://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/brian-a-dominick-animal-liberation-and-social-revolution>
- Dovidio, J. F., Gaertner, S. L., & Kawakami, K. (2010). Racism. In J. F. Dovidio, M. Hewston, P. Glick, & V. M. Esses (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination* (pp. 312–327). London, England: Sage.
- Dovidio, J. F., Love, A., Schellhaas, F. M., & Hewstone, M. (2017). Reducing intergroup bias through intergroup contact: Twenty years of progress and future directions. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 20(5), 606–620.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430217712052>
- Duckitt, J., & Sibley, C. G. (2007). Right wing authoritarianism, social dominance orientation and the dimensions of generalized prejudice. *European Journal of Personality*, 21, 113–130.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/per.614>
- Dunayer, J. (2004). *Speciesism*. Derwood, MD: Ryce.
- Ekehammar, B., & Akrami, N. (2003). The relation between personality and prejudice: A variable and a person-centred approach. *European Journal of Personality*, 17, 449–464.
- Everett, J.A.C., Caviola, L., Savulescu, J., & Faber, N. S. (2019). Speciesism, generalized prejudice, and perceptions of prejudiced others. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 22(6), 785–803.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430218816962>
- Faul, F., Erdfelder, E., Buchner, A., & Lang, A. G. (2009). Statistical power analyses using G*Power 3.1: Tests for correlation and regression analyses. *Behavior research methods*, 41(4), 1149–1160.
<https://doi.org/10.3758/BRM.41.4.1149>
- Foels, R., & Pappas, C. J. (2004). Learning and unlearning the myths we are taught: Gender and social dominance orientation. *Sex Roles*, 50(11/12), 743–757.
<https://doi.org/10.1023/b:sers.0000029094.25107.d6>
- Fujioka, Y. (2005). Black media images as a perceived threat to African American ethnic identity: Coping responses, perceived public perception, and attitudes towards affirmative action. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 49(4), 450–467.
https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4904_6
- Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2005). Understanding and addressing contemporary racism: From aversive racism to the common ingroup identity model. *Journal of Social Issues*, 61(3), 615–639.
- Gaertner, S. L., Dovidio, J. F., Anastasio, P. A., Bachman, B. A., & Rust, M. C. (1993). The common ingroup identity model:

- Recategorization and the reduction of intergroup bias. *European Review of Social Psychology*, 4(1), 1-26.
- Gaertner, S. L., Mann, J. A., Dovidio, J. F., Murrell, A. J., & Pomare, M. (1990). How does cooperation reduce intergroup bias? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(4), 692-704.
- Glasser, C. L. (2011). Tied oppression: An analysis of how sexist imagery reinforces speciesist sentiment. *The Brock Review*, 12(1), 51-68. <https://doi.org/10.26522/br.v12i1.333>
- Glick, P., & Fiske, S. T. (1996). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory: Differentiating hostile and benevolent sexism. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70, 491-512. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.70.3.491>
- Good, J. J., & Woodzicka, J. A. (2010). Reducing approval of benevolent sexism: An educational intervention. *The New School Psychology Bulletin*, 7(1), 16-30. Retrieved from <http://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/viewdoc/download?doi=10.1.1.962.7192&rep=rep1&type=pdf>
- Greenaway, K. H., Wright, R. G., Willingham, J., Reynolds, K. J., & Haslam, S. A. (2015). Shared identity is key to effective communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 41(2), 171-182.
- Häkkinen, K., & Akrami, N. (2014). Ideology and climate change denial. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 70, 62-65. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2014.06.030.
- Harwood, J., Paolini, S., Joyce, N., Rubin, M., & Arroyo, A. (2011). Secondary transfer effects from imagined contact: Group similarity affects the generalization gradient. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 50(1), 180-189. <https://doi.org/10.1348/014466610x524263>
- Hayes, A. F. (2013). *Introduction to mediation, moderation, and conditional process analysis: A regression-based approach*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Hedges, C. (2003). *What every person should know about war*. New York, NY: Free Press.
- Heinrich Böll Foundation, & Friends of the Earth Europe. (2014). *Meat Atlas: Facts and figures about the animals we eat*. Retrieved from https://www.foeeurope.org/sites/default/files/publications/foee_hbf_meatatlas_jan2014.pdf
- Herzog, H. A., Betchard, N. S., & Pittman, R. (1991). Gender, sex role identity and attitudes toward animals. *Anthrozoös*, 4, 184-191. doi:10.2752/089279391787057170.
- Ho, A. K., Sidanius, J., Pratto, F., Levin, S., Thomsen, L., Kteily, N., & Sheehy-Skeffington, J. (2012). Social dominance orientation: Revisiting the structure and function of a variable predicting social

- and political variables. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38, 583–606. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167211432765>
- Hodson, G., & Costello, K. (2012). The human cost of devaluing animals. *New Scientist*, 2895, 34–35. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079\(12\)63189-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0262-4079(12)63189-3)
- Hodson, G., MacInnis, C. C., & Costello, K. (2014). (Over)valuing “humanness” as an aggravator of intergroup prejudices and discrimination. In P. G. Bain, J. Vaes, & J.-P. Leyens (Eds.), *Humanness and dehumanization* (pp. 86–110). New York, NY: Psychology Press.
- Hoffarth, M. R., & Hodson, G. (2016). Green on the outside, red on the inside: Perceived environmentalist threat as a factor explaining political polarization of climate change. *Journal of Environmental Psychology*, 45, 40–49. doi:10.1016/j.jenvp.2015.11.002.
- Husnu, S., & Crisp, R. J. (2010). Imagined intergroup contact: A new technique for encouraging greater inter-ethnic contact in Cyprus. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology*, 16(1), 97–108. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10781910903484776>
- Husnu, S., & Crisp, R. J. (2011). *Enhancing the imagined contact effect*. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 151(1), 113–116. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224541003599043>
- Jackson, L. M. (2019). Speciesism predicts prejudice against low-status and hierarchy- attenuating human groups. *Anthrozoös*, 32(4), 445–458. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08927936.2019.1621514>
- Joy, M. (2011). *Why we love dogs, eat pigs, and wear cows: An introduction to carnism*. Berkeley, CA: Conari.
- Joy, M. (2019). *Powerarchy: understanding the psychology of oppression for social transformation*. Oakland, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers.
- Jylhä, K., & Akrami, N. (2015). Social dominance orientation and climate change denial: The role of dominance and system justification. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 86, 108–111. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2015.05.041.
- Kteily, N. S., Ho, A., & Sidanius, J. (2012). Hierarchy in the mind: The predictive power of social dominance orientation across social contexts and domains. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 48, 543–549. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jesp.2011.11.007>
- Kuchenbrandt, D., Eyssel, F., & Seidel, S. K. (2013). Cooperation makes it happen: Imagined intergroup cooperation enhances the positive effects of imagined contact. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 16(5), 635–647. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430212470172>
- Malamuth, N. (1989). The attraction to sexual aggression scale: Part one. *Journal of Sex Research*, 26(1), 26–49. doi:10.1080/00224498909551491.

- McConahay, J. B. (1986). Modern racism, ambivalence, and the Modern Racism Scale. In J. F. Dovidio & S. L. Gaertner (Eds.), *Prejudice, discrimination, and racism* (pp. 91–125). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Mendl, M., Held, S., & Byrne, R. W. (2010). Pig cognition. *Current Biology*, 20(18), R796–R798.
- Miles, E., & Crisp, R. J. (2014). A meta-analytic test of the imagined contact hypothesis. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 17(1), 3–26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430213510573>
- Milfont, T. L., Richter, I., Sibley, C. G., Wilson, M. S., & Fischer, R. (2013). Environmental consequences of the desire to dominate and be superior. *Personality and Social Psychological Bulletin*, 39, 1127–1138. doi:10.1177/0146167213490805.
- Paluck, E. L., & Green, D. P. (2009). Prejudice reduction: What works? A review and assessment of research and practice. *The Annual Review of Psychology*, 60, 339–367. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.60.110707.163607>
- Patterson, C. (2002). *Eternal Treblinka: our treatment of animals and the Holocaust*. New York: Lantern Books.
- Pettigrew, T. F. (2009). Secondary transfer effect of contact. *Social Psychology*, 40(2), 55–65. <https://doi.org/10.1027/1864-9335.40.2.55>
- Pettigrew, T. F., & Tropp, L. R. (2008). How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 38(6), 922–934. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ejsp.504>
- Plous, S. (2003). Is there such a thing as prejudice towards animals? In S. Plous (Ed.), *Understanding prejudice and discrimination* (pp. 509–528). New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Pratto, F., Sidanius, J., Stallworth, L. M., & Malle, B. F. (1994). Social dominance orientation: A personality variable predicting social and political attitudes. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67, 741–763. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.67.4.741>
- Rollero, C., Glick, P., & Tartaglia, S. (2014). Psychometric properties of short versions of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory and Ambivalence Toward Men Inventory. *TPM-Testing, Psychometrics, Methodology in Applied Psychology*, 21(2), 149–159.
- Rothgerber, H. (2013). Real men don't eat (vegetable) quiche: Masculinity and the justification of meat consumption. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 14(4), 363–375. doi:10.1037/a0030379
- Schmid, K., Hewstone, M., Küpper, B., Zick, A., & Wagner, U. (2012). Secondary Transfer Effects of Intergroup Contact. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 75(1), 28–51. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0190272511430235>

- Shi, X., & Zheng, Y. (2020). Perception and tolerance of sexual harassment: An examination of feminist identity, sexism, and gender roles in a sample of Chinese working women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 44(2), 217–233. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0361684320903683>
- Shook, N. J., Hopkins, P. D., & Koech, J. M. (2015). The effect of intergroup contact on secondary group attitudes and social dominance orientation. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19(3), 328–342. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430215572266>
- Sidanius, J., & Pratto, F. (1999). *Social dominance: An intergroup theory of social hierarchy and oppression*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Singer, P. (2015). *Animal liberation*. London, UK: The Bodley Head.
- Taschler, M., & West, K. (2017). Contact with counter-stereotypical women predicts less sexism, less rape myth acceptance, less intention to rape (in men) and less projected enjoyment of rape (in women). *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 76(7-8), 473-484. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-016-0679-x>
- Vezzali, L., Capozza, D., Giovannini, D., & Stathi, S. (2011). Improving implicit and explicit intergroup attitudes using imagined contact: An experimental intervention with elementary school children. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 15(2), 203–212. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1368430211424920>
- Wilks, M., Caviola, L., Kahane, G., & Bloom, P. (2021). Children Prioritize Humans Over Animals Less Than Adults Do. *Psychological Science*, 32(1), 27–38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620960398>
- Yetkili, O., Abrams, D., Travaglino, G.A., & Giner-Sorolla, R. (2018). Imagined contact with atypical outgroup members that are anti-normative within their group can reduce prejudice. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 76, 2

Book Review: Robison-Greene, R. 2023. *Edibility and in vitro meat: Ethical considerations*. Lanham, MD: Lexington. \$95, hardcover, \$45 e-book. 160 pages. ISBN: 9781793614667.

Nathan Poirier
Poirinat1@gmail.com

The issue of in vitro meat (IVM)—meat grown from animal cells outside the body of an animal—is fairly polarizing. Activists who are radical and liberation-oriented tend to oppose it on numerous grounds while more mainstream and welfare-oriented activists tend to support it. Another group that tends to support its production is philosophers. Academic papers written by philosophers that take a strictly philosophical view overwhelmingly come down on the positive side of IVM. Rachel Robison-Green falls in line with the majority of philosophers in decidedly supporting IVM as evidenced in her book *Edibility and In Vitro Meat* which is the subject of this review. Robison-Greene presents a convincing argument that if we view IVM through an ethics-only scope, that IVM will come out looking ethical. I agree. But I would argue that as soon as a wider-angle lens is adopted, much of the ethical rosiness dissipates as the ethical potential of IVM is based on (rather naïve) speculation. A notable exception is Carlo Alvaro (2019; 2020) who uses a virtue ethics approach. Alvaro does not see IVM as in line with virtuosity because it violates several virtues. Alvaro's works are worth reading to compare to Robison-Green's book and arguments. Robison-Green, on the other hand, asserts that IVM is supported by a virtue ethics approach, while not citing Alvaro's criticisms at all.

Robison-Greene surveys a number of ethical approaches and decides that each one would lend support for IVM, or at least not preclude it as an ethical possibility. In particular, she examines the right-based ethics of Tom Regan and utilitarianism of Peter Singer. For the former, she concludes that Regan's ethical theory would have at least allowed IVM to be permissible, despite any direct commentary by Regan on the subject. Peter Singer on the other hand, has explicitly supported IVM multiple times. Therefore utilitarian support for IVM is established. Robison-Green's own approach to supporting IVM is to use non-ideal theory. Non-ideal theory states that real life situations preclude people from enacting ideal solutions to problems.

Therefore, partial measures and incrementalism are often asserted as more pragmatic approaches than liberation. Non-ideal theory also states that complete success may not be possible. Within non-ideal theory, it is hoped that perhaps “practical” steps can lead to larger structural changes at some unidentified time in the future, but then again perhaps not. Robison-Green views the ideal approach as not viable. That is, her stance is that attempting to convince people to be vegetarian or vegan, or at least to consume drastically fewer animal products is not a feasible tactic. This is the typical discourse of many who are pro-IVM: “Advocates of cultured meat products are often in the non-ideal theory camp. It may be true that it would be better if everyone gave up meat entirely, but that’s not going to happen” (p. 62). She supports her argument with empirical research on consumer attitudes and behaviors: “Though studies reveal that more than fifty percent of sampled populations report care and concern for animal welfare, their consumer behavior does not tend to change in a way that reflects their concerns” (p. 70). From this she concludes that “The harms that are currently being done and that will continue to be done are too significant to sit around waiting for people to see the light” (p.72). From this, it seems reasonable to conclude that Robison-Greene does not have a very optimistic opinion about people to do the right thing. I also agree with this general assessment.

Yet, Robison-Greene seems to contradict her non-ideal approach by arguing that consumers should staunchly hold corporations accountable for their actions. I would argue it is also empirically verifiable—and based on everyday experience—that people, in any sort of sizable numbers or regular basis, do not do this. So by non-ideal theory, we should not assert that as a viable course of action or something to support. People clearly do not hold corporations accountable for their harms against humans, nonhuman animals, or the environment. If they did, most people would go vegetarian or vegan—the very thing Robison-Greene says is inevitably ineffective. At the very least, they would change their purchasing habits drastically and not buy from large corporations. But we don’t see this happening either. In fact, corporations continually grow more profitable, stronger, and draconian. This is not a major argument made by Robison-Greene as she does not develop the idea or look at its potential implications, but there are a number of practical limitations with it nonetheless. For instance, how can people be mobilized to take action? How is such accountability different from convincing people to go vegetarian? Who will enforce sanctions against

corporations? These questions stray outside of philosophy and highlight the limitations with a ethics-only approach to IVM.

Another flaw in Robison-Greene's argument is that she consistently qualifies her assertions with statements to the effect of (to give a generalized paraphrase), "if IVM is enacted ethically..." without providing substantial rumination on how likely it may be that IVM will be produced, sold, distributed, marketed, or consumed ethically. While Robison-Greene does briefly consider the possibility that IVM may be ultimately unethical, she provides little substance as to why she thinks it *could* be ethical. She admits businesses will only look out for themselves and their profit (p. 52). She also notes major structural problems with scaling the industry to create cheap enough products to compete with factory farmed meat (p. 6). Yet, she dismisses such concerns as no reason to not support IVM because the *potential* (which is entirely theoretical at this point, a point Robison-Greene fails to make clear) benefits outweigh the current negatives. Again, from a strictly ethical perspective, I agree. But this is a very difficult claim to defend based on all the unknowns about IVM and human behavior (for example, we don't know how many people will even want to try it, let alone largely replace traditional meat with it). There very well may be structural limitations to the ability of IVM to achieve appropriate levels of scale in production to bring the price down to what people may be willing to purchase—if they're willing to purchase it. Discomfort with "artificial" meat (such as a "yuck factor"), accessibility (as in price or geographic availability), ideology (such as aligning "true" meat with masculinity, patriotism, etc., as is common in the U.S.) or health reasons may turn people off from trying IVM. These are all things Robison-Greene does not adequately consider, or does not consider at all. Instead, Robison-Greene says that people should get over their issues with "unnatural" or unfamiliar foods based on philosophical arguments that deal with literal edibility based on biological capabilities.

Her main argument is that people should change their conception of "edibility" from one based on personal tastes (as in, for example, "I don't like broccoli so it's 'inedible'") to one based on what is literally in/edible. In her words: "My thesis is that the consumption of flesh itself is morally neutral. That is, there is nothing about the flesh that makes it morally wrong to consume" (p. 100). Yes, but matters of taste and foodways are social issues, things that philosophers are often not very good at taking stock of (even Alvaro doesn't do this very well in his promotion of raw veganism, something I have also critiqued Alvaro for, see Poirier 2020). Notice

Robison-Green's focus on the morality of flesh consumption, not its attendant and inseparable social roles and symbolism. Indeed, Robison-Greene does not offer mechanisms by which people can change their attitudes. If this were easy, then perhaps convincing people to go vegetarian would be easier and viewed as viable by Robison-Greene in the first place. Many IVM stakeholders have made it clear that they do not see—nor necessarily desire—animal agriculture being eliminated. Instead, the dominant pro-IVM discourse is to work with animal agriculture to help feed a growing population without significantly disrupting current animal consumption (Poirier, 2021).

Another very practical, non-ideal situation Robison-Greene uncritically discounts by giving virtually no time and space to is the criminalizing of activists who record the goings-on in slaughterhouses and farms. She says animal agriculture should be held to standards that include full transparency, but the trend is the opposite. More and more, animal agriculture is moving to criminalize—more and more harshly—such instances. I think it is a big error concerning Robison-Green's argument because she argues for transparency yet current attempts at transparency are being increasingly criminalized. To suggest full transparency but completely overlook how such transparency is being criminalized is a big problem. Therefore, if we view this situation realistically, we can see that changing consumer behavior does not seem to fit within a non-ideal approach any more than veganism does. Again, Robison-Greene's suggested solution is too simple from a social perspective.

In short, this book is only convincing if the reader is willing to overlook a host of important, fundamental points that go beyond ethics (yet are not wholly detached from ethics—e.g., for a host of social reasons, I consider it unethical to work with animal agriculture to help them stay in business producing animal products in exchange for also producing IVM). As mentioned above, Robison-Green either overlooks or discounts the difference between the *potential* of IVM and how it is currently *actually* being produced and how this may influence the likely future trajectory, the difficulty of convincing people to change their eating habits or attitudes towards foods (which is often rooted deeply in culture and not ethics per se), the corruption of animal agriculture in complicity with politicians in terms of transparency, or the point that ideal and non-ideal theory are not entirely incompatible. Taking an ethics-only view blinds one to social factors that are or may be at play. These include institutional collusion between corporations, politicians, the armed services, and animal agriculture (what sociologist C.

Wright Mills (1956) called the “power elite”) in shaping public attitudes. It is, frankly, annoying and disconcerting that philosophers do not mention the necessary limits of their own approaches, such as those just listed above.

Non-ideal theory does not work as an argument to *support* IVM. It may be an argument to *tolerate* it, *if IVM can be produced ethically*. But this seems highly unlikely given mainstream pro-IVM rhetoric (Poirier, 2021), if it can even be produced at a low enough price to be widely affordable. This is currently a big unknown in the IVM “industry.” I find Robison-Green’s arguments unconvincing to support IVM as they are too narrow. I understand Robison-Green’s pessimism (and it must be pessimism to insist that nowhere near the needed number of people are going to act “ideally”). I understand the choice of non-ideal theory as a framework but do not think it is enough. This is the main criticism of my review because many of Robison-Green’s suggested solutions are underdeveloped to the point of seeming naïve. One should not simply put forward solutions without also laying out how those solutions are to be achieved. This is the major shortcoming of an ethics-only approach: ethics suggests the outcomes but cannot necessarily address what steps should be taken to achieve them. I even further agree with Robison-Green that enough people will never become vegetarian or vegan to make the changes the planet needs. But I also do not support IVM and will readily admit the future doesn’t look good because of this. Nevertheless, I will continue to encourage people to do the ideal thing and become vegan, regardless of the perceived feasibility of this. I will not settle for partial measures. When both the ideal and non-ideal seem destined to be similarly ineffective, I will always choose the ideal.

References

- Alvaro, C. (2019). *Ethical veganism, virtue ethics, and the great soul*. Lexington Books.
- Alvaro, C. (2020). *Raw veganism: The philosophy of the human diet*.
- Mills, C. Wright. 1956. *The power elite*. Oxford University Press.
- Poirier, Nathan. 2020. Review of *Raw veganism: The philosophy of the human diet*. *Trace: Journal for Human-Animal Studies*, 6, 98-100.
- Poirier, N. (2021). Alternative animal products: Protection rhetoric or a protection racket? *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 18(3), 27-54.

Book Review: Tyler, Tom. 2022. *Game. Animals, Video Games, and Humanity*. University of Minnesota Press.

Emelia Quinn

e.j.quinn@uva.nl

Tom Tyler's *Game* (2022) is not a conventional academic monograph. In its subject matter, Tyler's focus on video games engages a corpus that, despite the rise of game studies over the last few decades, can often face snobbery and ridicule in the academy, seen as unworthy of serious critical attention. *Game* also resists any easy disciplinary pigeon-holing. As Tyler notes, the book draws not only on video games but on sources as varied as "encyclopedias, classical mythology and medieval fables, literary fiction and film, a regional newspaper, memoirs, poetry, Edwardian comedy and Shakespearean tragedy, contemporary art, musical nomenclature, theological tracts, ethology, entomology, ichthyology, primatology, ecological and environmental studies, hunting and fishing manuals, sitcoms and the works of philosophy" (p. 6). Breaking disciplinary bounds, *Game* is as much an analysis of video games as it is a work of animal studies and critical animal studies (and the distinction between the two is, as I detail below, helpfully challenged in the book's final chapter). It might also be categorized as a reflection on language and etymology.

In addition to its subject matter, *Game* resists the conventions of the academic monograph in its form. Rather than a handful of expository chapters following an overarching argumentative thread, it comprises thirteen free-standing essays offering varied reflections on nonhuman animals and video games. It also seems to break the rules of academic copyright and the endless compulsion for new material required by academic publishers: nine of the thirteen chapters have been previously published elsewhere (across the period from 2013 to 2019). But perhaps most unconventional of all, and most interesting to readers of the present journal, is that, despite all appearances, *Game* is a work of unapologetically vegan proselytizing that enacts new ways of introducing unsuspecting readers to animal rights discourse.

Each of the book's chapters follow a similar premise: take a game (or two or three) and use it as an entry point to explore broader questions about animals, humans, and language. In chapter one, "Game," Tyler offers the reader three senses of the titular "game": as a form of entertainment or pastime (to play a game), as related to hunting and the wild animals hunted (game birds); and as an attitude of being willing to try something new (to be

game for). Through this short interrogation of the term, he introduces the book's key themes. He presents, for instance, the theme of language and the playful interest in etymology and definitions that runs throughout the book. *Game* shows us how playing with language and its slippery nature can open up new connections and ways of thinking about our relationship with nonhuman animals. Playing with the word "game" also demonstrates that games and animals have a surprising linguistic link and opens us to the possibility that just as in Claude Lévi-Strauss's famous terms, animals are "good to think" (1969, p. 162), games may also be good to think (with). The proceeding chapters offer demonstrations of how, through thinking with games, we might engage differently with nonhuman animals. Tyler encourages us to be game for the challenge of doing so.

Chapter two, "A Singular of Boars," turns to the meanings of "virtual" in the context of games involving virtual pets before considering the collective names for groups of animals. Tyler plays with the possibilities for thought attached to the supposed collective name "a singular of boars" from the 1486 *Book of Saint Albans*. Via the wild boar antagonists of the game *Titan Quest* (Iron Lore Entertainment, 2006), he then unpacks Jacques Derrida's work in *The Animal That Therefore I Am* (2008). This chapter, and arguably the book as a whole, seems aimed at those largely unfamiliar with the major texts and theories that have been foundational to the growth of animal studies over the past few decades and offers a textual introduction for video game scholars looking to think with animals. This chapter would therefore also work well as an introductory text for those teaching animal studies courses: presenting undergraduates with a clear and accessible entry point into complex animal theory. Chapter three offers a similarly helpful teaching tool, focusing on the "Smellovision" of the video game *Dog's Life* (Frontier Developments, 2003) to provide a concise and accessible introduction to Jakob von Uexküll's concept of *Umwelt* and its relevance for thinking about our limited access to how different animals perceive the world, as well as for exposing us to the "anthroponormativity" of our human perspectives.

The two chapters that follow offer less in the way of animal theory and remain on the surface of language play. In chapter four, "Enumerating Ruminants," Tyler turns, for example, to the multiple meanings of the word "ruminant," and its distinction from "enumeration," to think about the reworked, endlessly ruminated games of Jeff Minter. Chapter five, "An Inkling," is, at three pages in length, the shortest of the volume and offers a playful reflection on the etymology of the word "inking," and the emergence in the game *Splatoon* (Nintendo, 2015), of a choice of playing characters who embody both the juvenile associations of the suffix "ling" (in the form of pre-teens) and the sense of those who dabble in ink (in the form of a squid).

Chapter six returns to a concrete text of animal theory, with Tyler utilizing the genre of endless runner game genres to draw out the significance

of Val Plumwood's essay "Being Prey" (1996), now a foundational work in animal studies and ecofeminism. While many popular video games often play with the idea of human beings as prey, as edible, the repeat-to-win structure of most games means that eventual human triumph over adversaries is inevitable. Tyler notes that endless runner game genres, by contrast, have an infinite play area. While the number of runners is also seemingly infinite, the game is impossible to win in any conventional sense since it will always end in their death. Building on Malcolm Bull's definition of "reading like a loser," Tyler here offers a conception of "playing like a loser," a mode of playing that aligns with Plumwood's work by positioning us *as* prey. This is one of the most compelling chapters of the volume, offering the *inklings* of a much larger project that would consider what it means to reconceive the human and how we might do so. The value of Tyler's work here is its incentive for further thought. He does not overwhelm the reader with numerous theoretical intersections but leaves us to *ruminate* on the concepts and play with their possibilities ourselves (I found myself thinking throughout, for instance, about how Jack Halberstam's [2011] work on queerness and failure would be fruitful for exploring these ideas further).

The theme of losing as a potentially productive way of breaking down human exceptionalism is further developed in chapter seven, "A Thing Worth Doing," which reflects on the virtues of doing things badly. In this chapter, Tyler considers the game *Ridiculous Fishing* (Vlambeer, 2013) to promote the ethical possibilities of such games, which allow us to fish as a means of entertaining respite while not denying the pleasurable lives of fish themselves and their own proven desire for play. Tyler's ethical animal perspective is on full display here, reflecting on the cruelties of angling and concluding with the abolitionist possibility that virtual fishing is "the only fishing worth doing" (2022, p. 64).

As if gradually building the intensity of his animal rights messaging with each chapter, chapter eight, "Cows, Clicks, Ciphers, and Satire," offers an extended exegesis of the cruelties faced by dairy cows (p. 71). This is a familiar animal rights message that draws on Carol J. Adams's (1990) much-cited concept of the "absent referent" but is rendered secondary to Tyler's exposition of critiques of the game *FarmVille* (Zynga, 2009) and its satirical counterpart *Cow Clicker* (Bogost, 2010), drawing attention to how social media games risk turning friendships into transactional exchanges and erode user time. Like chapter two, this chapter appears to be specifically aimed at those without a background in animal studies, to whom the horrendous suffering experienced by industrially farmed dairy cows may come as, at least partially, a surprise revelation. The role of the cow in *Cow Clicker* is rendered incidental to the fascinating history of the game and Tyler's consideration of the unwitting satire of such social games and their enmeshment in late capitalism. And yet, those interested in this video game

analysis cannot escape the chapter without some knowledge of the animal suffering similarly enmeshed in late capitalist production structures.

Chapter nine considers Matthew Calarco's concept of "indistinction," a leveling of the human and animal that allows us to see that we are all mere edible flesh and yet also much more than flesh. Turning to the video game character "Meat Boy" of *Super Meat Boy* (Team Meat, 2010) and PETA's response in the form of *Super Tofu Boy* (MCM Net, 2010), Tyler considers the various meanings of meat and how playing with its meanings offers possibilities to view ourselves differently. Chapter ten turns to the etymological history of the exclamatory term "bullshit," a history that, in the various false speculations as to bullshit's origin, is humorously declared to be, in itself, bullshit. This musing on bullshit ultimately leads to a final proclamation of the need for vehemence in our condemnation of animal cruelty, where to be anything other than passionate about animal injustice would be "total BS" (p. 105). As befits the book, what first reads as a playful game with language becomes a serious commentary on our ethical investments.

In chapter eleven, the word "pathology" as both pathological and pathogen, allows for a rethinking of the concept of misanthropy. For me, this is one of the book's most thought-provoking chapters, responding to a growing climate of misanthropic thought in contemporary culture. Tyler observes that misanthropy has always required a human subject, a pathological hating of oneself. Turning to the video game *Plague Inc.*, Tyler considers what a misanthropy without humanity would look like and what it would mean to play a game as a pathogen that will wipe out humanity (in a distinctly non-pathological sense). This gaming with misanthropy opens up new lines of thought for thinking about the difficulties and ambiguities of the misanthropic position and how misanthropy works against itself to bolster the centrality of the human.

The final two chapters of the volume are significantly longer than those preceding them. In chapter twelve, "Difficulties," Tyler questions the idea of the "everyman" and its assumptions of normative humanity via consideration of the difficulty settings of *Half Life 2* (Valve, 2004): offering playing options of easy, normal, or hard. Reflecting first on the question of the everyman, of the implied reader and implied gamer, and the inherent exclusionary nature of games, Tyler then turns to games produced for captive or domestic animals and examples of different species playing games not explicitly designed for them. He concludes with a call for an expansion of the everyman and implied player but also of the need, in an overt critique of animal captivity, for the freedom to not be subjected to playing games.

In this varied volume, the final chapter, "Trojan Horses," provides the cheat code to the overarching message of *Game*. CAS scholars may be interested in the succinct summaries of critical responses to Donna Haraway's disparaging remarks about veganism. However, most important

for CAS scholars is what this chapter does to our conception of the book as a whole. Thinking about how vegans argue in favor of the cause, Tyler uses the metaphor of a trojan horse game to promote the importance of texts that contain latent vegan messages rather than outright defenses. Building on insights from Christian apologetics, Tyler suggests that outright defense appears to be a less effective and less convincing way of spreading the vegan message since it positions the debate of vegan ethics as already on contested ground. Coining the term “vejan” to describe texts that function as veritable trojan horses in their penetration of carnist defenses, Tyler proposes the following speculative example of a vejan text: “An essay might examine, for instance, the wit of *Cow Clicker* (Bogost, 2010), a working video game parody of the social network game *Farmville* (Zynga, 2009) before exploring how *Cow Clicker*’s satire highlights not just the inanity of *FarmVille*’s gameplay, but the paucity of its depictions of dairy cows’ punishing existence” (2022, p. 150). This wry admission alerts us then to how all of the book’s essays thus far can constitute vejan texts, sneaking in a vegan defense where it is not expected nor seen as a direct defense. The book then meets the ideal criteria Tyler posits: “a vegan perspective is not introduced by means of a frontal assault, but rather snuck in undercover, before emerging, impenitent and assured, to shake and trouble” (p. 150).

The “Trojan Horses” chapter also draws to the fore the premises that have led to developing the distinct field of critical animal studies. As several critics have noted, CAS is concerned with moving beyond the abstract “question of the animal” to consider the *animal’s condition* (Taylor and Twine, 2014, p. 1). This distinction between abstract questioning and real-world conditions is one that, according to Helena Pederson and Vasile Stanescu, positions CAS in “profound *opposition*” (2014, p. 262, emphasis in original) to animal studies. I suggest that what Tyler deftly demonstrates in *Game* is that such an opposition is perhaps counter-productive since the question of the animal can, and indeed often does, lead us in important ways to considerations of the animal’s condition. For Tyler, sneaking political and ethical considerations of the latter into the former may even be the most effective way of allowing our activism to reach a broader readership, a readership for whom CAS’s often provocative work would be an ineffective form of vegan apologetics. CAS has long been interested in the coming together of activism and scholarship and forcefully critiquing what is seen as the abstraction of conventional animal studies scholarship. Tyler demonstrates, by contrast, what such abstract play with language and games has to contribute to ethical vegan commitments and political action.

To return, by way of conclusion, to my opening assertion that Tyler’s book is not a conventional academic monograph, it is worth noting that on the level of readerly experience, *Game* disrupts expectations of the difficulty of the scholarly monograph, requiring extended periods of sustained concentration. Tyler’s text is, instead, highly readable, with accessible prose

and a light tone. Like many of the games Tyler analyzes, it is a book that could be read during a morning commute or as a means of weekend relaxation. The tone of the book also comes to mirror the evident fun that Tyler has playing games: offering his reader engaging digressions, encouraging them to find their own threads to follow across the chapters, speaking to a diverse range of readers (mirroring his assertion, in chapter twelve, of the need to expand and diversify the implied player of games), and offering up surprise twists. All of this makes the book itself a work of playful entertainment. That *Game* also provides us with highly astute cultural observations and significant pathways for further thought, functions to prove the overarching message of the book: that games can be, and are, good to think with and that such playful thinking can be an important way to rethink our relation to the world and the nonhuman animals with whom we share it.

References

- Adams, C. J. (2015). *The sexual politics of meat: A feminist vegetarian critical theory*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Cooper, D. E. (2018). *Animals and misanthropy*. Routledge.
- Derrida, J. (2008). *The animal that therefore I am*. Fordham University Press.
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The queer art of failure*. Duke University Press.
- Lévi-Strauss, C. (1969). *Totemism* (R. Needham, Trans.). Penguin.
- Pederson, H., & V. Stanesco. (2014). "Conclusion: Future directions for critical animal studies." In N. Taylor & R. Twine (Eds.), *The rise of critical animal studies* (pp. 262-76). Routledge.
- Taylor, N., & R. Twine. (2014). Introduction. Locating the 'critical' in critical animal studies. In N. Taylor & R. Twine (Eds.), *The rise of critical animal studies: From the Margins to the centre*, pp. 1-15. Routledge.
- Tyler, T. (2022). *Game. Animals, video games, and humanity*. University of Minnesota Press.

Book Review: Best, S. (2014). *The politics of Total Liberation: Revolution for the 21st century*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Juan Jose Ponce León

Juan.ponce.leon.psicologo@gmail.com

This review of Steven Best's book discusses the principal points of his theory of the politics of total liberation and particularly the political-ontological and strategic-military proposal of the 'animal point of view,' summarizing his criticisms both of animal advocacy theory and the Left, and stressing the urgent need for a mutual encounter.

Outline of *The Politics of Total Liberation*

The six chapters of this book discuss perspectives of total liberation, human, animal and of the Earth, theoretically and politically interweaving social justice, the animal issue, and the defense of nature. Best points up the political urgency of a total revolution within the framework of the ecological crisis of the 21st century: "climate change, the sixth great extinction crisis in earth's history, resource scarcity, global capitalism, aggressive neoliberalism, economic crashes, increasing centralization of power, rampant militarism, chronic warfare, and suffering and struggle everywhere..." (xiii).

Best criticizes the political action and social movements of the Left for being fragmentary, weak, and regressive, not including the point of view of non-human animals in the historical horizons of their struggle. He situates the roots of this oppression in the context of the capitalist system, of neoliberalism, and a society based on intensive agriculture. Although some environmental and social justice movements have linked together, they have omitted animal advocacy from their alliances. The politics of alliances within the Left needs to be challenged by animal advocacy with the political objective of overcoming the historical humanist alienation about other animals and to the Earth. The author seems to conceive of the Left as a homogeneous and reified whole. In this text, I will refer to the Left of humanist tendency. Best believes "politics for this century ... will not focus solely on class struggle of fragmented identity politics pursued along single-issue lines concerning race, gender, sexual orientation, and so forth" (xii).

The radical politics of Total Liberation seeks to update the programmatic objectives of the social struggles of this century, by showing the analogy of the roots of oppression, which do not exist in isolation but are deeply interconnected. It is a normative commitment to go beyond the partiality and separatist logic of social struggles, which involves the different Left movements interconnecting with each other through honest and respectful dialogue that seeks to point to common objectives against the transversal structures that oppress and dominate the subaltern sectors.

Chapter 1. The Animal Standpoint

The aim is to reread the historical, social, and political processes that have given origin to, developed, and perpetuated all kinds of domination from an animal point of view. This implies understanding that “the domination of human over nonhuman animals underpins the domination of humans over one another and over the natural world” (p. 1). The hierarchization of society began dislocating the human from the animal and from nature.

The animal point of view denounces the biased perspective of history, not only in its elitism, patriarchy and racism, but also in speciesism. The history of the West presupposes the superiority of the human over the animal, appealing to unique virtues such as rationality. This legitimizes the conception of nonhumans as means to human ends. The author’s proposal is nourished, on the one hand, by feminist standpoint theory, which reveals patriarchal domination, and, on the other, it is based on the Hegelian dialectic of the master and the slave, through which the oppression of a particular group is understood by turning the gaze on to the oppressed, as they have a privileged point of view that the oppressors do not have. This approach is similar to that of post-colonial theories and critical anti-racist theories that denounce colonial domination and racism as nodal axes of the origin of modernity and global capitalism. The author states that the animal standpoint reveals “important insights into the nature of social and ecological consequences of speciesism” (p. 3). In addition, it builds on foundations of the traditional Left that seeks to revisit history from the subaltern perspective, and not from that of the dominators. It is a commitment to animal history from below.

The history of humanity cannot be grasped without situating the role of non-human animals, as well as the metabolism of nature in society (p. 4). This implies recognizing: 1) *environmental determinism*, which rejects the

anthropocentric prejudice that understands society as exclusively human interaction and recognizes the role of nature within the fabric of society, and 2) *animal agency*, which, unlike environmental determinism, which reduces animals to part of natural history, recognizes the active and critical role of non-human animals in nature and in society. This means highlighting animal complexity in subjective, social, emotional, moral, and cultural terms. Animal agency, following Best, makes visible the will and desire of non-humans to free themselves, questioning *humanist supremacism*, which assumes “that only humans are conscious, self-directing and purposeful agents” (p. 5).

The author sees speciesism, from a co-evolutionary point of view, as constitutive of the origin of hierarchies. It is very difficult, Best continues, to imagine a human society without animal domestication, which “is a euphemism for a regime of exploitation, herding, confinement, coerced labor, hobbling, branding, ear cropping, and killing” (p. 7). The domestication of animals and plants gave rise to agricultural societies and, thus, to surplus production, population growth and social hierarchies (p. 8). Domestication and agricultural society generated a fragmented vision of humanity regarding its animality and the natural world. In addition, they accentuated the logic of conquest over the other. The human-animal dichotomy generated the division: nature-culture, rational-irrational, civilization-barbarism. Thus, animals became the measure of alterity. Animalization, understood as the consideration of certain human groups as “mere” animals, wild and primitive, particularly women, blacks, and people with functional diversity, was the result of inter-species domination. The de-humanization or sub-humanization of the other results from harm to animals. Domination between humans was rehearsed on non-humans. Therein lie the deep connections between speciesism and racism, sexism, colonialism, slavery, and labor exploitation.

To conclude, Best argues that the ethical dimension of the animal point of view entails redefining the notion of justice in an anti-speciesist mode. The moral character of society would be given by how non-human animals are regarded and treated. This justice perspective emphasizes relationships inter-species and relationships between humans and nature. Finally, the animal point of view implies reviewing the political strategies of resistance. This necessarily entails questioning the hegemonic dogmas around pacifism, since the animal point of view leads us to consider the situation of the victims and not that of the perpetrators. As the author says, “Instead of asking ourselves

if a course of action is legal, morally sanctioned, or palatable to public opinion, we can adopt the animal standpoint to ask: What would oppressed and tortured animals want us to do? What courses of action would they approve, and which would they condemn as inadequate and a betrayal?" (p. 15).

Chapter 2. The new abolitionism: Capitalism, Slavery, and Animal Liberation

Capitalism is denounced as a "system of slavery, exploitation, class division, inequality, violence and forced labor" which was strengthened through: 1) the labor force of millions of slaves from Africa and other latitudes, 2) an army of migrants, artisans, domestic workers, and the factory proletariat (p. 21). Over five centuries, various movements have resisted colonialism, slavery, and capitalism. In this historical context, the abolitionist movements in England and the United States consolidated. According to Best,

Although various slave markets still flourish and thrive today and the battle against racism, domination and exploitation is far from over, throughout the world a moral revolution has emerged, as society shifts from considering human to animal slaves and a new abolitionist movement seeking animal liberation emerges as a potential catalyst of significant social change. (pp. 22-23)

In 1830 the abolitionist movement in the United States was born. This articulated a radical critique of racism and slavery due to the dehumanization of the black population (...). "Slavery transforms a human subject into a physical object, a person into a commodity and thus reduced to a moveable form of ownership known as 'chattel,'" based on criteria as arbitrary as skin color (p. 25). This was considered inherently inhumane. Consequently, the author continues, abolitionists renounced all reformist approaches. Total and immediate emancipation was demanded. They did not seek that the slavers be kind to their slaves, but rather that the master and slave relationship be broken.

The abolitionist movement, according to Best, was broad and heterogeneous. In addition to the variety in its social composition, the strategies were also diverse. The most radical factions of abolitionism legitimized violence as self-defense through the logic of reciprocal violence (p. 26). Among other historical figures are William Lloyd Garrison,

Frederick Douglass, and David Walker. Black women, such as Sojourner Truth, played a central role in the movement. The Underground Railroad was one of the most important clandestine and illegal factions of abolitionism.

According to the author, in this historical relationship “leftists argue that it is a categorical fallacy to use discourse such as ‘slavery’ or ‘exploitation’ in reference to animals” (p. 29). The ontological dualism of the humanist Left distinguishes humans from other animals. Therefore, “animal slavery” or “animal holocaust” can be deeply offensive to the anthropocentrism of the Left. Still, Best argues, Marjorie Spiegel’s seminal book *The Dreaded Comparison* draws an analogy between animal and human slavery, drawing on the animalization of blacks by white Western civilization. Therefore, the new abolitionism does not seek to subordinate any exploited group, but to locate the similar roots of their exploitation. Speciesism, sexism and racism all configure false dichotomies of one group in relation to another and justify the differences in hierarchies. These systems are the basis of the capitalist economy, as they legitimize the use of oppressed groups as labor force, merchandise, and private property.

Steven Best considers that “the dichotomy should not be between humans and animals, but rather between sentient beings and non-sentient things (p. 36). That is the ontological and political premise of New Abolitionism, which lays its foundations in moral evolution and social transformation, seeking animal liberation and including human animals. This movement combats animal slavery and criticizes “the welfarist approach that seeks only to ameliorate, not eliminate, the institutions and practices of animal exploitation (p. 38). An example of this New Abolitionism is the Animal Liberation Front and the Earth Liberation Front, who fight animal exploitation through direct action, without resorting to the State or its institutions.

Finally, New Abolitionism distances itself from Gary Francione’s abolitionist veganism, which has proven reactionary. Despite widely criticizing neo-welfarism and animal ownership, his position falls into the logic of consumption, individualism, and the depoliticization of animal advocacy (p. 43). Rejecting violent action and civil disobedience, Francione extols education and moral suasion as the only legitimate methods. This position is installed in the dynamics of market consumption and does not question capitalism or the State. This abolitionist “pseudo-movement”, Best emphasizes, represents a “bourgeois white elitist, individualist, consumerist lifestyle veganism” (p. 46). It is pacifist and liberal veganism as a lifestyle,

and not as a radical political practice that includes direct action, mass confrontation, civil disobedience, and a politics of alliances.

The New Abolitionism, in contrast, assumes the multidimensional posture of total liberation that includes: 1) the defense of militant direct action, such as liberation and economic sabotage, 2) the radical critique of capitalism and the State, 3) the interrelation of the different forms of oppression, 4) the promotion of a politics of anti-capitalist alliances, 5) the overcoming of the limitations of “progressive” humanism, and the questioning of the politicized masses regarding the urgency of veganism and animal liberation to underpin human liberation (p. 49).

Chapter 3. The Paralysis of Pacifism: In Defense of Militant Direct Action

The author sees “pacifism as a problematic moral and political philosophy that perpetuates power relations and violence, in contradiction to its stated aims” (p. 52). He denounces the passive, timid, apolitical, and domesticated stances of contemporary veganism, and defends militant direct action as a contextual and pluralistic method. Therefore, he does not reject peaceful actions, nor does he seek to fetishize violence. Finally, he defends the principle of extending self-defense towards non-human animals.

According to Best, pacifism has degenerated and has acquired a negative connotation. The historical tradition of nonviolent civil disobedience of Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. has been forgotten or partially selected. It has been transformed from an approach oriented to action and non-violent active confrontation against oppression and injustice that operated in the public sphere, through protests, demonstrations, and civil disobedience, into a movement of mass consumption. Pacifism has become “passivism,” and the public sphere and agitation have been abandoned for “Facebook activism” and education. It is a consumer-centric approach, which emphasizes the dynamics of the market, and omits the problem of the State and corporations. According to the author, for this “liberal model, the solution is not institutional change and revolution, but consumer education with respect to veganism” (p. 55). In relation to this, Francione's fundamentalist approach rejects direct action and presupposes that education and moral persuasion are capable of impacting those who exploit animals. This ignores the power of speciesist propaganda and rather individualistically overvalues the rational and ethical dimension of social change. Ultimately,

pacifism responds to the privileges of “middle/upper class western liberals” (p. 59).

Steven Best goes on to question the caricatured and distorted view of violence, arguing that pacifists have internalized the language of the State and corporations, accusing those who opt for militant tactics of being “eco-terrorists” and “violent.” These accusations divert attention from what is truly violent, caused by the real “criminal forces, which are obscured by corporations, states, security agencies, mass media” (p. 60). That is, crimes against the life of animals, the earth, and peoples. Violence is exercised against sentient beings, not against private property.

He concludes the chapter with a challenge to form a post-pacifist politics that questions fundamentalism and the liberal “passivism” associated with pacifism. Best defends the method of militant direct action, taking the animal point of view as a reference. This means understanding that non-human animals would do everything possible, by any means, to defend their lives and free themselves from slavery and exploitation.

This implies assuming a pragmatic and contextual point of view on the use of violence as self-defense extended toward other animals and the Earth. This contextualist approach asks: “What tactic or combination of tactics is the most appropriate to a specific situation?” (p. 74). This means assuming the conditions of a total war, where the aim is 1) to cause the greatest possible damage to the exploiters, 2) to free the caged from their situation of captivity, torture, and death, and 3) to frustrate the assault on all forms of life through whatever means necessary. This method questions the usefulness of democracy, the State, institutions, and hegemonic avenues of political action, such as education, legislation, and even public demonstrations. The historical lessons of how the State and its apparatus operate in the service of capital are thus assumed. And in addition, it implies assuming animal liberation on one’s own account, and taking full responsibility for the attacks, blockades, sabotage, and any act that seeks to stop the prevailing biocide.

Chapter 4. Rethinking Revolution: Veganism, Animal Liberation, Ecology and the Left

Best analyzes the animal advocacy and environmental struggle as a place of rupture and criticism regarding “the reductionist class politics of the old Left, but also the anthropocentrism and humanism of the new Left and the new social movements as well” (p. 80). Animal liberation and the practice of veganism have challenged the speciesist and humanist dogmas of radical and

progressive leftist traditions. Despite the recognition of the intersectionality of oppression, and of the growing link between social justice and the defense of nature, there are no significant concrete efforts that unite the struggles for liberation of humans and the Earth with the movements for animal liberation. Best argues that “both the Left and animal advocacy movements have ignored each other at best, or expressed intense mutual disdain and hostility” but “each movement has much to learn from the other” (p. 81).

On the one hand, the criticism by the Left of hegemonic animal advocacy, in its legalistic, pacifist and particularist aspects, points out the naive vision they have of the State, which is just a structural criticism of the way in which the interests of capital operate. Welfarist animal advocacy and Francione’s abolitionism both criticize the historical practices of struggle and resistance of leftist movements: liberationism and tactics of boycott and sabotage. These two currents of animal advocacy, in practice, legitimize the State, capital and the market. In their myopic vision they omit class domination and struggle, and the problem of imperialism and neo-liberalism. According to the author, the particularism of the defense of animals is indifferent to or ignores other social struggles, and even many right-wing and conservative groups allege the defense of animals at the expense of human rights (p. 85). This is the well-known misanthropic perspective of animal advocacy. Animal advocacy, the author insists, has been co-opted by an elitist and privileged enclave that intensifies class oppression, while its reforms operate within the capitalist system and glorify market society. This type of animal advocacy is not recognized in the historical tradition of struggle of the working class and other subaltern sectors, but operates as a privileged class, thus permitting misanthropy and moral superiority.

In short, hegemonic animal advocacy omits the complex and structural dimension of the economy based on animal slavery, reinforces the system and legitimizes the myth of bourgeois democracy. At the same time, the waves of new age veganism, as well as spiritual animal advocacy, limit their experience to consumption and individual transformation. However, the main problem with the Left’s criticism of animal advocacy, emphasizes Best, is precisely the homogenized conception of the movement, as it omits the insurrectional, liberationist and anarchist factions of animal advocacy. In addition, the substantive contribution in terms of the normative horizons offered by animal advocacy to transform society is made invisible.

The historical horizon of animal liberation places humanist supremacism on a similar level to white supremacism and male privilege. Liberationist

animal advocacy questions, in cognitive and practical terms, the arbitrary division between the human and the non-human. This implies questioning all the social institutions that define animals as property, commodities, resources, and objects in the service of humans (p. 90). Thus, animal advocacy questions the Left for ignoring one of the most severe forms of exploitation and oppression on the planet: speciesism. The Left has been challenged about its anthropocentric positions, and for the hypocrisy of speciesist morality, which implies rejecting and denouncing domination, but forms part of it, through consumption of the dismembered bodies of non-human animals. Best denounces that products of animal origin are part of a production and consumption system, whose imperative of indefinite growth of capital is destroying the Earth, peoples and the animals (p. 92). In addition, agribusiness is the main cause of environmental destruction today. In this context, even though, from the seventies, the Left began to take the ecological issue into account, for example, through Bookchin's social environmentalism (p. 97), from the animal point of view the Left is regressive and reactionary in its humanist and speciesist dimension, since it is omitting one of the most severe problems of the capitalist system, interconnected with other forms of oppression.

Best concludes by stressing the need for both the Left and animal advocacy to feed into each other. Veganism and animal liberation provide a radical critique of society as a whole and question all forms of oppression, by situating speciesism as the nodular axis of domination. The Left can interrogate and update the apolitical, ahistorical, elitist, particularistic and misanthropic factions of a certain faction of animal advocacy. Consequently, animal liberation is not a sufficient condition for total revolution, but it is a necessary condition (p. 104).

Chapter 5. Minding the Animals: Cognitive Ethology and the Obsolescence of Left Humanism

Best questions the supposed exclusivity of the human. Based on technological advances, and by virtue of cognitive ethology, he challenges the ontological dualism of human and animal, starting from the question: what does it really mean to be human? He situates the concept of humanity as a social construction, and not as a biological determination. This implies that the paradigm of the identity construction of the species has been challenged by the ontological turn that is “post-anthropocentric, postspeciesist and post-humanist” (p. 108). Therefore, the ethics of respect

for all forms of sentient life, human and non-human, and the recognition of the Earth as a whole, conceptually and empirically subvert humanist supremacism. Such an ontological and epistemological failure situates the Western rationalism, anthropocentrism, and speciesism of the Left in a conservative and reactionary posture.

The author continues to outline the critique of humanism based on transhumanism, in terms of the new post-human condition of cyborg species. On this basis, he questions the ontological division between humans and machines, and between humans and other animals. In this context, anti-speciesism and biocentrism function as a device that allows the decentering of the human to continue.

In addition, he criticizes the supposed biological division in the evolutionary chain of *Homo sapiens* with respect to the rest of the animal species. Best argues that the chimpanzee human, taking up Jared Diamond, signifies the dislocation of the human from its place of exclusivity, placing it as the third chimpanzee (p. 121). In the subjective dimension, cognitive ethology contributes to the study of the complex nature of non-human animals, that is, the emotional, cognitive, linguistic, social and behavioral level. The reactionary responses to this branch of science accentuate “mechanism, dualism, behaviorism and speciesism,” denying the cultural expressions and deep meaning of other animals (p. 123).

Best concludes the chapter emphasizing the particularity of non-human animals in terms of specific abilities superior to those of humans and, in parallel, deepens the criticism of human and non-human difference as a programmatic justification for the subordination of the latter to the former. He ends by stating that, just as it took the Left about a century to assume the importance of the ecological question, it is essential, given the current context of ecological and social crisis, to begin to assume the animal point of view, by virtue of a radical cognitive and ethical change and in political horizon (p. 135).

Chapter 6. Moral Progress and the Struggle for Human Evolution

Best criticizes the modern notion of progress as “expansion of the human empire over animals and nature” (p. 137). The author also points out the subordinate place of “the ‘primitive,’ ‘savage,’ and ‘barbaric’ stages of pre-modern human existence for full-blown techno-scientific, mechanistic, and market-dominated societies” (p. 137). Consequently, he declares that “the discourse of progress helped to create and legitimate Eurocentrism,

colonialism, industrialism, capitalism, imperialism [and] consumerism” (p. 139). Progress is defined as the linear advance of history, developing in a desirable direction and toward permanent improvement. Many narratives of progress conceive the domestication of non-human animals and plants as a transit to be celebrated, because it allowed the leap from the “savage” to the “civilized” (pp. 140-141). Therefore, according to Best, any attempt to question modernity and criticize progress will have to be based on post-humanism, as a radical critique of anthropocentrism and speciesism. This is because progress denies animality, and omits or invalidates pre-modern forms of life, in terms of their conceptions of the world or other ontologies.

The above implies a movement from technique and domination toward nature. The humanism of the Enlightenment would be, in the opinion of the author, the secular version of the theological providential vision of history as domination over the Earth (p. 142). The predominance of instrumental reason in the “civilized” and “enlightened” world generated the technological and scientific development of animal domination through the processes of industrialization. Therefore, humanism is sustained by the slavery and extermination of the other animals on the planet: “from the animal and ecological standpoints, therefore, ‘progress’ is regress, science is sadism, humanism is barbarism, and the ‘light’ of Reason brings darkness and madness” (p. 147).

To conclude the chapter, Best argues that 1) human identity, philosophy, social theory, and ethics must transcend the limits of humanism, 2) progress, as it has been defined, must be deconstructed and reconstructed from a post-humanist, antispeciesist, non-linear historical perspective, and 3) there is a need for a “new universalism” (p. 152) and a “new enlightenment” whose moral progress subverts the domination, the hierarchies, and the dual conception that places the human over the rest of living beings; perspectives that will be problematized in the next section (p. 156). The aim of all of this is to generate a metastasis in the capitalist system, overthrow the division between humans and non-humans and expand the “new enlightenment” toward the entire community of other species, toward a “bio-community” (p. 158). To achieve this, given that capitalism cannot be humanized in its matrix that is inherently destructive toward humans, animals, and the Earth, a politics of total liberation is urgently needed that is capable of overcoming the fragmentation of the struggles and that seeks to bring down all forms of domination and hierarchy, without distinction of species.

Video Game Review: BlueTwelve Studio. (2022). *Stray* [Video game]. Annapurna Interactive and Herobeat Studios. (2022). *Endling: Extinction is Forever* [Video game]. HandyGames.

Richard Giles
regiles@uwaterloo.ca

Stray, developed by BlueTwelve Studios, has emerged as a critical hit, gaining positive reviews and winning numerous awards across various sources. Known as “the cat game,” it is a linear adventure game in which one plays as a cat who, alongside a small robot that houses a human consciousness, explores a cyberpunk city inhabited only by robots and fleshy, garbage-consuming monstrosities. The player’s goal is to find a way out of the city, achieved by running small errands for robots in need, progressing through various environments, and occasionally knocking different objects over between needling and randomly meowing. Despite running errands, the cat is not anthropomorphic; the dialogue comes from the world’s robots, and the cat can do many “cat things,” including naps in hard-to-find spots. Critics who have been more apprehensive of the game have used this contradiction – an errand-running cat without anthropomorphic features – to dismiss *Stray* as dependent on a gimmick that supposedly rejects the true nature of felines as both carefree and uncaring beings. As a result, these reviews tend to present the game as little more than an exercise in creating atmosphere and aesthetics through gimmicks. I argue that such framing dismisses the unique, posthumanist intentions of the game.

The existence of *Stray* is impressive; video games, as a medium, tend to represent animals as a resource that can be harvested by whatever violent means necessary for the player’s survival or success. There are few games in which the animal is not a resource and even fewer in which the animal is not also a metaphor; while *Okami* does have a wolf as its main character, the wolf is a figure of Japanese folklore rather than its own being. In games like *The Last Guardian*, the animal is introduced as a companion to a human being. *Stray* begins by singling out the cat in a large world, obligating the player to see and understand this animal as an animal without a lingering metaphor. The cat does not represent lost humanity – it is its own being. Even

when the cat meets its human-consciousness-companion, it is not anthropomorphized to understand this new partner suddenly; they both embark on the same adventure, but only one has thoughts communicable to the player. The cat is never even named.

John Berger famously argued that zoo animals are monuments to their own disappearance. In *Stray*, the cat emerges from this disappearance to become a monument to its reappearance. As the cat enters the city, the robots flee in panic, distressed at the sight of an alien being, until their leader reassures them that the cat is harmless. As the player learns, following the disappearance of human beings from this society, robots continued with the lives they were programmed to live; they also learned about human actions and society, mimicking certain aspects and disregarding others, all without seeing an animal in this enclosed world. Something they do not do is harm the cat; the cat is never in danger due to a robot, at least for reasons of its own animality (security robots will give anyone and everyone a hard time, regardless of who/what they are). *Stray* goes beyond representing the cat itself and asks difficult questions, even if they are left to be answered by the player on their own accord. In a society of artificial intelligence and robots who emulate human behavior but can make conscious decisions about what to replicate and disregard, would they internalize and rationalize violence towards animals? The game seems to argue no, which raises new questions – what drives human beings towards such violence against animals? Is it the biological drivers of hunger that a robot will never know or the cognitive dissonance of humanity which would not make sense to a robot programmed for basic logic? The game seems to, again, respond with “no,” as later on, one comes across robots in a bigger area of the city who drink oil and partake in human-esque crime and class struggle but do not go out of their way to hurt this cat. Whether consciously or not, the robots of this world have refuted speciesistic violence towards animals – the reasons implied but left open to interpretation.

The relationship between the cat and its human-consciousness-companion also tends towards a posthumanist functionality. While the companion may possess skills that the cat does not have, like opening doors and deciphering the text, they must work together across the species barrier to escape the city. This cooperation is especially posthuman as the human, in this pairing, does not have access to a traditional body, rendering it solely as a form of mind – the game ponders whether the human consciousness would hold consistently anthropocentric views of animals if the human body were

inaccessible. Regardless of intentionality, the game challenges the prioritization of mind and body, positing the possibility that one can be a being, capable of life, regardless of the expression of one's mind or body. *Stray* makes the case that, even if "animal is body and human is mind," progress can only be made with the cooperation of both therein; competition between the two cannot rectify the negative situations which affect them both. Such messaging is uncommon in gaming; games that test the player's propensity for committing violent actions, such as *Spec Ops: The Line*, do not necessarily envision what can come of cooperation between the subjects of the game. Even when the game does engage in some degree of anthropocentric categorization of animals – the companion does, at one point, envision living in a small cabin with the cat, using a harmless fishing rod for relaxation – the living being is still granted a life before and after the interaction with humanity, challenging the notion that anthropocentricity must be violent if it is to exist at all.

Stray is also unique in rejecting the "more-than-human" imagination of artificial intelligence and robotics proponents. Despite rejecting violence towards animals, the robots of this world continue with the oppression of other classes, the securitization of the state, and the solipsism of its individuals. They fail to overcome many of humanity's failures. Hence, the robots keep themselves enclosed within the city walls, which proves so dangerous to them, despite no one being in control anymore. The animal helps open the city and liberate the robots; the feline protagonist overcomes the failures of humanity and artificial intelligence. Some may argue that such a dynamic valorizes the animal over others. Yet, this argument neglects the possibility that the animal's success demonstrates the value of animalistic thinking or at least engaging with the animal's condition. So often, calls to "think like an animal" result in lamentations of the difficulty of thinking like an animal. *Stray* thinks like an animal by making its goal of reuniting the cat with its feline companions rather than maintaining social stratification, as the animal in no way benefits from the maintenance of anthropocentric hierarchies. While many video games make freedom the key goal of its human protagonists, here, freedom is something meant to be achieved by all – human, nonhuman, non-animal, non-biological – and can be perpetuated by those without the ability to write or read, and who may have nothing more than selfish goals. The artificial intelligence of this world, as a result, comes across as a failure. It might be able to do exciting and unique things and even have forms of emotion, but it does not overcome humanity. It might have

something to learn from animals and “animality.” Simultaneously, *Stray* also rejects the outright rejection of AI and robotics, which some advocate; neither inherently good nor evil, these entities, like all beings, are influenced by history and systems, their programming only overcome by conscious effort.

Stray has been critiqued for its simple gameplay; hitting the x button and exploring small environments is not particularly challenging. The game’s complexity arises in the background. Pondering massive questions and sometimes answering said questions in surprising ways, the developers have created a meditation on posthumanism, a rarity in modern entertainment. *Stray* is a confrontation with video gaming’s humanist bias. It obligates its players to consider the animal on its own accord in a world where human consciousness and robots cannot, or do not, automatically categorize the animal as a subject of violence. Whether players think deeply about the game is one matter – BlueTwelves Studios, regardless of its players or even the studio’s intentions, have developed a radical portrait of a posthuman world that requires cooperation. This posthumanism is treated critically so that even the game’s moments of more straightforward humanism are still cast in a critical light so that, underlying the slick aesthetics and lo-fi coziness is a pointed questioning of why animals are subject to such wide-scale, institutionalized, cognitively dissonant violence at human hands. *Stray* is worthy of inquiry into what video games can do for the representation of animals and ideologies surrounding animal life therein.

Endling Review

Endling – Extinction is Forever, developed by Herobeat Studios, follows the final mother fox on Earth, who must find one of her stolen cubs, raise her other cubs, and survive a world rapidly collapsing due to climate change and societal destabilization. Players must explore the world, feed themselves and their cubs, and avoid threats – both human and nonhuman – for 28 in-game days. The fox, much like *Stray*’s feline protagonist, is not anthropomorphic; she communicates in yelps, investigates by scent, and fights with her teeth and claws. The fox is not a metaphor. Though she may be an endling, this endling is literal, leaving the player (and viewer) to apply their own symbolism should they see fit. The game’s primary antagonist is not the trapper who steals – but eventually relinquishes – the missing cub, but a violent hunter who appears suddenly and pursues his desire with obsessive abandon. While *Endling* may be described in ways typical of adventure game

tropes, the game engages with posthumanism in considerably radical ways for a modern video game.

Though many independently developed games engage with societal collapse and environmental destruction themes, *Endling* is unflinching in its representation of a future under climate change. Normally healthy food loses nutritional value; climate refugees litter the land; water is increasingly poisoned. In the game's ending sequence, the sun burns bright, the solar panels and wind turbines collapse, and players are left with the clear idea that technology cannot save us from a climate that has been damaged too substantially for too long. Some may accuse the game of engaging in "climate doomerism," but *Endling* makes clear that the dangers which lie ahead cannot, and should not, be understated. Even if humans can overcome certain aspects of climate change, it has already proven too late for many animals and environments.

The game manages, however, to do something unique in its refutation of cliché, incessantly violent representations of "Darwinian nature" and "great chains of being" during times of crisis. The world of *Endling* is undeniably harsh but inconsistent. Some humans are cruel to you and your cubs; some are indifferent, and some will share food with you. While your fox can hunt in the game – and is incentivized to do so through the game's constantly depleting hunger meter – the player can consciously choose to leave animals alone, scrounging for garbage and any natural food left. The fox can also help other creatures in certain situations (specifically, a badger). Often, video games present nature as a relentlessly uncaring, cruel entity where everything is a threat. Herobeat Studios represents nature more realistically, where the wild's inhabitants may be inconsistent in their adherence to supposedly fixed practices, exercising agency in their daily lives. The game engages with cross-species and intra-species cooperation, which even Kropotkin failed to do in *Mutual Aid* by focusing solely on inter-species cooperation. This nuanced presentation of nature overcomes its supposedly "fixed" functionality, in which humans and animals are part of a reciprocal food chain, instead presenting life as difficult to predict, granting greater agency to animals and humans alike. The game offers an alternative to Val Plumwood's notion that, by nature's indifference to animals and humans, questions of the morality of meat consumption and violence towards animals are "anthropocentric separations from natural existence" (Pilgrim, 2013, p. 114); instead, all beings are part of a complicated, difficult-to-determine set of relationships and ethical dialogue, regardless of nature's indifference.

Endling's posthumanism also extends its critiques to the human treatment of animals, so much to veer back towards a certain humanism. The game's ending sequence is particularly powerful; the mother fox and her cubs go through a desolate desert landscape, eventually coming to a giant fence. As she digs a tunnel, the hunter re-emerges, using his last bullet to shoot the fox. However, she is able, along with her cubs, to get under the fence, leaving the hunter with no bullet and no meat. On the other side of the fence, the woodlands are the mother fox's final resting place and will presumably be the home for her cubs. This sequence is powerful in its questioning of violence towards animals. Even if the hunter could turn the fox into meat, what point would there be to such suffering, especially the suffering of her mourning cubs? In a collapsing world with no discernible prospects, the game demands players to ask why one's continued existence should come at the expense of the suffering of others, a bold question for a game that engages with surviving in a rugged, cruel "nature."

The game's posthumanism is seen clearly in representing the results of violence towards animals in unwavering, compassionate terms; it engages in a unique hybrid of humanism and posthumanism by contemplating whether human beings should either understand themselves differently in their relationship to the animal world or should outright separate themselves, by their abilities and differences, from the "natural order." Posthumanism does not mean erasing human beings but a far more critical engagement with anthropocentrism and human action. *Endling* does make the case that humans are doing the damage and probably cannot fix the damage by how they live; it uses a certain humanist orientation to prevent players from pretending to "return to the natural order" in accepting this line of thought, instead making the case that humans should potentially settle for a greater degree of suffering, in a climate-ravaged future, to minimize the suffering of others in the overall realm of existence. *Endling* refuses the tendency to use societal collapse as a reason to forego ethical and moral reasoning, discourse, and consideration, a bold choice that sticks out in a medium in which climate change and societal collapse are presented in such nihilistic terms that, eventually, "anything will go," and individual survival trumps all.

The game's ending does leave some ambiguity – who erected this fence and maintained the forest within it? Are these people/institutions we are to depend on in a climate-change-riddled future? Some may use this ambiguity to dismiss the game's posthuman tendencies. Still, I argue that the ambiguity is purposeful, prompting players to, as Žižek (2023) argues, "perceive the

catastrophe as our fate, as unavoidable, and then, projecting ourselves into it, adopting its standpoint, we should retroactively insert into its past (the past of the future) counterfactual possibilities... on which we can act today.” What if there are no humans in this fenced-off area? What if that is, by design, an area left to (attempt) to prosper while its designers remain outside of the fence? The difficulties in determining who erected the fence reflect modern environmentalism’s failure to directly engage with the inability to overcome the material and immaterial functionality of human beings and their domination of the environment. Environmentalism has not just failed because of “the system,” but because of its inability to answer basic questions about how to build a new world.

Endling, released around the time of *Stray*, represents another achievement in the representation of animals in video games, telling a non-anthropomorphic story that critically questions human perceptions of, and actions towards, animals and the animal condition in general. Though the game has evident compassion for all living beings, it does not render animals as lesser or greater, but instead, as individuals and groups caught in the trap of their biological manifestation and the natural, indifferent world. Importantly, though, the game makes a radical case to move away from the pleasure principle of utilitarian thought, if not for any reason other than the inability to find pleasure in a world decimated by climate disaster. The developers prod players to consider who determines one’s suffering and whether suffering should be lessened at the expense of dignity and ethics. Pleasure, in the game, is present only in the context of eventual suffering, a more accurate portrayal of existence than typically offered in utilitarian thought. The game’s messaging may not be welcome to those who believe that there is still a way out of the climate crisis – one funded by the primary perpetrators of climate change – but it demands thinking which may be necessary sooner than one wants. Even if one discards the environmental messaging, there is merit in the game’s refutation of anthropocentric understandings of animals. There is an additional ending, in which the fox’s cubs are adopted by the badger you can choose to save earlier in the game, engaging with the intra- and cross-species ambiguities of animal life one final time, asking the player to overcome their usual ways of thinking about animal life. Like *Stray*, *Endling* deserves analysis for its innovation in a narrative, especially in a medium often dismissive of animals as anything other than fodder.

References

- Berger, J. (2009). *Why look at animals?* Penguin Books.
- Pilgrim, K. (2013). 'Happy Cows,' 'Happy Beef:' A critique of the rationales for ethical meat. *Environmental Humanities*, 3, 111-127.
- Žižek, S. (2023, January 17). What lies ahead? *Jacobin*.
<https://jacobin.com/2023/01/slavoj-zizek-time-future-history-catastrophe-emancipation>.

Poem: Six Poems About what we Eat

Lisa Kemmerer

lkemmerer@msubillings.edu

Pantanal Piranha

In a bluish boat on a brown river,
visitors in bright blouses and khaki shorts
peer through bulky binoculars,
 pointing at purple plumes
 and knobby orange knees
before steering to wider waters
 where they dangle rattan rods
 rigged with beguiling barbs.

A fierce pull hoists a frightened fish
 (notorious for tearing teeth),
who has snatched a death-catch
 that slips between incisors
 and out through an eye.

Gasps and squeals of surprise and delight
 supplant the gentle lapping of liquid
 as I turn my back,
wondering why we are so willfully unaware
 of what is blatantly clear
 in a fish's eye.

Thicker than Water

Platelets and cells
course thick and warm
through tiny tunnels
that wend and weave
 through wombat
 and yellow-wattled bulbul,
bluefish
 and black angus,

 reminding that
 blood binds.

August Prairie

I caught a whiff of water-waders—
humid hide, bawdy breath,
fermented seed of desert weed—
 four friends
on the fringe of Culter Creek,
 cooling their clovens.

Third Thursday (In the United States, Thanksgiving Day)

Sinews of last summer's sunflowers
 stood silent,
 contorted,
 and colorless,
as we walked the prairies
 of golden-gone grass,
 sharing thoughts.

Across the creek,
 we noticed our neighbors—
 also walking—
though they went along
 under a sheen of shiny black feathers,
 quietly clucking.

November was slipping by
 while all of us traipsed
 over stubbled slopes
 on long legs
 with knobbed knees,
 talking the time
 as we traveled.

So Politely and Nimble

They say you cradle creation,
but I think you cannot stand
to hold in hand
such senseless suffering
as we deliver daily
 to the downtrodden,
as we bring to bear
 on innocents of field and forest—

like those luckless lambs
 (of God)
we so politely and nimbly
pierce with petite points
 (after a brief blessing),
 chattering as we chew.

Anatomy

No fangs to fell,
 no claws to cleave—
suited for growing greens,
 tugging at tubers,
 and wrapping long limbs
 around loved ones.

This short poem was inspired by Wilfred Owen's "Arms and the Boy," in which he describes the ugly of war. In the last stanza Owens states that we should not shoot at a boy/man who has "no claws behind his fingers supple; / And God will grow no talons at his heels, / Nor antlers through the thickness of his curls." Here Owens seems to suggest that, while wrong to shoot at young men in arms, we rightly shoot those with claws, talons, and antlers. Why do we need to be shooting anyone?

Poem: Queering Animal Law, A Haiku Series

Sam Skinner

SamanthaSkinner@Osgoode.Yorku.ca

Animals don't care
What categories we use
In advocacy.

For rights and welfare,
Property and personhood
Are meaningless words.

I guess, so are laws.
Just words written on paper.
So, categorize,

But responsibly;
Intentional Strategic
Essentialism.

No more collapsing
Such respectable beings
Into binaries.

Dichotomies like
Sentient/Insentient,
Human/Animal,

Free moving or not,
Citizen or sovereign,
Are far too narrow.

We open doors by
Learning the double movement.*
Grouping animals

In ways that advance
Their political movement
When necessary,

Such as Fur-Bearers,
Animal Labourers, or
Research Animals.

Such advocacy -
Based on Queer Legal Theory -
Can be successful.

*The phrase “learning the double movement” comes from Judith Butler’s *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York & London: Routledge, 1993).

Author Biographies

Olatz Aranceta-Reboredo is a Ph.D. candidate and researcher in the Department of Communication at Pompeu Fabra University (UPF), a member of the CRITICC research group, the COMPASS project, and the UPF-Centre for Animal Ethics. Their research areas include critical animal studies, interest groups, and the representation of animals in media

Samantha Baugus works in critical animal studies, ecocriticism, science fiction and fantasy literature. She received her Ph.D. from the University of Florida August 2022.

Ricardo Borges Rodrigues is Assistant Professor at Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE), and integrated researcher at CIS-Iscte. With a PhD in Social and Organizational Psychology, he conducts research and intervention in the area of intergroup relations in childhood and adolescence, namely on processes of racial, ethnic, and gender-based inclusion and exclusion in educational contexts. Director of the Master in Psychology of Intercultural Relations and academic vice coordinator at Iscte of the Erasmus Mundus Global Mobility, Inclusion and Diversity in Society (Global-Minds).

Solomon Davis lives in the Pacific Northwest. Vegan. Forklift driver. Adjunct. Recently published in *Entropy*.

Richard Giles, Ph.D. recently completed his Doctor of Philosophy in Social and Ecological Sustainability at the University of Waterloo. He is currently trying to find employment while working on larger volumes of writing.

Lisa Kemmerer, Ph.D. is internationally known for her focus on animals, nature, and disempowered human beings in the field of ethics, professor emeritus. Dr. Lisa Kemmerer is founder and director of the educational non-profit, Tapestry (vegantapestry.org). Kemmerer has authored many articles, anthology chapters, and books including *Vegan Ethics: AMORE—5 Reasons to Choose Vegan*; *Animals and World Religions*; *Sister Species: Women, Animals, and Social Justice*; *Eating Earth: Environmental Ethics*

and *Dietary Choice*; and two 2023 poetry chapbooks with Finishingline Press, *Affinity* and *Waterways*.

E. C. Mason is a poet, writer, and Ph.D. candidate at Uppsala University, Sweden. He is the author of *Building Black: Towards Antiracist Architecture* (2022), and *The Instagram Archipelago: Race, Gender, and the Lives of Dead Fish* (2022), as well as two collections of poetry. His essays and poems are widely published. With his group Penny Drops Collective, he has organized many exhibitions, performances, and talks. pennydropscollective.org.

Talitha May, Ph.D. is an adjunct assistant professor at Portland State University, where she teaches rhetoric and writing.

Dusan Pajovic

Nathan Poirier is a professional tutor at Lansing Community College who has spent much time studying and critiquing in vitro meat from vegan and critical animal studies perspectives. Nathan also has graduate specializations in (critical) animal studies and women's & gender studies. Nathan was co-organizer for Students for Critical Animal Studies from 2019- 2023, and co-edited the book *Emerging New Voices in Critical Animal Studies: Vegan Studies for Total Liberation*.

Juan Jose Ponce León is a Ph.D. candidate at Universidad Autónoma de Madrid. He is a researcher of Instituto Latinoamericano de Estudios Críticos Animales (ILECA), and part of the editorial staff of Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios Críticos Animales (RLECA). Juan Jo has authored many articles, including: *Animalist self-ethnography: multispecies perspectives on the political subjectivation of veganism; New abolitionism or popular veganism? The issue of Total Liberation Politics and its modern-colonial vestiges; Genesis of animalist subjectivities: emotions, bodies and relationships inter-species; Animalist Subjectivity: A Perspective from Men's Studies. Vegan Masculinities, or the Queerness of Anti-Speciesist Men; Critical Animal Studies and Sociology: theoretical notes on post/anti-humanism; Speciesist state: animal proletarianization or life substitution. Marxist reflections on animal question.*

Emelia Quinn is Assistant Professor of World Literatures & Environmental Humanities at the University of Amsterdam. She is author of *Reading Veganism: The Monstrous Vegan, 1818 to Present* (Oxford University Press, 2021), and co-editor of *Thinking Veganism: Towards a Vegan Theory* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) and *The Edinburgh Companion to Vegan Literary Studies* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022).

Colin H. Simonds is the Baker Post-Doctoral Fellow of Contemporary Asian Religion at Queen's University at Kingston. His writing engages Tibetan Buddhist philosophy and contemplative practice with environmental and animal ethics to uncover novel ways of approaching the more-than-human world.

Sam Skinner is a Ph.D. Student at Osgoode Hall Law School in Toronto Ontario. Researching in the field of animal law, criminal law, and constitutional law, Sam's academic work has been published in *Animal Law*, the *Journal for Animal and Natural Resource Law Review*, and the *Global Journal of Animal Law*.

JCAS Editorial Objectives

The *Journal for Critical Animal Studies* is open to all scholars and activists. The journal was established to foster the 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.

Copyright

Articles submitted to JCAS should be original contributions and should not be under consideration for any other publication at the same time. For ease of dissemination and to ensure proper policing use, papers and contributions become the legal copyright of the publisher unless otherwise agreed.