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Uneasy Animals:
Encountering Nonhuman Difference in American Literature, 1896-present

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M.A., Emory University, 2012
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An abstract of
A dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the
James T. Laney School of Graduate Studies of Emory University
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Abstract

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By Christina M. Colvin

Uneasy Animals demonstrates how animals in the work of major American authors of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries shape representations of environmental crisis, cultural upheaval, and social change. Until recently, the critical tendency has been to read animals in literature as simple figures for human behavior, values, or characters. This project, however, argues that animals' morphological, behavioral, and phenomenological difference unsettles literary texts, a reading that unseats the human as the chief focus of literary critical thought. The dissertation's interdisciplinary approach—bringing insights from fields such as biology, ethology, psychology, philosophy, and civil law into conversation with literature—demonstrates the importance of attending to nonhuman difference as it appears in a range of textual forms, particularly during the ecological crises of the present day. *Uneasy Animals* further shows how authors as diverse as Henry James, William Faulkner, Ernest Hemingway, Linda Hogan, Adrienne Rich, Margaret Atwood, Cormac McCarthy, T.C. Boyle, and Richard Powers ask how we might reconfigure what it means to be human not against, but in relation to, animals and animal life.

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Introduction

Uneasy Animals

Following the sudden death of his wife, T. (shortened from the rarely-used "Thomas") of Lydia Millet's 2008 novel *How the Dead Dream* takes up an unusual activity: breaking into zoos to be in close, private proximity to almost-extinct species of animals. Struggling to negotiate his own loss and loneliness, T. imagines these last animals as like himself, "at the forefront of aloneness, like pioneers." For his first break-in, T. visits the "rarest animal in the zoo," an old, frail, solitary Mexican gray wolf (135). After scaling the fence of the wolf enclosure and falling into the animal's pen, T. flicks off his flashlight and focuses on an animal shape crouched in the dark.

> He got up silently and picked his way closer, still without the flashlight on, his eyes on the ground while he threaded his way between bushes. Closer and closer till he pointed the flashlight toward the ground in front of the wolf's hunched shape and touched the switch with his thumb. A quick yellow flicker of eyes and then the wolf moved fluidly, fleeing along the fence. It went away from him, into a corner where it remained.
>
> He would not get closer. The wolf would not allow it. (136-7)

T.'s inaugural visit to an endangered animal begins and ends quickly, the wolf thwarting T's efforts to be near it. Despite T.'s comparison between his own feeling of loss and the aloneness of last animals, this wolf does not volunteer himself as a potential companion; instead, the wolf "went away" and "would not allow" T. to come any closer. I will suggest that Millet's wolf, unwilling to engage T. in a way that fulfills the human's desire for camaraderie and companionship, offers an example of animal resistance, an important focal point of this project. My contention will be that literature provides the opportunity to explore how animals' morphological, behavioral, and phenomenological difference poses an active challenge to prevailing systems of representation and aesthetics—a resistance to rather than a passive absorption of human meaning.

Out of all the endangered species T. could (and eventually does) visit, a list that includes a rhinoceros, marmosets, tarsiers, golden lion tamarins, pupfish, and elephants, T. chooses to visit the lone Mexican gray wolf first. In his relatively brief history with animals, T. has had two significant experiences with canids prior to this episode. The first, a coyote T. hits and kills with his car on a nighttime drive to Las Vegas, alerts T. to a reservoir of sympathy for animals he had not realized he possessed. After dragging the coyote out of the road, T. stays with the broken animal until she stops breathing. Observing her still body, T. feels "relieved but oddly disoriented. Where was the ambulance? No: he was all that she had. All her lights, all her rescue workers" (38). T. bridges the gulf between humans and animals by extending care to an unknown, nameless animal, dismissible as roadkill, and T. provides this care by staying with the coyote and whispering to her as she dies. T.'s encounter with the coyote haunts him in the weeks

following her death and leads him to meet the second significant canid in his life: the dog he rescues from a local shelter. T. and the dog slowly grow accustomed to one another, and the dog becomes, according to T., "an animal *companion*," a status that T. eventually understands as precious (40). Both his time with the coyote and his adoption of a dog represent turning points in T.'s developing awareness of animals: the coyote showed him he could use his experiences to relate to the pain and feeling of a nonhuman creature, and his dog showed him that he could build on such common ground to develop a close relationship with an animal. As an emotionally detached real estate developer with few intimates (human or otherwise), these two canids inform T. of the existence of a range of relationships beyond business transactions and exchanges of currency.

The wolf in the zoo offers T. the crucial third lesson in his education about human-animal relations. Reflecting on his visit, T. thinks that "[a]nimals were self-contained and people seemed to hold this against them...He had strained against the wolf's aloofness himself, resenting the wolf for its insistence on distance. He had felt it almost as an insult, and inwardly he retaliated" (137). Until this point in the novel, T. has found all of his major encounters with animals replete with meaning: the wolf's "insistence on distance," however, refuses T.'s attribution of significance. June Dwyer contends that "many people in Western societies want more than just domestic animals as their companions; they want wild animal friends, too. And they want more than just to see them and hear them; they want to touch them and eat with them as well" (624). Dwyer's suggestion certainly holds true in T.'s case. Analyzing what he initially experienced as the wolf's "insult," T. muses:

> [A]t the heart of it, you wanted animals to turn to you in welcome. It was a habit gained from expecting each other to do this, from expecting this of other people and only knowing people, not knowing anything beyond them. This was another kind of solitude, the kind where there was nothing all around but reflections… Instead of looking at the wolf as an animal he never knew and never could...he had fallen into the trap. He had wanted it to lick his hand and lope along beside him. (Millet 138)

Looking back, T. recognizes not only his desire to be hailed by the wolf as a friend with a lick of the hand and a stroll around the zoo, but also that such an expectation comes from "expecting this of other people," a tendency acquired by looking around at the wide world of other beings and seeing "nothing...but reflections." When T. meets the wolf, he expects to encounter not a nonhuman animal with its own set of desires and repertoire of behaviors: rather, he expects to meet a form of himself, a "reflection" of his desire for cross-species companionship (138). T. expects to meet a human in wolf's clothing.

T.'s initial inclination to project human desires, attributes, and meanings onto an animal is certainly not unique in either literature or culture. As alluded to above, too, T. selection of a wolf as the first animal to visit on his zoo break-ins holds additional significance because of the wolf's long and varied history as a figure. Calling the wolf "the cruelest, most wanton killer of all our Southwestern predators," G.W. "Dub" Evans echoed the feelings of many Southwestern American ranchers during the early-twentieth century, a period during which hunters eradicated tens of thousands of wolves every year (77). Wolves' reputation for unparalleled savagery and senseless killing rendered them a

figure of evil and of ruthlessness: Evans' brother went so far as to write that "idea of preserving the lobo is no more sensible than it would be to...coddle a bandit or rapist who was endangering the lives of your loved ones...To kill the lobo wherever you find him is to render a service to mankind and to all wildlife" (83). Also in the early twentieth-century, Aldo Leopold famously found in the eyes of a dying wolf the "fierce green fire" that sparked a dawning ecological awareness of the way wolves live in relationship to their environment and to other wildlife (138). In both examples, wolves and encounters with wolves carry great significance: for the Evans brothers, killing a wolf is analogous to killing a human criminal, and for Leopold, a close look at a freshly-shot wolf provides a philosophically transformative experience.

When T. glimpses the eyes of the wolf in the zoo, however, he sees neither his own reflection nor Leopold's "fierce green fire"; T. does not experience the wolf as a figure or a source of inspiration. What T. feels instead is the force of the wolf's resistance, its refusal to accept T.'s company and by extension fulfill T.'s desires. In short, the wolf requests to be left alone. This key scene in Millet's novel of animal resistance attests to the existence of beings that act, make decisions, and that do not cast humans as the center of their worlds. This scene also shows that sometimes animals do not fit into the narratives and discourses we have established for them: animals have their own ways of understanding, of navigating the world and establishing relations. As this project will show, however, animal resistance should not make humans feel further isolated in the world as T. initially felt when the wolf spurned his efforts at friendship. Instead, humans might see the otherness of animals, not to mention all that humans and animals share in

common, as an opportunity to remain open to new ways of knowing and being, as well as an opportunity to reconfigure ourselves and our strategies of representation in relation to nonhuman needs, desires, and actions.

Animals participate in human discourses uneasily. The designation “animal” is a title given to animals that they themselves do not recognize; animals are not interpellated by the name “animal” and so do not organize themselves accordingly. Animals exist in excess of the language we use to describe them. Humans have developed a number of ways through which to negotiate (or dismiss altogether) this excess. In what follows, this project provides an interrogation of the ways animals become intelligible to us as *animal*, as well as how animals act in ways unanticipated by our discourses: how they surprise, unsettle, and reconfigure our notions of what constitutes not only human and animal, but also agency and passivity, life and death, science and literature.

To date, the growing, interdisciplinary field of animal studies has focused on destabilizing the human/animal divide by focusing on the ways the “human” is constructed in opposition to the “animal.” At the center of many works of animal studies are companion animals and companion species, creatures that share a close, and, in the case of pets, often intimate relationship with humans. Animal studies’ focus on companion animals and companion species has served as an important entry point for thinking through ways in which humans are connected to nonhuman bodies and agencies, and how the remarkable abilities of many domestic animals to read and respond to us suggest that humans are not as exceptional as we’ve long constructed ourselves to be. Several seminal texts in animal studies, including Jacques Derrida’s *The Animal That*

Therefore I Am and Donna Haraway's *When Species Meet*, emerge from encounters with pets—here, a cat and a dog, respectively—to illustrate how the animals who recognize us as part of their worlds can make us strange to ourselves. In our push to deconstruct the human/animal divide, however, animal studies scholars have traditionally focused less on the differences separating humans and animals than on our resemblances, the points of intersection that reveal what we share in common. To address this tendency, my project begins by exploring human/animal commonalities before moving to examine persistent sites of difference, particularly moments when animals resist being "like us" and even deny altogether our desire to be acknowledged by them. At stake in my project's insistence on nonhuman difference is not only the question of literary representation and analysis—how do we write and read the nonhuman?—but also the challenge of how to extend critical and compassionate attention to that which is *un*like us, arguably the next crucial frontier of animal studies.

Irrespective of authorial or artistic intentionality, that animals participate in our discourses uneasily is a fact continuously reproduced in our representations of them. Literary and artistic responses to animal difference therefore present an opportunity to see how even represented creatures, those written and read animals that might once have been understood as passive receptacles of human meaning, insist on an attention to their strangeness, on what makes them "animal" or otherwise, as well as on how their appearance in our human forms of meaning-making attest to other-than-human realities, understandings, and worlds. For this project, I focus on how literary animals unsettle four structures of meaning in particular: the ontological separation of human and animal,

myths and stories, the concept of active “life” versus passive “death,” and the biological sciences, specifically the discourse of species.

The first chapter reads moments of corporeal and metaphoric touch between humans and animals to conceptualize the embodied vulnerabilities shared across species boundaries. Building on the first chapter’s methodological framework, my second chapter attends to the running, growling, thrashing, bleeding, and unmistakably dynamic animals in William Faulkner’s 1942 novel *Go Down, Moses* to show how they breach the abstracting and appropriative systems of representation that attempt to contain them. The third chapter provides a close analysis of taxidermy in the work of Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, and Linda Hogan to demonstrate taxidermy’s critical potential as not only a tool for thinking through human-animal relations, but also as emblematic of the often strange, varied, and disturbing semiotic function of animals (even dead animals) in literary texts. Finally, the fourth chapter examines representations of species extinctions in the recent fiction of T.C. Boyle, Richard Powers, Margaret Atwood, and Cormac McCarthy. This chapter argues that the disappearance of animals and the epistemological uncertainty that attends such disappearances emphasize animals’ resistance to human systems of knowing and ordering.

Chapter One

Killable Animals and the Ethics of Worldly Touch

Fleshy Exposures and Bodies at Risk: Touching Across Species Lines

Roughly in the middle of Adrienne Rich's “Twenty-One Love Poems” (1976) nestles sonnet X, a poem that begins with the speaker's observation of her lover's dog who dozes, “tranquil and innocent,” through the lovers' conversations. Throughout the “Love Poems,” Rich combines a reflection on ordinary, daily experience with an exploration of the particular, private intimacies shared between two women. For Joanne Feit Diehl, the “Love Poems” seek to “convert a specific intimacy into a paradigm that maps the possibilities of [a lesbian] relationship for a radically alternative poetics” (149). We might expand Diehl's reading by attending closely to poem X, moving as it does from a specific encounter between a human and an animal to a meditation on what such an encounter could mean for an understanding of creaturely life generally conceived. In poem X, the speaker contemplates not only what her lover's dog might know about the two women, but more importantly, what the dog herself might otherwise share with them:

> Your dog, tranquil and innocent, dozes through
> our cries, our murmured dawn conspiracies
> our telephone calls. She knows—what can she know?

> If in my human arrogance I claim to read
>
> her eyes, I find there only my own animal thoughts:
>
> that creatures must find each other for bodily comfort,
>
> that voices of the psyche drive through the flesh
>
> further than the dense brain could have foretold,
>
> that the planetary nights are growing cold for those
>
> on the same journey, who want to touch
>
> one creature-traveler clear to the end;
>
> that without tenderness, we are in hell.

What begins as a question about the status of the dog's knowledge—"She knows—what can she know?"—becomes, by the poem's end, a meditation on the basic desire for bodily comfort and shared touch that all creatures, women and dogs alike, possess. This shift from the question of knowledge to a contemplation of shared bodily needs importantly parallels the poem's movement from the ordinary to the epic, from a small interaction between woman and dog to a reflection on a "shared journey," "planetary nights" and "creature-traveler[s]."

The poem seems to ask, then, how a particular moment—here, an encounter between a human and an animal—might serve as a foundation for a kind of understanding that transcends species barriers. Indeed, the speaker does not linger on an interrogation of the dog's comprehension of human language, of the "murmured dawn conspiracies" and "telephone calls" mentioned at the poem's outset. Rather, when the speaker looks into the dog's eyes, she sees not the dog's thoughts translated into human

language, but the speaker's "own animal thoughts." That these thoughts are designated as *animal* rather than as human has a equalizing, rather than an exclusionary, effect: that is, the speaker recognizes her own animality, her "own animal thoughts," by meeting the eyes of the dog, a recognition which emphasizes what this dog and this speaker share in common instead of what makes the two beings different. As if to further emphasize what she and the dog have in common, the speaker afterward abandons the language of human and animal altogether, invoking instead the even more unifying term "creature." That a desire for "bodily comfort" and to "touch" a fellow creature unites the interests of the speaker and the dog implies the possibility for community, perhaps even a creaturely kinship, on the basis of a shared investment in bodily well-being. Indeed, for a poem in which the "voices" or the language of the psyche "drive through the flesh/further than the dense brain could have foretold," it is appropriate that "tenderness" and the possibility of comforting touch—that which might, operating beyond language, repair and address matters of the flesh—provides the means for navigating through dark "planetary nights" and away from "hell."[1]

If, as I have suggested, the poem discovers the possibility of tender creaturely relations based on a common investment in bodies and in touch, we might take Rich's insight as inspiration to further interrogate how the figure of touch otherwise addresses

---

[1]The assertion that "voices of the psyche drive through the flesh" has interesting implications if we take these "voices" to mean something like regulatory or normative discourses as they intrude on the mind and influence behavior, discourses which Rich was certainly invested in struggling against. In poem X, too, beyond a resistance to heteronormative conventions and language, the "voices" that do violence to the flesh may also be, particularly in keeping with the larger argument I make in this chapter, the discourses that divide "the human" from "the animal" and which contribute to and legitimate many forms of violence brought upon the flesh and bodies of animals.

issues of embodied life. With the speaker of Rich's poem, I want to ask how matters of the human body and human flesh are likewise matters for those bodies covered by fur, scales, feathers, and exoskeletons. Further, I ask: how can an investigation of touch help us address the uses and abuses of creaturely bodies, particularly when what can be *done* with those bodies, that is, how they can be pet, caressed, held, cut, penetrated, eaten, injected, shocked, skinned, and so forth, is, with few exceptions, always-already determined? Finally, how might touch challenge pervasive and longstanding categorical oppositions, namely, the opposition between "the human" and "the animal"? I show that attempting to respond ethically to animals means dispensing with the assumption that humans are separate from the world and that they among all earth's myriad creatures possess exceptional, inviolable bodies. As the speaker of Rich's poem implies, all creaturely lives on the planet share in common an investment in how their bodies will be touched by the bodies of others. The figure of touch may therefore help us think about both possible intimacies with animals as well as the ways their bodies are discursively rendered according to how they are permitted to touch and be touched in ways distinct from the comparatively *un*touchable bodies of humans.

Only recently has work in the humanities begun to theorize what it means to be human not against, but in relation to, the animal. Work in animal studies explores both the ways in which the lives of animals are intimately connected to and implicated in the lives of humans as well as how the (traditionally white and male) human has historically defined himself against the *in*human along lines of gender, class, and race. As Kelly Oliver explains, "The human subject—until relatively recently referred to as 'man'--was

conceived of as free, autonomous, self-sovereign, and rational...[T]his conception of man or human was/is built and fortified by excluding others who were viewed as man's opposite, particularly animals and those associated with animals" (Oliver 26). Animal studies' move to explore human and animal *connectedness* instead of positing and assuming *separateness* makes touch—physical touch between bodies as well as being touched or touching affectively—a particularly apt figure for a discussion of human-animal relations. One of animal studies' central insights, that the categories of human and animal are neither fixed nor should they determine in advance the terms of human-animal relations, constitutes a useful starting point for approaches to literary representations of human-animal interaction. Further, thinking human and animal connectivity through touch responds to Timothy Morton's insistence that "[t]hinking interdependence involves dissolving the barrier between 'over here' and 'over there'...Thinking interdependence means thinking difference. This means confronting the fact that all beings are related to each other negatively and differentially, in an open system without center or edge" (*The Ecological Thought* 39). As I will show in the latter part of this chapter, touch provides a way to position the human as one earth-bound, environmentally-enmeshed species among many, and further as a species whose interests cannot and should not be thought separately from the interests or concerns of other animals.

First, however, a thinking of touch will focus our attention on both the vastly numerous and varied physical bodies of animals and the way those bodies function and exist in a lived, material register, as well as how bodies both human and nonhuman are understood, figured, and made available or unavailable for use through discourse as either

exceptional or violable, murderable or killable, separate from nonhuman world(s) or intimately intertwined with it. Forms of touch read both as something done to animals as well as something animals “do” to humans takes seriously the physical-embodied lives of what some animal studies scholars have called “actual” or living, non-metaphorical animals as well as how language determines how such animal bodies and lives are enabled to live and to thrive (or not). My contention is that human language produces and signifies animal bodies as well as (and often in contrast to) human bodies, and that the ways in which animal bodies are signified and understood has a direct connection to and impact on how “actual” human and nonhumans exist in the world. At the outset, then, the figure of touch reminds us of the constructed, discursive significance attributed to the human body, and that despite such discursive significance, humans share a basic bodily materiality and vulnerability with animals. Humans can not only touch, but are themselves touchable. The very shared materiality of human and animal bodies troubles at the outset a thinking of the human as separate from, above, or beyond the world of animals. Touch suggests connection, not separateness; interdependence, not independence.

That the numerous and varied members of the animal kingdom possess a diverse array of material bodies that can both touch and be touched needs to be taken into account in any analysis of human-animal relations, particularly when animals' legal and moral status is frequently defined according to how their bodies can and cannot be used by humans. Domestic animals in particular are both accorded and denied a range of legal protections determining how their bodies can be used, and specifically, how their bodies

can be *harmed* by humans: some domestic animals have extensive protections, while others (even among members of the same species) are granted few to no protections. Among the primary legal classes of domestic animals (which include “companion animal,” “laboratory animal,” “livestock,” and “warm-blooded animal”), companion animals are protected against cruelty in every state and receive the greatest number of legal protections (Satz 92). Ani Satz attributes the protections granted to companion animals to the “value humans place on their relationships with them and the link between animal cruelty and violence against humans” (68). In addition to valuing companion animals as pets or, as pet owners frequently attest, as “family members” (a designation which attempts to elevate the social importance of certain pet-animals closer to the level of humans), companion animals receive protections because their well-being is linked to human well-being and because their interests often align with the interests of humans. Importantly, however, even companion animal species are accorded legal protections that differ according to context: as Satz explains, for example, “companion animals who are sold in retail pet stores are not protected under the AWA [Animal Welfare Act], while animals originated from commercial breeders have protections concerning their confinement, care, and conditions of transportation” (93). Puppy mills are another instance of the lack of legal protections accorded to even one of the most popular and beloved animals in America: the dog. Even this class of domestic animal that receives the most extensive legal protections is not afforded those protections universally: when a demand exists for the mass production of certain animal bodies, those animals are much less likely to be afforded protections that regulate their treatment and care. In sum,

regardless of species or of legal class, commonly protected animals can still be legally made available for a range of cruel and exploitative practices should those practices align with human interests.

That the legal status of animals is frequently determined according to how their bodies may or may not be used is particularly visible in instances in which certain animals are purposefully excluded from anti-cruelty or animal welfare laws. When animals are excluded from the protections instituted by the very laws instituted to reduce or regulate exploitative practices, these animals become legally available for unchecked exploitation and cruelty. Animal law specialist Taimie L. Bryant explains that, in order to legalize the use of certain animal bodies, legal authorities simply name species either “wild” or “domestic” in accordance with the protections (or lack thereof) associated with one or the other category of animal. Bryant cites an instance in which a California law changed the classification of fallow deer from “wild” to “domestic” for the purposes of legalizing the dismemberment of fallow deer bodies in slaughterhouses when dismemberment was only permitted for “domestic” animals (Bryant 188). Bryant also points out that, in order to legalize the cruel or exploitative treatment of certain food animals and laboratory animals, some animal species are *not even considered “animals”* under provision of law in order to exclude them from anti-cruelty protections. Rats, one of the most valued species of animal for use in lab experiments, are not considered animals under the Animal Welfare Act; in consequence, “[s]cientists who use rats have no obligations of care to them” (146). Similarly, while chickens are defined as “animals” to help enforce cockfighting prohibitions, chickens are not considered animals under the

Humane Slaughter Act, "the only federal statute that confers any protection at all to animals dismembered for food" in the United States (147). As Bryant elaborates, "[f]lesh-food animals do not typically exist even for purposes of animal anti-cruelty statutes, most of which explicitly exempt them or standard industry exploitative practices by which they are harmed" (147). Even when numerous legal protections exist to help protect animals from human harm, the legalized use of animals persists through the deliberate exclusion of certain animals from laws that would regulate their use and abuse. In short, in the realm of the law, animals and their bodies can be simply signified or re-signified as unprotected and available for harm when necessary to advance human interests.

With regards to wildlife, too, even the Endangered Species Act which prohibits the "taking" (that is, the killing), trading, or selling of listed animals has, according to a 2011 report issued by the nonprofit organization Defenders of Wildlife, recently come under attack from legislators. "As of the August 2011 congressional recess," the report states, "13 bills or legislative proposals are pending that would undercut or dramatically weaken the ESA. In addition, the House Natural Resources Committee has announced plans to begin reauthorizing the ESA." The report goes on to explain that these proposed laws range from "blocking protections for particular species to discarding the expert opinions of top scientists" as a way to advance the interests of big businesses ("Assault on Wildlife" 6). Such proposed changes make clear that even species scientifically proven to be threatened with extinction are not guaranteed continuous legal protection.

Despite the inconsistent and variable legal definitions of animals, the overall structure of human-animal relations in the above examples remain the same: when the

interests of animals (including freedom to live, to play, to be exempt from cruelty, and so forth) conflict with the interests of humans, the interests of humans invariably take precedence. As a result, even "protected" animals remain or may become available to harm—and particularly to bodily harm—despite the existence of laws that ostensibly help regulate killing, exploitation, cruelty, and other forms of physical violation. By extension, this basic and pervasive structure of human-animal relations, that animals are legally and, as we will see, ontologically available for harm, maintains the status of the human as *un*available for those harms legally inflictable on the animal. That the human is legally protected from harm and from a wide range of physical abuse while the animal receives few to no protections from physical violence and other harms reflects a crucial differentiation of the category of "the human" from the category of "the animal": among all of the creaturely bodies that populate the earth, the human body alone is understood as exceptional and inviolable. For Oliver, too, even according to many philosophies of alterity, "the very notions of humanity...continue to be formed through a disavowal of their dependence on the animal and animals" (5). It should be emphasized, then, that the exceptionality of the human and of the human body depends on the disavowal of the animality of the human, of the essential materiality, vulnerability, and I would add, touchability of the human-animal body which all animals, including humans, share.

Despite this longstanding, pervasive separation between human and nonhuman animals, Donna Haraway argues in her seminal animal studies text *When Species Meet* that the categories of human and animal should not determine in advance how interspecies relations proceed. Haraway opens her book with two questions that guide her

interrogation of human-animal relations, the first notably emphasizing touch as a principle mode of interacting and relating to animals: "(1) Whom and what do I touch when I touch my dog? and (2) How is 'becoming with' a practice of becoming worldly?" (3). With her first question, Haraway identifies that her analysis of animals will think, engage, and attempt to respond to actual animals, that is, animals that not only have material bodies that can touch and be touched, but also animals whose ontological status is not determined in advance.[2] Because she does not presume to know who or what specific and irreducibly singular animal she touches when she touches her dog (or any other animal), the question of who and what she touches must continually inform her attempt to respond to *this* animal in *this* moment. No preexisting frameworks of relation or instructions for how to ethically respond suffice for Haraway: rather, both the human and non-human participants in an encounter must determine how to respond to each other during the event of their meeting rather than prior to it. Determining how to respond to an actual animal or animals is always an ethical issue: as she later explains, "[m]y premise is that touch ramifies and shapes accountability. Accountability, caring for, being affected, and entering into responsibility are not ethical abstractions; these mundane, prosaic things are the result of having truck with each other" (36). Here, Haraway insists that touching

[2] In the March 2009 issue of *PMLA* featuring animal studies, Rosi Braidotti's article aptly describes what animal studies' attention to "actual" animals entails. Braidotti calls for considerations of animals that resist the common practice of reducing them to metaphors for human "values, norms, and morals," a trend easily perceived throughout historical, philosophical, and literary treatments of animals (527). Braidotti urges a move toward "a neoliteral relation to animals, anomalies, and inorganic others" that constitutes a "new mode of relation" (528). As I see it, animal studies (including Haraway's recent work on animals) and its turn towards material animals pioneers Braidotti's new mode of relation, a mode that takes the lives of material animals seriously. For a further discussion of a neoliteral relation to animals, see Braidotti. For a discussion of the ways in which Western philosophy has typically ignored or paid little attention to "actual" animals, see Derrida, *The Animal that Therefore I Am*.

an animal or being touched by an animal necessitates being accountable to and for that animal, as well as opening oneself to to being affected by that animal or by animals.

Because Haraway does not presume to know in advance *whom* or *what* she touches when she touches the body of her dog (or the body of any animal, for that matter), she rejects the longstanding definitions of certain animals as available to being touched in *this* or *that* predetermined way. Instead, she allows interspecies touch to transform and trouble, not prescribe, the terms of this human-animal encounter. Without such guiding frameworks of relation as the categories of “human” and “animal” would impose, Haraway opens a space for ethical response as she considers what it means to touch a particular dog in a particular moment. Haraway's attempt speaks to the very condition of ethical responsibility itself: neither the terms nor the outcome of an ethical response can be determined in advance. That is, an ethical response cannot emerge from a set of prescriptions or codes that dictate either the terms of the response or the ontological status of those in relation (here, the immense burden of what it “means” to be either human or animal). Haraway describes response well when she writes, “[t]here is no formula for response; precisely, to respond is not merely to react with a fixed calculus proper to machines, logic, and—most Western philosophy has insisted—animals” (77). To respond is to act without certainty, without the assurances provided by logic or discourse: it is to occupy a position of incalculable risk, a position of openness and vulnerability before the other.

Importantly, too, the attempt to respond ethically to an animal or to animals does not eliminate the problems inherent in sharing a world with other mortal, embodied

creatures. In other words, response neither eliminates killing nor does it provide a way for humans and animals to, as Haraway says, "live outside killing":

> I suggest that it is a misstep to separate the world's beings into those who may be killed and those who may not and a misstep to pretend to live outside killing. The same kind of mistake saw freedom only in the absence of labor and necessity, that is, the mistake of forgetting the ecologies of all mortal beings, who live in and through the use of one another's bodies. (80)

An ethical response to an animal or animals neither determines in advance the ontological status of those in relation (by separating animals and humans into the categories of those who may be killed and those who may not, respectively), nor does it naively disavow that both humans and animals exist within a complex mortal web of living and dying, of letting live and killing. The essential consequence of these interrelated conditions for response is that animals must not be made ontologically available for killing, or "merely" killable. Making-killable forecloses ethical calculation and critical, responsible thought: it shrouds the necessity of a perpetual struggle to imagine alternatives to killing and to inflicting suffering with the reassuring veil of reason. It is reason itself that Haraway insists will always be insufficient for an ethical engagement with animals: as she writes, "response-ability...demands calculations but is not finished when the best cost-benefit analysis of the day is done and [is] not finished when the best animal welfare regulations are followed to the letter. Calculations—reasons—are obligatory and radically insufficient for companion-species worldliness" (88). Making animals killable provides

reasons for killing and inflicting suffering, but for Haraway these reasons will never be satisfactory, will never arrive at something like actual justification.[3] In short, making-killable terminates ethical calculation.

The crucial question remaining to be asked, then, is this: if the conditions for ethical response necessitate that the ontological status of animals not be determined in advance—that the animal not be made merely killable—than must not the status of humans as the only inviolable species also be relinquished? By extension, how might an ethical response to an animal or animals challenge the assumed exceptionality of the human body and of human flesh? Haraway does not take up this particular implication of response at any length, nor does she imagine the material consequences of how human-animal relations would proceed if the human were to renounce this essential, exclusive privilege of the species, this privilege that invests moral significance in human bodies and human flesh that far exceeds the value of all other bodies and other flesh (if in fact these other bodies are invested with significance at all). However, Haraway does write that, "I do not think we can nurture living until we get better at facing killing. But also get better at dying instead of killing" (81). I want to linger on Haraway's suggestion and to take seriously what it might mean for humans both to get better at facing killing and to get better at dying instead of killing. Could part of what Haraway means by getting better at dying instead of killing include the de-signification of human flesh as inviolable and exceptional, even when the inviolability and exceptionality of human bodies and of flesh

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[3] Here I both have in mind (as I suspect Haraway does as well) and attempt to invoke some of the language of Derrida's "Force of Law: 'The Mystical Foundation of Authority'" in which he asserts that justice never arrives but is always to come.

is itself a quality proper to “the human”? How might the exceptional flesh and exceptional body proper to the human get in the way of ethical relations with animals? Alternatively, how could the significance attributed to human bodies and human flesh inform, promote, and even help make possible ethical responses to animals?

To explore these questions, we may first take as instructive that in both Derrida and Haraway's theorizations of what it might entail to respond to animals, a human body at risk for harm, and notably, at risk for *touch*, emerges as the principle figure that inspires further inquiry. Significantly, too, in both instances the human body at risk for harm emerges during an encounter with an animal as if to show that response means becoming-vulnerable to change or to harm through that animal-encounter. Indeed, not only does Derrida's experience of standing naked before the eyes of his cat introduce *The Animal that Therefore I Am,* but also his description of the event conveys both his embarrassment in being looked at as well as his awareness of his own biteable body:

> [I]f the cat observes me frontally naked, face to face, and if I am naked faced with the cat’s eyes looking at me from head to toe, as it were just to see, not hesitating to concentrate its vision—in order to see, with a view to seeing—in the direction of my sex. To see, without going to see, without touching yet, and without biting, although that threat remains on its lips or on the tip of the tongue. (4)

Derrida’s description of not only the fact of his nakedness, but also the particular parts of his body (his face, head, toes, and particularly his sex) that he imagines his cat concentrating her vision on and even threatening to bite, emphasize his experience of

bodily vulnerability. The look of an animal imposes on Derrida an awareness that the exceptional flesh fundamental to the concept of the human has no corresponding significance to an animal who threatens to bite: in other words, he recognizes that his humanness does not prevent or protect his body from being biteable to a cat. Having his own flesh scrutinized by an animal leaves Derrida unsettled and questioning his self-identity as human: "Who am I, therefore?" Derrida asks under his cat's gaze (5).[4] As she opens her "Sharing Suffering" chapter, too, Haraway invokes the story of African scientist Baba Joseph of Nancy Farmer's novel *A Girl Named Disaster*. Haraway tells of how Baba Joseph released tsetse flies to feed on the bodies of shaved guinea pigs whose skin had been treated with poisons intended to kill the flies. To learn what the guinea pigs suffer during these experiments, Baba Josephs inserts his hand into the flies' cage to allow them to feed on his flesh and grow plump on his blood. Haraway interprets Baba Josephs' self-harming action as attempt to remain in solidarity with the animals who endure pain during laboratory research (69). This instance of what Haraway calls "non-mimetic sharing" of pain reminds us that even the best reasons for inflicting suffering do not excuse or elevate humans beyond having to consider their own uninnocent involvement in a world of suffering, living and dying (83). By offering his bare hand to the tsetse flies, Baba Josephs maintains a kind of fleshy common-ground with the guinea

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[4] In her critique of *The Animal*, Haraway suggests that Derrida, in his haste to interrogate the history of Western thought that separates the category of the human from the category of the animal, fails to dedicate the same rigorous and attentive thought to how to respond to his little cat that looked at him. In Haraway's estimation, "he [Derrida] did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning" (20). Although this assumption is purely speculative, I wonder if Derrida did not pursue his curiosity because of the vulnerability he felt as his cat looked at him, perhaps a deliberate (or not) shortsightedness he shares with the very philosophers he critiques; that is, those philosophers who, as Derrida charges, write as if they had never been looked at by an animal. For Haraway's full discussion of this moment in Derrida's text, see Haraway, esp. pp. 19-23.

pigs on which he experiments. In both Derrida and Haraway, the exposure of the human body to harm, or making human flesh available in ways humans imagine only non-human animal flesh to be available (for experimentation, consumption, and so forth) begins to destabilize the primacy of humans in relation to animals. Such exposure does not suggest an inverse paradigm whereby human flesh signifies in the way animal flesh signifies, that is, as always already available for violation or for destruction. Rather, considering the human body as not *simply* unavailable or insulated from harm but as vulnerable to being acted upon by other embodied agents (in my analysis, animals themselves) situates human beings as part of the world rather than separate from and superior to it.

Taken to a particularly violent extreme, the shift from understanding the human as always already exceptional and unavailable to harm to thinking of humans and human bodies as situated within a world populated by other animals that can themselves harm and be harmed calls into question another fundamental privilege of the human species: that is, to freely eat without being eaten. Eco-feminist philosopher Val Plumwood interrogates this very privilege after narrowly surviving a crocodile attack while canoeing in Kakadu National Park, Australia. Plumwood knew that crocodile attacks were very rare, so when a crocodile approached and suddenly struck her canoe, she was doubly surprised: not only was the near-impossible happening, but the crocodile regarded a human being as an object for consumption, as prey. Plumwood tells of how the crocodile rushed her canoe, seized her between the legs, and viciously twisted her body through the water in a “death roll” used to exhaust and overcome prey's resistance to being drowned. After the crocodile spun her through several more suffocating rolls, the animal began to

weaken, and Plumwood managed to drag her mangled body up the muddy riverbank and towards a ranger station. Reflecting on the experience after her rescue and recovery, Plumwood finds that her near-death experience in the jaws of a crocodile forced her to reevaluate how she understood her position as a human in relation to the world and its inhabitants. She explains, “I glimpsed a shockingly indifferent world in which I had no more significance than any other edible being. The thought, 'This can't be happening to me, I'm a human being, I am more than just food!' was one component of my terminal incredulity” (Plumwood). The “more than just food” status of the human exemplifies what James Hatley calls “the asymmetry of predation” whereby we humans “happily eat [animals'] flesh, but ours remains sacrosanct” (Hatley 18). By reflecting on her experience from the perspective of the indifferent world of the crocodile, Plumwood understands that the narrative of human mastery and separateness from nature and other animals depends on human flesh's signification as inedible in contrast to the edibility and availability of non-human animal flesh:

> This concept of human identity positions humans outside and above the food chain, not as part of the feast in a chain of reciprocity but as external manipulators and masters of it: Animals can be our food, but we can never be their food....The idea of human prey threatens the dualistic vision of human mastery in which we humans manipulate nature from outside, as predators but never prey. We may daily consume other animals by the billions, but we ourselves cannot be food for worms and certainly not meat for crocodiles. This is one reason why we now treat so inhumanely the

> animals we make our food, for we cannot imagine ourselves similarly positioned as food.

For Plumwood, humans exploit animals because they cannot conceive of themselves as sharing with them the position of being “just meat,” or merely killable. Plumwood does not suggest that humans throw themselves to the crocodiles to experience the bodily vulnerability of an animal about to be consumed by another animal. She insists, however, on a reconceptualization of the human that does not position it above or outside the dynamics of reciprocatory eating or, to invoke Haraway's terms, the fact that humans, too, “live in and through the use of one another's bodies” (Haraway 80). Plumwood's reflection reveals the discursive construction of human flesh as exceptional and inedible as just that: a construction, and one that too quickly and thoughtlessly legitimates the exploitative use of non-human animal bodies.

The appetites of animals such as crocodiles, bears, mountain lions, sharks, and other large predators should remind us of the often shocking reality of our vulnerable, even consumable flesh. Even mosquitoes, flies, ticks, and other insects that feed on humans as readily as they feed on other animals trouble the construction of the human as unavailable for eating. As Hatley argues, taking seriously our own edibility “leaves us in dispossession of our very flesh, in a bewildered questioning of our humane insistence on being invulnerable to ingestion, in awe of how our very matter is destined to be rendered as another's sinew, stalk, or cilia” (20). For Hatley, understanding our edible, potentially nourishing bodies in relation to the physical bodies of other animals shows that the significant flesh understood as proper to the human does not in actuality *belong* to the

human at all; rather, humans and human bodies exist and are sustained because of the nourishing bodies of other living things. Conversely, both before and after death, flesh-bearing humans help sustain life: that is, their bodies can be the means by which other living things grow and flourish. Although we might be tempted to think exclusively of the variety of viral or parasitic harms that can befall the consumable human body, I find Hatley's analysis suggestive of the positive, promising potentialities of human-animal relations.

We might then add the question "Who and what am *I* when my dog touches me?" to those that open Haraway's text. Indeed, if we understand human bodies as touchable, vulnerable, and even as violable by virtue of their exposure to other bodies, we may begin to close the hierarchical gap that separates human from animal on the basis of the latter's predetermined bodily availability and touchability. Although understanding the human body as available to be touched by animals does mean acknowledging a set of risks (including, but certainly not limited to, the edibility of human flesh), it also illuminates forms of human/animal relations which demonstrate the non-violent possibilities of touching across species. We may take Hatley's embrace of human edibility as a starting point for thinking about the multiple and diverse ways in which allowing human bodies and human flesh to be available or vulnerable to animals risks not simply pain or death, but also awe, pleasure, recovery, and joy. What if the non-exploitative pleasures of sharing a world with animals who can touch and be touched took precedence as a way to inform human-animal relations? How would this change the hierarchical structure that undergirds much of how animals are treated and discursively

rendered in modern Western societies? By emphasizing the possibilities of interspecies pleasure and networks of well-being involved in various forms of friendly touching, I move now from an analysis of bodily violation and harm alone to explore the potential pleasures and benefits of opening the human body—and by extension the human as concept—to being changed and touched by animals.

Pleasures and Possibilities of Interspecies Touch

That animals can themselves experience a range of joys and pleasures—particularly at the level of the body and of the senses—has been a relatively recent focus of animal scholarship. According to animal ethologist Jonathan Balcombe, most present and historic discussion of animal sentience revolves around animals' capacity to experience pain, stress, and suffering. Through his own work on animal pleasure, Balcombe suggests that, by including a consideration of the ways in which animals experience pleasure in studies of human-animal relations, not only do we enhance the case for extending moral consideration to animals, but also we may begin to regard animals as capable of a range of both painful and pleasurable experiences, experiences that can make their lives varied and complex. In this way, Balcombe starts to develop another argument against the making the animal merely killable. The killability of the animal not only provides an excuse for the killing itself, but also it denies, or at the very least explains away, any importance or consideration attributable to the full, rich life an animal could enjoy. As Balcombe explains, when we kill animals, "we cause harm by denying them the opportunity to experience rewards that life would otherwise offer them"

(214). He goes on to suggest that, “[T]he main reason that our criminal system treats murder so seriously is not that the victim may suffer—though that certainly compounds the crime. Murder is wrong because life, specifically that portion of life yet to be experienced, has value” (214). The importance of taking animal deaths seriously is compounded by the evidence that animals, like the only species of animal that can be legally murdered, can also experience a range of pleasures. The staggering number of animals killed for human consumption and use and thus the staggering number of animals divested of the opportunity to experience the basic pleasures of life becomes not simply an issue having to do with the fact of the animal deaths themselves. Including animal pleasure in a consideration of human-animal relations means taking seriously animal *lives*.

Balcombe locates and describes four main sources of animal pleasure: play, food, sex, and touch. Interestingly, the examples he cites for evidence of the pleasure animals take in touch involves touching across species as much as touch shared among members of the same species. While animals such as chimpanzees and horses regularly groom one another, both laboratory rats and dolphins take pleasure in being tickled and rubbed by humans, some dolphins even opting to receive a rub instead of a fish when given the choice (213). Many animals also demonstrated pleasure when being touched by other nonhuman animal species: for example, hippopotamuses “splay their toes, spread their legs and hold their mouths open to provide easy access for [cleaning] fishes,” and the hippos become so relaxed during these cleaning sessions that they sometimes fall asleep

(213). Many species of fish also appear to enjoy receiving cleanings from other species of fish.

That human beings also enjoy interacting with many species of animals through various forms of friendly touch is hardly news, and a growing body of research reflects the human health benefits of petting and interacting with companion animals in particular. Humans who own companion animals have increased survival rates from coronary artery disease and generally enjoy better mental and physical health than people who do not own companion animals, for example. Further, animal-assisted interventions have been successful at improving the quality of life for persons with developmental, neurological, social, and psychological impairments (O'Haire 232). Although there remains much work to be done to examine the effects of human touch on animals, some early studies showed that dogs undergoing mild physical trauma experienced reduced stress levels when pet by a friendly human at the time of the trauma in comparison to dogs who underwent the same mild trauma without being petted (Lynch and McCarthy). Certain farmed animals, including hens, also demonstrate less fear and avoidance of humans after being regularly touched and interacted with (Graml, Waiblinger, and Neibuhr).

The possibilities for cross-species intimacy, mutual joy, and well-being are frequently publicized under sensational headlines that highlight the ability of animals to respond to danger or to perform in unexpected ways, but the ordinariness of many human-animal connections are also worth emphasizing. On February 2, 2012, *The New York Times* published “Wonder Dog,” an article whose title emphasizes the

extraordinary, perhaps even heroic, behaviors of an animal frequently invested with cultural value because of its ability to respond to human needs and affects. The article features the service-dog training facility 4 Paws for Ability and one family, the Winokurs of the Atlanta area. According to 4-Paws founder Karen Shirk, eight-year-old Iyal Winokur "needed a dog." Prior to the boy's adoption by the Winokurs, fetal alcohol syndrome had stunted Iyal's emotional and intellectual growth. Despite all efforts by family, neighbors, therapists, and doctors, Iyal threw frequent temper-tantrums and often woke in the night, enraged. None of the 20 different medications Iyal's doctors tried prescribing proved helpful: Iyal continued to struggle with language, daily activities, basic communication, as well as the frequent tantrums. Increasingly concerned, the Winokurs called the Xenia, Ohio nonprofit 4 Paws in hopes of receiving a dog to help calm and monitor Iyal. After extensive review, 4 Paws placed the Winokurs with Chancer, a high-spirited, confident golden retriever who, without a family to become close to, "needed a boy." The sensitive and perceptive dog quickly began to provide for Iyal in ways that medicine and more traditional therapy could not. Attuned to Iyal's emotional states, Chancer intervenes during the boy's tantrums and often prevents them from occurring altogether. The dog inserts his muzzle between the boy's angry, crossed arms, or stands between Iyal and objects of the boy's distress. The pair also play and sleep together. Crucially, it seems from the article, Chancer's method of therapy relies almost entirely on touch: he uses his furry dog's body to help regulate and respond to Iyal's emotions. In consequence, too, Chancer gains the care and companionship he "needed." Since Chancer's arrival, the Winokurs have perceived crucial changes in Iyal's

behavior. The boy has developed a sense of selfhood, makes conscious decisions, and uses increasingly complex language, improvements the family wholly credits to Chancer's influence: the dog enables the struggling boy to connect to the world. Even though Iyal will never be "cured," the presence of such an intuitive and attentive animal has undeniably enriched Iyal and his family's quality of life.

Chancer assists his struggling human by exercising his unique perceptive and sensory capabilities as a dog, and his method of communicating—through his body and through touch—makes possible a human's ability to connect and communicate. Conversely, Iyal's behavior provides Chancer the opportunity to exhibit those attentive, affective responses productive of the "wonder" mentioned in the article's title. Rather than portraying Chancer and Iyal as two independent, separate entities, the article's illustration of the shared benefits of this human-animal relationship suggest the boy and dog's mutually constitutive mode of existing in the world. Taking up Cary Wolfe's suggestion in his analysis of humans and their service animals, we might imagine Chancer and Iyal as inhabiting an "irreducibly different and unique form of subjectivity—neither *Homo sapiens* nor *Canis familaris*, neither 'disabled' nor 'normal,' but something else altogether" (*What is Posthumanism?* 141). When Chancer places his muzzle between Iyal's arms to calm the boy's rage, these connected bodies form a co-constituted subject neither human nor dog, an entity composed by and through interspecies encounter, relation, and touch.

Following Chancer and Iyal's example, we may recall that Haraway's initial question of *who* and *what* she touches when she touches her dog leads directly to her

second guiding question: how becoming with is also a practice of becoming worldly, or in other words, how being a part of the world also involves being affected by the animals with whom the human species coexists. For Haraway, touching across species demands constantly re-evaluating and reassessing one's relationship to the world and its creatures. Haraway's opening questions thus point toward both literal, physical touch between nonhumans and humans, as well as forms of touch beyond what can be simply felt through fingertips or paws, flesh or fur. By recognizing and emphasizing the world we share with animals, re-signifying human bodies and human flesh in relation to animal bodies and animal flesh becomes an ethical necessity, indeed the condition of possibility for ethical response itself.

To help develop these ideas further, I turn to Jonathan Franzen's latest novel *Freedom* (2010). Through a discussion of Franzen's work, I show that even ethical responses necessitate doing harm to the self or harm to others, but that being in relation to the world—what Franzen calls opening oneself to the possibility of love—demands the pursuit of ethical action in the face of incalculable risk. In this way, being in relation to the world may be understood as a form of touch deeply implicated in matters of the flesh, yet also one suggestive of modes of relation that move across and beyond physical spaces and bodies. Against what could be understood as the novel's anthropocentric leanings, I read the nonhuman animals of *Freedom* as not simply devices for propping up or helping to represent the human. Rather, I suggest that the novel's animals help complicate and challenge straightforwardly human-centric ways of relating to and being in the world by emphasizing the messy web of relations in which humans and nonhumans are entangled.

Bird Matters: Ecological Touch and Risky Interconnectivity in Franzen's *Freedom*

The New York Times praises Franzen's novel for its development of "fully imagined human beings," yet persistent, often unseen nonhuman-animals flit on the margins of this predominantly "human" narrative. As introduced by its opening section detailing the liberal guilt and troubled family life of Minnesota suburbanites Walter and Patty Berglund, *Freedom* explores the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century personal and moral problems of the white American middle class. The narrative follows Walter and Patty's relationship as they meet in college, get married, have two children, take other lovers, separate, and, at the novel's close, ultimately get back together. *Freedom* also briefly presents events from the perspective of Walter's best friend and punk rock star Richard Katz as well as from the perspective of Joey Berglund, Walter and Patty's wayward, money-grubbing son. Throughout, *Freedom* comments on contemporary political, economic, and ecological issues as well as the complex moral decisions and compromises these factors lead the characters to make or to resist making.

As the mouthpiece of what is arguably one of the centerpiece issues taken up by the novel, that is, the anthropogenic destruction of the natural world, Walter Berglund occupies a significant portion of the novel's narrative space detailing his pro-conservationist, pro-environment efforts, and it is through Walter's work to save the endangered cerulean warbler that a nonhuman animal species infiltrates an otherwise "human" story. The persistence of Walter's vocal environmentalism, as well as the significance he places on the preservation of the cerulean warbler and its habitat is

regarded by some reviewers as a distraction from the narrative proper, that is, from a narrative ostensibly *about* human interests and human concerns. According to a review of *Freedom* in *The Washington Post*, Walter's environmental work significantly detracts from the progression of the narrative:

> [F]ar too often, Franzen uses Walter's environmental work to arrest the story, turn toward the audience and hector us about the loss of wildlife, particularly the extinction of songbirds. In the unlikely event that some strip-mining, ocean-dumping, panda-hunting rube stumbles onto this novel, he'll get his comeuppance for sure, but everybody else will probably use these cranky public service announcements as a chance to stretch their legs...Oddly discordant with the story's sophistication, these corny bits are like watching Dick Cheney shoot fish in the face in a barrel.

The *Post* reviewer makes at least two claims worth pointing out: first, that Walter's environmentalism is not intrinsic to the structure or makeup of the story but is rather accessory to a primary, event-driven narrative. I want to linger on the reviewer's suggestion that Walter's environmental work arrests the progression of the narrative to ask what it would mean for Walter's personal and ethical investment in ecological sustainability, wild bird conservation, and natural resource depletion to interrupt a human story (that of the Berglunds and their relations) or even *the* human story generally conceived (that is, a story of exclusively human development, human relationships, or human ways of occupying and existing in the world). What if the *Post* reviewer is in a certain respect right to claim that Walter's environmentalism halts the progression of

narrative events, but that such a pause is in fact a necessary characteristic of entering into relation to the world and, by extension, to its nonhuman inhabitants? I suggest we leave open the possibility that Walter's environmentalism deviates from a human narrative for the sake of deviation itself, as reading Walter's character and actions in this way understands deviation as resisting a straightforward progression of events whose causes and effects may be fully anticipated or known in advance. Instead, deviation stages a suspension of decision and of knowable, fully calculable consequences to events, suggesting that the question that continually haunts, informs, and troubles *Freedom* at the level of both content (what "happens") and style (the "arrest" of the story) is, ultimately, unanswerable: that is, the question of "how to live." We may say, in short, that a concern with nonhuman animals, by interrupting a predominantly human narrative and by raising questions about living in a time of environmental disaster, open a space for critique and for ethical calculation. I therefore read this "interruption" of Walter's environmentalism as unsettling an exclusive focus on the human.

The second noteworthy claim the *Post* reviewer makes about *Freedom* is that the environmental issues it raises are only of relevance to a select kind of unlikely reader, namely a "strip-mining, ocean-dumping, panda-hunting rube." All other readers, the reviewer claims, would take Walter's description of environmental ills as "a chance to stretch their legs" until more pertinent narrative events emerge. Whether or not Walter's environmentalism would only be of *interest* to a few readers is up for debate; nevertheless, the reviewer's assumption here is that environmental concerns only address a hyperbolic, caricatured exploiter of natural resources. By featuring Walter's

environmentalism so prominently in a narrative that explores middle American family life in the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century, the novel suggests that such concerns are relevant to a significant portion of the American public (if not to all Americans, generally speaking). The reviewer's reduction of the urgency conveyed by the novel to “corny bits” comparable to “watching Dick Cheney shoot fish in the face in a barrel” seems entirely to miss Franzen's point: indeed, the reviewer likens Franzen's narrative to an enactment of the very kind of thoughtless violence of which *Freedom* speaks against, that is, the uncritical, unquestioned destruction of nonhuman life by humans in positions of power. Through Walter, the novel presents environmentalism and the self-critique that may accompany it as a meaningful way through which to engage not only a human world, but also a world populated by nonhuman forces and creatures. In this way, *Freedom* demonstrates that thinking the human alongside and through the concerns of animals offers an important way of living in and of keeping in touch with the world.

Thinking interconnectivity, not separateness, and thinking about the dependence of human life on nonhuman life, and vice versa. As Morton writes, “[s]ince everything depends on everything else, we have a very powerful argument for caring about things. The destruction of some things will affect other things” (*TET* 35). Yet a powerful and persistent narrative of separation between human and nonhuman concerns persists despite ample evidence for the interdependence of all things and the porous and permeable boundaries between human and nonhuman. According to this language of separation, a claim to want to help “the planet” is somehow already to set oneself up in opposition to

the human: we may recall Mitt Romney's position on this very point when, during the 2012 Republican National Convention, he declared that while the current president "promised to begin to slow the rise of the oceans and heal the planet," Romney's promise, in contrast, is to "help you and your family." This rhetoric associates caring about the planet with the adoption of an extreme, fanatical position that privileges nonhuman life instead of or in opposition to human life. Admittedly, there exists something deeply disconcerting about thinking interconnectivity as opposed to separation: bringing oneself to be accountable for problems both large and widespread is conceptually difficult, and as we will see, personally and ethically risky as well.

In *Freedom*, Walter Berglund encounters one character in particular who insists on a separation between human and nonhuman interests. Near the end of the novel, this "nice guy," environmental lawyer, activist, and bird lover, after years of living alone and isolating himself from his family, decides to defend the local songbird population from his neighborhood's domestic cats. As Walter explains to the homeowners of Minnesota residential community Canterbridge Estates, "the low-end estimate of songbirds daily murdered by cats in the United States [is] one million, i.e., 365,000,000 per year (and this, he stressed, was a conservative estimate and did not include the starvation of the murdered birds' chicks)" (*Freedom* 545). Walter's repeated use of the word "murder" to describe the destruction caused by cats suggests he understands needless nonhuman animal death as a crime, or at least as deserving of attention and prevention: further, his language here makes no distinction between the typically-privileged lives of humans and those of birds in terms of whether those lives warrant consideration. In attempt to reduce

the number of bird “murders,” Walter visits his neighbors to ask that they keep their cats indoors, a gesture which eventually estranges him from the residential community whose members perceive his love of birds as intrusive, fanatical, and most interestingly, as antithetical to their own values. Linda Hoffbauer in particular, owner of the marauding cat Bobby, resists Walter's efforts more and more staunchly. After taking offense at his multiple suggestions that she keep Bobby indoors for the sake of “some bird” when, after all, “God gave the world to human beings,” Linda tries to rally neighborhood sentiment against Walter and instructs her husband to heap snow in front of Walter's driveway during the winter (543). Increasingly frustrated and incensed at his neighbors', and particularly Linda's, complete lack of concern for the wide variety of North American bird species declining in part due to their cats' preventable activity, Walter traps Bobby the cat and relocates him three-hours away to an urban animal shelter. Once it becomes clear to Linda Hoffbauer that Walter was the likely cause of Bobby's disappearance, she adopts three new cats from the local animal shelter and, immediately after returning home, frees them from their cardboard boxes and shoos them in the direction of Walter's property (548).

In the face of such opposition, Walter's intervention into the ecosystem surrounding Canterbridge Estates and the resistance he elicits from his neighbors evokes one of the central issues raised in Franzen's novel: that is, “how to live” in a problem-riddled world as an ethical and responsible human being. Walter in particular struggles to reconcile his anger and frustration surrounding the vast and numerous ills of anthropogenic environmental destruction with the difficulty of responding ethically and

meaningfully to that destruction and to those creatures (both human and non-human) affected by it. When living on a planet headed, as Walter describes it, toward "total catastrophe...total collapse," the question of how to live also emerges as a question of what, given the present condition of the natural environment and its rapidly depleting resources, can be done, particularly by a single person (323). In Canterbridge Estates alone, Walter's attempt to instantiate a small, local change in a larger and widespread ecological issue meets with apathy and even hatred. Due to concerns more pressing than the "chirping and fluttering world of nature" or because, for Linda Hoffbauer in particular, caring about birds during the twenty-first century's economic recession is a frivolous privilege that makes Walter "the local representative of everything wrong with [the] world," Walter's neighbors reject his efforts at bird conservation, and Walter becomes even more estranged from the residential community (546, 8).

Against the possible suggestion that the question of how to live be answered through detachment and resignation, Franzen tells of his struggle between active worldliness and passive disengagement in his 2011 commencement address at Kenyon College. Franzen explains that he long oscillated between caring about the destruction of the natural world and deciding *not* to care about it after determining he could effect no meaningful change that would help the planet. "But then," Franzen says, "a funny thing happened to me. It's a long story, but basically I fell in love with birds."[5] Franzen explains that he *had* to worry about the environment after falling in love with birds, as the

[5] Citations refer to the edited version of Franzen's address as published by *The New York Times* on May 28, 2011 titled "Liking is for Cowards. Go for What Hurts." For the full audio version of the address, see "Jonathan Franzen's Commencement Address at Kenyon College."

preservation of certain natural habitats are necessary for the survival of many species. Yet, instead of feeling encumbered by rage and hopelessness over impending planetary doom, his involvement in bird conservation made it "easier, not harder, to live with...anger and despair and pain." At the conclusion of his address, Franzen says:

> When you stay in your room and rage or sneer or shrug your shoulders, as I did for many years, the world and its problems are impossibly daunting. But when you go out and put yourself in real relation to real people, or even just real animals, there's a very real danger that you might love some of them. And who knows what might happen to you then? ("What Hurts")

Refusing detachment and entering into relation to real people and real animals offers a response to the question of how to live, and Franzen advocates putting oneself at risk for love. In *Freedom*, Walter's character and actions mirror Franzen's emphasis on being-in-relation to the world and its inhabitants. As Walter explains, "I took the job [saving warblers] in the first place...because I couldn't sleep at night. I couldn't stand what was happening to the country" (218). In Walter's case, to care for country and to care for himself means caring for birds. Against the argument that the extinction of the cerulean warbler would only mean the loss of "one bird," Walter responds, "[e]very species has an inalienable right to keep existing" (219). Walter finds sleep at night when he determines to fulfill his responsibility to the not mutually-exclusive concerns of country, self, and environment by helping the cerulean warbler to live. While such an active engagement with the world may make possible a working through of negative affects (such as the anger, despair, and pain Franzen experienced, as well as Walter's angry and anxious loss

of sleep), opening oneself to others and to the “very real danger” of love also means exposing oneself to harm. As Franzen points out in his address, “the big risk here is rejection,” both from the object(s) of one's love, and, as depicted in Franzen's novel, from those who disapprove of the person who loves. In the instance of Canterbridge Estates, too, Walter's effort to save songbirds alienates him from his neighbors who reject not only his enthusiasm for wild bird conservation, but also Walter himself.

Freedom stages its characters' struggle with the question of how to live by showing that the choice to enter into relation with the world risks another kind of harm: ethical failure. Walter's effort to save what he loves unleashes three new cats on the very songbirds he abducts Bobby to save, likely decreasing the birds' chances of survival. Yet, beyond the consequence of Walter's actions for the birds themselves, to focus only on Walter's bird-friendly agenda is to say nothing of his unethical response to Bobby the cat, or of Walter's unethical response to the human family whose pet he relocates to an animal shelter where Bobby might be either adopted or euthanized. Walter's attempts to act on his love for the environment continually risk—and often come at the cost of—ethical failure. On a larger scale, too, Walter's work with the Cerulean Mountain Trust and his efforts to save a single endangered bird species from extinction entangle him in the environmentally-devastating practice of mountaintop removal. To secure habitat space for the cerulean warbler, Walter arranges for coal-hungry investors to devastate a hundred-square mile section of West Virginia. Before it can be reclaimed as a warbler preserve, the site must have its “ridgetop rock blasted away to expose the underlying seams of coal,” thereby filling surrounding valleys with rubble and obliterating

biologically rich streams (*Freedom* 211). Although some environmentalists in West Virginia disagree, Walter is hardly an ethically compromised figure: the novel features his constant self-conflict and struggles to act responsibly towards his family and to the world, and his commitment to making "good" choices in his personal life and in his career is unmatched by any other character in the novel. Yet even Walter's love cannot help but expose Walter himself *as well as* Bobby the cat and a mountaintop in West Virginia to multiple forms of harm.

In his commencement address and more elaborately through his novel, Franzen insists that an openness to harming and being harmed is a necessary condition for an active engagement with the world and its inhabitants. If we understand the central question of *Freedom*—how to live?—to be in part a question about ethics and the possibility of ethical response, then the challenge of living ethically in the world crystallizes around the difficulty of responding to even one problem or to even one other (in Franzen's speech, "real people" or "real animals") in a way that avoids ethically harming anyone (or any *thing*) else. That ethical failure is a necessary condition for ethical response is an issue that preoccupied Jacques Derrida throughout much of his career. Derrida explains that, even as he writes or speaks about ethical action, he nevertheless "betray[s] at every moment all my other obligations: my obligations to the other others whom I know or don't know, the billions of my fellows (without mentioning the animals that are even more other others than my fellows), my fellows who are dying of starvation or sickness" ("Whom to Give To" 69). Even as he speaks or writes in a way that endeavors to do no violence or harm to others, he still neglects billions of ethical

calls demanding his response at any given moment. Importantly, however, Derrida continues to write and to address his audience: that is, he does not declare the question of ethics meaningless because of the innumerable others who call to him at any moment and to whom he cannot respond. Derrida continues to act, much as Walter continues to act, in the face of his own ethical failures and neglect.

In the texts discussed above, a concern with humans' particular ethical responsibility toward animals emerges out of a consideration of ethics in general: Franzen and Derrida alike show that animals cannot be excluded from a conversation either about ethics or about actively engaging with the world. Because of what Derrida calls the "*unprecedented* proportions of the subjection of the animal" that have intensified and accelerated over the past two centuries (and because of the denial of compassion for animals that has accompanied such subjection), Derrida demands that the war between those who would extend ethical consideration to animals and those who would refuse this consideration be rigorously thought (*The Animal* 25). Derrida insists that the answer to Jeffrey Benthem's famous question, "Can they [animals] suffer?" is *undeniably* "yes": he also emphasizes that despite this undeniable fact, "men do all they can in order to dissimulate this cruelty or to hide it from themselves; in order to organize on a global scale the forgetting or misunderstanding of this violence, which some would compare to the worst cases of genocide" (26).[6] By moving the conversation to center on man's denial

[6] For Derrida, Benthem's "Can they suffer?" frames the question of the animal to focus not on the animal's ability (that is, its capacity to think, reason, or speak) but on the animal's *in*ability, that is, its passivity, the "not-being-able" of suffering, a fundamental fact of life that humans share with animals and out of which compassion or pity may emerge. For Derrida's discussion of Benthem, see *The Animal*, esp. pp. 27-9. For an illuminating reading of Derrida and the two forms of "finitude" that humans share with animals, see Cary Wolfe, "Exposures."

of the animal suffering that "everybody knows" about, Derrida again raises the issue of ethical failure and neglect, but this time, he addresses a *categorical* ethical neglect based on species difference (26). The human's continuous and extensive violence toward the animal depends on a disavowal of animal suffering and compassion towards animals; consequently, an avoidance of ethical calculation or care structures many human-animal relationships. That animals are denied ethical consideration *simply because they are animals* is the central feature of what Wolfe terms "the institution of speciesism," or "the ethical acceptability of the systematic 'noncriminal putting to death' of animals based solely on their species" (*Animal Rites* 7).[7] In situations wherein the concerns of humans and the concerns of animals conflict, the institution of speciesism ensures that the concerns of the human take precedence over any concerns of the animal, and this categorical denial of ethical responsibility to animals thereby legitimates in advance the noncriminal exploitation of animals.

If as Derrida suggests in "Knowing Whom To Give To" that every attempt at an ethical response to an other comes at the expense of innumerable responses to other others, than why not excuse the subjection of animals as another inevitable ethical neglect? The answer, I suggest, again has to do with categorically denying animals ethical consideration, or with determining the status of animals as unavailable or unworthy of such consideration in advance. This is certainly Linda Hoffbauer's

[7] I would push Wolfe to add the "noncriminal inflicting of violence" to his succinct definition of the institution of speciesism. "Noncriminal putting to death," a phrase Wolfe borrows from Derrida, is certainly one, though not the only, essential characteristic of the institution of speciesism, which also legitimates in advance the tortured lives of most animals produced for flesh foods, to name one of the many institutionally-sanctioned abuses of animals. In other words, the putting to death of animals who suffer continuously in life is hardly the only "noncriminal" crime with which to concern ourselves, a point I think might be emphasized in any consideration of the range of ways animals are denied ethical consideration.

determination in *Freedom*: as she tells Walter in response to his plea for songbirds' right to live, "[M]y children matter more to me than the children of some bird. I don't think that's an extreme position, compared to yours. God gave the world to human beings, and that's the end of the story as far as I'm concerned" (543). What if the assertion that God gave the world to human beings was, in fact, the end of the story, the end of *Freedom*'s story, that is? Or, in other words, why does the novel refuse to ask the question "how to live" from a strictly human perspective? Linda's assertion reveals both that she does not want to think about the welfare of birds or of the local ecosystem ("that's the end of the story"), but that her care for her children must be independent from any care she could extend to birds. In other words, she understands care for animals as an "extreme position" and therefore incommensurate with professing care for human children: for Linda, there is a way to care exclusively about humans, that is, to care about humans without also having to care about animals (543).

If, as I have suggested, *Freedom* theorizes about how to live as an ethical and responsible human being amidst the anthropogenic environmental destruction of the twenty-first century, then Linda's assertion of human and animal separateness—that the two can and should be thought as having independent, non-convergent interests and concerns—serves as a counterpoint to the overall moral stance of the narrative. Indeed, what perhaps best characterizes Walter's effort to save the cerulean warbler is not necessarily ethical "failure," but rather its attempt to act on and to take into account the fact that, as he says, "everything's interconnected," including, oddly enough, the interests of billionaires, coal companies, and wild birds (212). Despite the ecological devastation

involved with mountaintop removal, Walter insists that as long as reclamation of the mined-out land is performed correctly, a “very lush and biodiverse forest” ideal for cerulean warbler families could grow afterward, as well as one safe from further exploitation by the coal industry (214). Because of its initial destructiveness, however, many environmentalists oppose the practice of mountaintop removal: as Walter explains, “our plan isn’t just about preserving the warbler, it’s about creating an advertisement for doing things right. But the environmental mainstream doesn’t want to talk about doing things right, because doing things right would make the coal companies look less villainous and MTR more palatable politically” (214). In Walter's estimation, “doing things right” does not mean denying human involvement in the destruction of the natural world: instead, it means risking the subversion of traditional conservationist narratives in favor of a more complex view, one that does not posit easy distinctions between heroic environmentalists and “villainous” coal companies (214). Rather than take an approach to warbler conservation that attempts to avoid the intricate web of relations and motivations that bring a set of typically-divergent interests together, Walter’s choice to work with the aims of mountaintop removal in order to pursue a larger goal embraces rather than ignores the potential intersections between ecology and capitalism, wild birds and human beings. To categorically neglect ethical care and concern for animals, then, is not only to ignore the myriad ways in which the lives of humans and animals are implicated in one another, but also to refuse to admit the human’s own status as one species of living creature among many, one whose interests cannot be thought of as independent from the concerns of animals.

As Franzen emphasizes in his novel and in his speech, being in relation to the world and its inhabitants also means putting oneself (and potentially others) at risk for harm. As I suggested previously, too, thinking interconnectivity comes with no small exposure to such risk. The complex web of relationships and dependencies, of actions and outcomes revealed by thinking interconnectivity threaten to overwhelm and make futile any attempts at intervention. Denying involvement and responsibility appears easier than working through big problems. That said, I read Franzen's novel as offering a way to think the big *through* the small, to *see* interconnectivity with and through something as tiny and as *other* to the human as a bird.

What is it about *birds*, anyway? Most of the birds in Franzen's novel go largely unseen: no cerulean warblers, Walter's endangered species of choice, are ever physically encountered in the novel, and aside from a cross-country birdwatching trip embarked upon by Walter and his lover Lalitha, birds are more often than not referred to rather than encountered directly. When birds do "appear" in the novel, they do so in the binoculars or camera lenses of birdwatchers pleased to glimpse a shy species. The relative dearth of direct human-bird interaction may therefore limit Franzen's narrative from offering us a way to think about touch as occurring on the immediate, tangible level of skin, fur, or feathers. What *Freedom* does offer, however, is the possibility of imagining touch in terms of "being in touch" with the world, of thinking interconnectivity through an attention to both the material bodies and the material dependencies of others. Indeed, the novel is unarguably preoccupied with the physical, worldly realities involved with sharing an earth with birds, even though those birds do not always appear "in the flesh."

That the novel thinks on bird matters even in the birds' frequent physical absence is, I would argue, one way in which the novel helps us think interconnectivity, to imagine the mutual implicatedness of the world's inhabitants even when the points of connection between living things are not immediately apparent. Indeed, the ways in which humans and nonhumans are inextricably connected to and implicated in the lives of one another might not always be either readily visible or even fully comprehensible, which makes imagining what is perhaps not physically present but *is,* nevertheless, a material, physical part of the world, essential to thinking touch and interconnection. In other words, thinking the connections between humans and nonhumans means that one does not have to be a birdwatcher to see birds everywhere, and that interspecies touch and thinking about fleshy, material connections between beings extends beyond the reach of the fingertips and deeper than the epidermis.

The cerulean warbler, Franzen's novel informs us, is a migratory bird. It makes its home in "mature temperate hardwood forests, with a stronghold in southern West Virginia" (210). Like many other North American songbirds, the warbler spends the winter months in South America. As a result, Walter's efforts to save the warbler by preserving the forests in which it lives leads him to reserve not only an area of West Virginia forest, but also huge swatches of warbler-friendly land in Columbia. What ethologists have discovered about migratory birds, too, is not simply the locations that birds travel between (although such distances between locations are vast for many species), but also *how* they navigate from place to place. According to zoologist Tim Birkhead, migratory birds possess what he terms a *magnetic sense,* one that "allows them

to read compass directions from the earth's magnetic field" (175). According to Birkhead, too, "birds also possess a magnetic map that allows them to identify their location" (175). No specific organ is dedicated to this "magnetic sense": rather, unlike light and sound, "magnetic sensations...pass through body tissues...it is possible for a bird...to detect magnetic fields via chemical reactions inside individual cells throughout its entire body" (175-7). Through their very body tissues, birds can feel the magnetic pull of the earth. Using this information, they can determine not only where they are in the world, but also which direction they need to go, which way is "home." This combination of a "map sense" and "compass sense" means that birds are continuously feeling in the very tissues of their bodies a situatedness, a sense of their location relative to other possible locations. In short, birds *feel* their position within the world and how they are connected to it. Their magnetic sense is, fundamentally, a sense of the global, a sense of relation, and a sense of connectivity.

When Franzen explains, then, that he had to worry about the environment after falling in love with birds, perhaps it is because to think birds *necessitates* thinking the environment. By further extension, perhaps to think birds is also to think about the world and one's own position in it. Thinking the nonhuman in *Freedom*, therefore, is also a way of engaging life and even of answering the novel's persistent question of "how to live." For, if what we learn from Walter Berglund and Jonathan Franzen alike is that trying to save one loved thing is also a way of saving oneself from hopelessness and despair, then we must also conclude that the lives of birds are not simply matters "for the birds," and not simply a concern for a select group of humans who elect to care about a species other

than their own. Rather, bird matters are global matters, ecological matters, and our matters. As I argued above, too, attempting to respond ethically to animals means relinquishing a certain established understanding of the human body as exceptional, and that the human species, positioned alongside other animals and ecosystems, *also* has a stake in what happens to a world neither exclusively human nor exclusively nonhuman. As if to echo some of Franzen's sentiments, Morton argues that putting oneself in in relation to the world also means putting oneself in a position of precarity and uncertainty alongside the filth of the earth:

> Instead of trying to pull the world out of the mud, we could jump down into the mud...[W]e admit that we have a choice. We choose and accept our own death, and the fact of mortality among species and ecosystems. This is the ultimate rationality: holding our mind open for the absolutely unknown that is to come. (*Ecology Without Nature* 205)

Even though Walter finds a way to sleep at night thanks to his investment in birds and in environmental conservation, the question that persists throughout Franzen's novel—how to live?—emerges as perpetually and finally unanswerable. Walter's birds do not, strictly speaking, *teach* him how to live: rather, they help show that the very unanswerability of "how to live," as well as the willingness to leave open and to continue asking the question, is itself the condition of possibility for ethics. As Morton articulates, too, being in relation means stepping down from the pedestal of human superiority and into the mud alongside other living creatures. Central, too, is Morton's invocation of a shared future, one in which the concerns of humans and the concerns of animals are not understood as

mutually exclusive, but as intimately connected. This interconnection is, finally, what our thinking of touch—of living bodies in relation and in the world—can help us both represent and remember. A certain definition of the human as above or beyond the concerns of ecosystems, birds, and all the animals whose bodies are touched and who touch us, refuses to imagine this shared future. Touch, as well as all of the vulnerability, intimacy, danger, and pleasure touch suggests, gives us a framework through which to help think the radically uncertain future of humans and nonhumans alike.

Chapter Two

"His Guts Are All Out of Him": Faulkner's Eruptive Animals[8]

After his dog was struck and killed by a car in a hit-and-run accident, William Faulkner wrote a short essay about the incident entitled "His Name Was Pete." Published in the *Oxford Eagle* on August 15, 1946, the essay explains how Faulkner's fifteen-month-old pointer dog Pete, friendly to humans and simple in his daily wants and expectations, stood in the road waiting for his young mistress to catch up with him when a motorcar driven by a hurried man sped up the road and struck Pete, "broken andcrying," into a roadside ditch (202). Faulkner explains that the driver was late for supper and therefore could not be bothered to either avoid Pete in the first place or to pause to check on the injured animal after the accident. Faulkner also implies that the other reason for the driver's lack of pause was that the creature in the road was "just a dog": throughout this brief piece, Faulkner describes Pete as "just" or "only" a dog three times, and his overall characterization of Pete as an unassuming creature emphasizes Pete's unremarkability. Faulkner's description of Pete's insignificance culminates in his reconstruction of the scene surrounding the hit-and-run:

[8] This is a working paper for "'His Guts Are All out of Him': Faulkner's Eruptive Animals," *Journal of Modern Literature*, Indiana University Press, forthcoming 2014-15.

> He shouldn't have been in the road. He paid no road tax, held no driver's license, didn't vote. Perhaps his trouble was that the motorcar which lived in the same yard he lived in had a horn and brakes on it and he thought they all did. To say he didn't see the car because the car was between him and the late afternoon sun is a bad excuse because that brings the question of vision into it and certainly no one unable with the sun at his back to see a grown pointer dog on a curveless two-lane highway would think of permitting himself to drive a car at all, let alone without either horn or brakes because next time Pete might be a human child and killing human children with motorcars is against the law. (201)

Faulkner imagines more reasons to account for the accident: Pete had no political standing or legal right to be in the road; he made poor assumptions about unfamiliar cars; and he and the driver of the car may have had difficulty seeing each other because of the sunlight. Although Faulkner concedes that the first two factors could have contributed to Pete's death, he calls impaired visibility a “bad excuse,” as the driver's ability to see clearly with the sun at his back would have been an essential skill for avoiding hitting and killing human children (who are, Faulkner suggests, worth avoiding at least because the law prohibits striking them with cars whereas dogs have no such legal protections). By dismissing impaired vision as a valid reason for Pete's death, Faulkner implies that were Pete a human child, the driver would have taken care to avoid him. Pete, however, was “only a dog.” By setting up this contrast between human child and grown pointer dog,

Faulkner proposes that, combined with the driver's hurry to get home for supper, Pete's status as an insignificant animal led to his death in a roadside ditch.

Even though Faulkner accounts for his dog's death by contrasting the supposed unimportance of an animal's life to the importance of a human's life, the essay emphasizes in its title, opening line, and ironic tone the name of the animal that was killed: Pete. As ordinary and as humble as the dog himself, the oft-mentioned name "Pete" as well as Faulkner's twice-repeated declaration that this creature *had* a name invites a closer examination of the essay's own description of Pete's insignificance. Faulkner writes that Pete's humble demands of the world included "earth to run on; air to breathe, sun and rain in their seasons and the covied quail which were his heritage," as well as food "given with affection—a touch of a hand, a voice he knew even if he could not understand and answer the words it spoke" (201). Pete's wants were neither extravagant nor even particular to dogs: his desire for air, earth, food, and affectionate touch hardly amounted to more than the basic requirements for animal life. Rather than describe Pete as special among dogs or even among animals, Faulkner shows that Pete's simplicity and unassuming nature should be valued in its own right. Indeed, little of Faulkner's description of Pete suggests that he was more remarkable or more worthy of life than any other dog or even any other animal: as he writes, Pete "expected little of the world into which he came without past and nothing of immortality either" (201). Pete is not an animal born with great cultural or historical significance—he has no "past"—nor did his once-existence become weighted with meaning after his death: he has "nothing of immortality" (201). What the essay implies, then, is that what a living thing *represents*

for human culture—whether that living thing is “just a dog” without history, or whether that living thing is a human child imbued with the immense discursive burden of what it means to be “human”—should not determine whether that living thing is granted or denied life. By repeating Pete's name and by memorializing his existence through the essay, Faulkner reveals the sarcasm inherent in his description of Pete as only a dog that could be thoughtlessly killed.

Faulkner does not specify what Pete may *be* other than just a dog. Instead, his description of Pete's base, material needs of food, air, earth, and friendly touch emphasizes Pete's bodily reality rather than any symbolic quality that he may possess or any category of being (such as “human” or “animal”) into which he might fit. Further, by setting up a contrast between Pete's status as “just a dog” unworthy of the motorcar driver's consideration and a depiction of Pete's material, embodied life, Faulkner reveals a key discrepancy between the driver's conceptual understanding of Pete as “just a dog” who could be struck and killed without consequence and Faulkner's own encounter with Pete as a singular, living creature. By accentuating both Pete's individual qualities and his material life, Faulkner differentiates “dog” as an abstract concept referring to all dogs in general (yet no dog or dogs in particular or in body) from *a* dog in specific: in this case, Pete. Faulkner implies that Pete's physical reality and former life was irreducible to the concept or category “dog” insofar as dismissing Pete as “just a dog” necessitates an ignorance or a disregard of the ways in which Pete was worthy of life despite the lack of cultural and/or historical significance attributed to his species or to his existence as a non-

human animal.[9] When Pete's existence was reduced to an abstraction, Faulkner suggests, his existence *became* dismissible, unimportant. Ultimately, then, "His Name Was Pete" addresses a breach of ethics: the motorcar driver's treatment of Pete as a merely killable animal—"just a dog"—rather than as a living thing whose material existence and embodied life demanded (and deserved) ethical consideration.[10]

In "His Name Was Pete," Faulkner raises the question of why Pete was killed by setting up a contrast between the concept of "dog" in general and the living, embodied materiality of Pete. Although surprisingly little criticism takes up Faulkner's exploration of the discrepancy between the animal in concept and an animal or animals (in this case, Pete) in body and in life, much critical attention has been dedicated to Faulkner's exploration of the tensions between lived experience, fleshy embodiment, and the discursive systems and practices of language which attempt to capture that lived, material world. As Addie Bundren of *As I Lay Dying* (1930) famously attests, "words are no good...words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at," an issue Faulkner's work continually engages on the levels of both style and plot (*AILD* 171). If the complexities of lived experience are incommensurate with the words available to describe them as Addie suggests, we may read in much of Faulkner's work an illustration of this very struggle to communicate or to represent the material world—including ways in which material bodies relate, interact, and touch—through the inadequate and insufficient means of

[9] Here I have in mind Derrida's distinction between his little cat that looks at him and the long history of significances attributed to felines in *The Animal that Therefore I Am*. For an extended discussion of this moment in Derrida, see below to pages 8-9.
[10] I invoke Donna Haraway's concept of animals made available for killing here and more thoroughly in Chapter I. For Haraway's discussion of animal life being made available for killing and as demanding ethical consideration, see *When Species Meet*, esp. Ch. 3, "Sharing Suffering."

language. As I have shown through my reading of "His Name Was Pete," Faulkner's effort to represent animals in part as members of lived, material worlds invites an interrogation of the ways in which Faulkner's animals are neither simply metaphors for human ideas, concerns, or characters, nor do they fit with perfect consistency into human systems of discourse.

In a key piece of criticism, Jay Watson pushes against the dominant trend in Faulkner studies of "comb[ing] [Faulkner's] novels for their occulted metaphors and elaborate symbol systems" (70). Instead, Watson rightly calls attention to the way in which the natural world—facets of material reality that resist easy assimilation into language—erupts "into the midst of a discursive field" in Faulkner's novels (68). Although Watson examines what he calls "the literal" in Faulkner's work, he is careful to define this term as not what is separate from or outside of language, but rather as that which is potentially disruptive of and difficult to capture within systems of representation. Watson explains:

> The natural world, of which body and blood are elements, exerts pressure on representation, even as it is shaped and partially constituted by representation, and even though it can never be apprehended in representation's absence, as some sort of unmediated reality. What we must try to do...is to read for the traces and afteraffects of the real in discourse, the rents, rifts, and ripples it leaves there, the strain it introduces into language and the noises with which it interrupts the apparently seamless functioning of representation. (70)

For Addie Bundren, words do not completely "fit" lived reality, and likewise for Jay Watson, "the real" exerts pressure on language and therefore cannot be fully contained by it. Watson's suggestion that critics read with an eye turned toward the moments in which the literal seems not to fit into words or into discursive structures invites an interrogation of the ways a variety of irreducibly fleshy, material, living, and organic pieces of the natural world resist, undo, and remake Faulkner's language. An attention to the literal may also motivate Faulkner scholars to explore the moments in which Faulkner's high modernist prose, frequently studied and celebrated for its figures and tropes, yields to or struggles to capture a lived and felt world that is immediate and touchable, as well as a world that touches its members back.

It is important that Watson selects *blood* as his exemplary object of study for his analysis of the literal in Faulkner's work. Not only is blood in Faulkner's South wrought with discursive significance, serving as a metaphor for and indicator of race, behavior, character, and breeding, but also blood is of the body: that is, blood is a particular, material substance whose value as a metaphor has little to do with its biological function. The separation between blood's metaphoric and literal values is not simply a matter of words not "meaning what they say," but rather an instance of a symbolic abstraction divorced from any particular, material existence. In the case of blood, too, the separation between literal and symbolic values provides the ground upon which exclusionary, discriminatory, and often violent acts are justified. In other words, often when blood is invoked and understood according to its metaphoric value (and therefore as an indicator of racial identity, to use a predominant example from *Light in August* (1932), the central

novel of Watson's study), such metaphoric value can be used in order to legitimate violence against blood-bearing bodies in turn. Through his reading of Faulkner, Watson further explains how literal blood is expropriated by metaphor: “Faulkner isolates discourse...as the ultimate ground of the novel's pervasive racial violence: but for the power of metaphors like 'black blood,' the blood and vomit of *Light in August* might never have flowed” (94). For Watson, the metaphoric value of blood begets physical violence and the shedding of literal blood. By recapturing the “literal meaning” of blood, a part of “the material body as opposed to the cultural field,” I see Watson exposing the constructedness of metaphors about the body, the material world, and organic life that are often used to legitimate violence against those very bodies, worlds, and lives such metaphors claim to represent (71). Focusing exclusively on blood’s function as a metaphor risks obfuscating, or worse, *appropriating* and *ignoring* the literal value of blood as a vital fluid constitutive of many particular, singular, concrete living bodies. The metaphor or concept of blood does not and cannot represent the literal value of blood as a ubiquitous and essential material force and substance in the world.

I see the promise of Watson's piece arising both from his turn towards what he terms “the literal” as a rich site of critical inquiry as well as from the possible ethical stakes of his analysis. Exploring the moments in which the literal escapes, exceeds, or erupts from its confinement within systems of discourse provides an opportunity to recognize the material consequences of the way we use abstract language and conceptual frameworks to determine the terms of relations. The power of blood as a metaphor signifying race, character, and behavior in Faulkner's South, for example, contributes

significantly to Joe Christmas's death in *Light in August,* his imagined black blood prefiguring his guilt and legitimating his macabre end as much as any violent crime he commits. I want to take seriously Watson's call to examine “the literal” in Faulkner's work and to argue that the fleshy bodies and worldly beings that appear in Faulkner's novels often do so not *simply* as metaphors. Rather, I see Faulkner's work grappling with the discrepancy between the singular and the abstract, the literal and the metaphorical, as well as with what happens when the conceptual appropriates and claims to know that which is material, particular, and embodied. I will demonstrate that privileging the conceptual and metaphoric to the exclusion of the literal and the particular risks foreclosing the possibility of ethical relations and ethical response to those particular, living beings for whom metaphors and concepts claim to speak for and signify.

Animals are frequent fixtures in Faulkner's work, yet the appearance and importance of animals in his fiction has received alarmingly little critical exploration. When Faulkner scholars do turn their attention to animals, they typically restrict their analyses to explorations of animals' symbolic value or to the ways in which animals reveal something about Faulkner's human characters. When it comes to analyzing animals, therefore, Faulkner scholars tend to reproduce the very divide between concept and “reality,” or between “the animal” as a concept and animals as living creatures, that Faulkner's work complicates. Derrida addresses this very discrepancy between speaking about “the animal in general” and speaking about specific, embodied, living animals. He calls the generalization of “every living thing that is held not to be human” into the general, reductive concept of “the animal” a gesture that ignores such differences among

species as those between the lizard and the dog, a protozoon and the dolphin, and the shark and the lamb (Derrida 31, 34). What inspires Derrida's meditation on animals as well as his rejection of the category of the animal in general, of course, is his encounter with a living animal: his cat. Not the *figure* of a cat, as Derrida insists, and not "an allegory for all the cats on the earth, the felines that traverse our myths and religions, literature and fables" (6). Derrida presses this point, acknowledging in the process the history of rendering animals not as embodied creatures that can be looked at and can themselves look, can be touched and can themselves touch, but as metaphors, figures, and symbols; in short, as disembodied, abstract concepts:

> My cat, the cat that looks at me in my bedroom or bathroom, this cat is perhaps not 'my cat' or 'my pussycat,' does not appear to represent, like an ambassador, the immense symbolic responsibility with which our culture has always charged the feline race…If I say 'it is a real cat' that sees me naked, this is to mark its unsubstitutable singularity…[I]t comes to me as this irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked. Nothing can ever rob me of the certainty that what we have here is an existence that refuses to be conceptualized. (9)

Here, Derrida differentiates the symbolic, figural, representative cat from the actual, "irreplaceable living being" that looks at him (9). This embodied, living cat is irreducible to metaphor or to abstraction: as "an existence that refuses to be conceptualized," this singular, material animal is not *the* animal, but *an* animal: she is not representative of *all*

cats, but is instead a single, actual cat. This seemingly simple and familiar scene of a meeting between human and animal is, in the history of Western philosophy, a shift away from speaking generally about the animal, a category always-already differentiated from the human, to speaking about the unique and embodied lives of animals. As Derrida begins to highlight, the discourse of "the animal," although seemingly concerned with difference when it comes to separating human from animal, fails to offer a way of talking about actual animals or even an actual animal. In short, "the animal" as concept gets in the way of a thoughtful engagement with an animal or animals even as it claims to speak about them.

On the rare occasion that Faulkner scholars attend to the animals that appear in his work, they tend to resort to the language of "the animal" in general insofar as they treat animals as abstractions, as always already invested with symbolic or metaphorical value. The "immense symbolic responsibility" that Derrida expressly refuses to attribute to his actual, little cat is the very sort of symbolic responsibility that Faulkner's critics attribute to Faulkner's animals (9). For critics, Faulkner's animals are representative of an idea, history, discourse, or set of behaviors. They are never representations of *animals* with physical, embodied lives. To demonstrate both what this oversight means for Faulkner scholarship as well as for a study of animals in literature more generally, I will discuss a piece of criticism that vividly exhibits the symptoms endemic to Faulkner criticism as a whole. In her article "Faulkner's Playful Bestiary: Seeing Gender through Ovidian Eyes," Gail Mortimer opens with the question of animal presences in Faulkner's work. Recalling her students' concern with Faulkner's treatment of animals, Mortimer writes that,

“Faulkner, [the students] complain, regularly portrays violent scenes of animal abuse...Horses and mules in Faulkner's stories are regularly beaten or driven into raging rivers where they drown, dogs are viciously kicked, wild ponies are shackled together with barbed wire...And all of this is without authorial comment” (53). Mortimer continues by explaining that she had not previously dwelt on these incidents of animal abuse in Faulkner's work, as they often appear within humorous contexts or to emphasize the general viciousness of a human character. What she learned from her students, she claims, is that her readings of Faulkner had perhaps been “too exclusively drawn to the portrait of a *human* character's desperation, fury, or sense of entrapment” (54, italics original). At first, therefore, it appears as if Mortimer is invested in pursuing a reading about animal suffering in Faulkner beyond what such suffering tells about his human characters.

As her article proceeds, however, it becomes clear that Mortimer's analysis provides little to suggest that Faulkner's animals might be read as more than just another set of symbols or figures for the human. Despite the instances of animal abuse to which she initially points, Mortimer promptly shifts her attention to discuss Faulkner's characters' history of attributing animal characteristics to other humans and human characteristics to animals. When Mortimer abandons her reading of animal suffering in Faulkner's work, she also abandons the insight she claimed to have gained from her students: that perhaps her engagement with Faulkner was too anthropocentric (my term, not Mortimer's) in its focus. She ultimately seems to find the depictions of animal suffering prevalent in Faulkner's work interesting or worthy of mention only insofar as

they are yet another indicator of human brutality. It would seem that, according to Moritmer's analysis, animals appear in Faulkner's work solely as extensions of human characters. She treats *The Hamlet* (1940) as representative of the parallels Faulkner often draws between humans and animals, arguing that Eula Snopes and Ike Snopes' cow share numerous traits, traits that ultimately help “expose the source of masculine anxiety about the female” (48). Mortimer's final conclusion, that “Faulkner's stories are like Ovid's in using animals to echo and isolate salient features of our lives as humans and in reminding us thereby of our ineluctable participation in the physicality of our world,” quizzically falls short of the full implications initially implied by her reading of Ike Snopes' love for the cow. By concentrating on the cow's status as a metaphor for Eula Snopes and for the feminine more generally, Mortimer subordinates the fact that it is a *cow* that enables Ike to develop “new capacities as a human being” through his love for an animal (57).

How differently would Mortimer's analysis have proceeded had she explored the difficulty and complexity of her original insight, namely that Faulkner's work includes numerous depictions of animal abuse and cruelty to animals, and that her own reading practices focus almost exclusively on human characters? Does Faulkner ultimately dismiss the import of animal suffering, or might the numerous scenes of such suffering indicate a deeper concern for animal life? And what might an interrogation of anthropocentric reading practices—those that, as I have suggested, proceed by treating animals as simple figures for human characters or behavior—help us understand about the ways in which the concerns of animals (including, but not limited to, animal

suffering) are often rendered *invisible* by our own discursive or analytic methods?[11] Rather than engage these or any related questions, Mortimer's reading is symptomatic of a human exceptionalism that works by excluding animals from extended, rigorous concern. Her analysis thus participates in, rather than offers a critique of, the very anthropocentrism that many of Faulkner's human characters themselves demonstrate.

As noted earlier, Mortimer is by no means alone in her reading of animals as metaphors for humans or of animals as symbolic abstractions rather than representations of living creatures with interests of their own.[12] As I explored through Jay Watson's article, the reduction of the particular into the abstract risks treating material, embodied life as known in advance and as available for a denial of ethical consideration. I argue that these two closely linked tendencies inform not only much Faulknerian literary scholarship, but also many instances and established structures of human-animal relations. One of the most visible effects of reading or understanding animals on a strictly abstract or metaphorical level is that the category of the animal in general becomes associated with a long legacy of generalized "characteristics" that dictate the way actual animals are regarded and treated. Historically, desirable attributes such as subjectivity,

[11] My invocation of the potential "invisibility" of animal suffering in literary criticism and elsewhere is intended to recall the work of Carol J. Adams. Adams suggests that the production of meat makes animals into absent referents, that is, "animals in name and body are made absent as animals for meat to exist" (51). In a related vein, I want to ask to what extent our own privilege of human characters and human concerns as objects of literary analysis make animals and the concerns of animals invisible, or to what extent our reading of animals as metaphors or figures for the human dismiss the possibility of reading animals as animals. For more on animals as absent referents, see Adams, esp. Ch. 1 and 3.

[12] Lorie Watkins Fulton, for example, provides an analysis analogous in many ways to Mortimer's in terms of its reading of horses and cows in *The Hamlet* as providing the basis for many traditional and untraditional markers of human masculinity and femininity. Fulton provides little to no analysis of the horses and cows themselves, however, or of animals considered independently of their use as figures for the human. For a prolonged discussion of the use of horses and cows to help describe human characters in *The Hamlet*, see Fulton.

agency, and language have been assigned to the exclusive purview of the human, whereas qualities such as savagery and irrationality are frequently associated with the animal. The exercise of the too-generalized category of "the human" and equally general category of "the animal" carries with it a potentially dangerous and politically-charged anthropocentrism that may mobilize the discourse of the animal against non-human and human animals alike. As Cary Wolfe explains, this anthropocentrism or "institution of speciesism" "relies on the tacit agreement that the full transcendence of the 'human' requires the sacrifice of the 'animal' and the animalistic, which in turn makes possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in what Derrida will call a 'noncriminal putting to death' of other humans as well by marking *them* as animal" (6). The category of the animal in general, then, when applied to either non-human animals or human animals, relies on a discourse of exclusion for all those marked animal and thus outside the privileged position of the human.[13]

For a novel primarily studied for its exploration of race relations in the post-Civil War American South, Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942) is populated by a vast collection of non-human animals. Horses, squirrels, bucks, does, mules, bears, a snake, a fox, a colt, several varieties of dog (pets, hounds, and fyce dogs), two legendary beasts, the great mongrel Lion and the giant bear Old Ben, as well as innumerable references to other animals both wild and domestic comprise the expansive bestiary of the novel. The

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[13] Wolfe's discussion of the discourse of speciesism may be productively brought into conversation with Agamben's concept of the "anthropological machine." The machine marks what is "human" and "animal" both in order to define the human in opposition to the animal (by locating the parts of the human that cannot be animalized) and to generate an animalized human, or the "nonhuman within the human" (37). Finding the nonhuman within the human may reduce the human to a form of "bare life" against which any violence can be leveled. For an extended discussion of the anthropological machine, see Agamben.

sheer number of animal bodies appearing in *Go Down, Moses* deserves attention, particularly when we ask why such a diverse set of species crowd a novel in which what counts as "human"—a category once exclusively reserved for the racially white—is highly contested ground. I argue that Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* attends to the changing boundaries of what constitutes human and animal prior to and in the aftermath of the American Civil War, boundaries that remap social and ethical terms of relation between white and black and human and non-human even as these very categories of distinction undergo radical revision and reevaluation. To depict such dramatic shifts, Faulkner's novel invokes, challenges, and offers alternatives to forms of representation that rely exclusively on the metaphorization and abstraction of all the creaturely lives that speciesism generalizes under the name of the animal. As a result, an attempt to imagine and represent singular, material animals emerges, and with it, the possibility for an encounter with even those other-to-the-human beings named "animal."

The Rhetoric of Speciesism and Humans Called Animal

"Pantaloon in Black," the third section of Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, is, centrally, a story of loss: loss of life, and loss of the possibility of ethical response. The first of the two sections of "Pantaloon" opens as Rider, a black man "better than six feet" tall and weighing "better than two hundred pounds," shovels huge mounds of dirt atop his dead wife's grave (*GDM* 129). Rider rejects offers of physical assistance and companionship from both friends and family, demanding instead to be allowed to return to his recently cold, empty, and potentially haunted house. Once at home, Rider is greeted

by his dog, a big "hound with a strain of mastiff," and the only company Rider permits throughout the story (133). In defiance of both convention and expectation, Rider returns to work at the sawmill the day after he buries his wife, hoisting and tossing massive logs that would have crushed men of smaller size and lesser strength. Still refusing company other than his dog's at the end of the workday, Rider purchases a jug of bootlegged whiskey and stalks the surrounding woods, cursing God and gulping the liquor. This initial section of "Pantaloon" concludes as Rider returns to the mill after midnight to play dice with his fellow workers and with Birdsong, a white man. Full of drink and grief, Rider catches Birdsong with a second pair of dice up his sleeve and, gripping the white man's wrist, exposes the dice for the other players to see. As Birdsong reaches for his pistol, Rider deftly flips open a razor and slices it across Birdsong's throat, killing him.

In the second and final section of Faulkner's story, a sheriff's deputy sits in his kitchen as his wife cooks supper. Recalling the proceedings of the day and the day previous, the deputy narrates the events that culminated in the lynching of a black prisoner. The deputy's story is marked by bafflement as well as an attempt to temper his confusion with an assertion of what is "known": an assertion of what constitutes the human in opposition to the animal. Hungry, sleep deprived, and a "little hysterical," the deputy says:

> Them damn niggers…I swear to godfrey, it's a wonder we have as little trouble with them as we do. Because why? Because they ain't human. They look like a man and they walk on their hind legs like a man, and they can talk and you can understand them and you think they are

> understanding you, at least now and then. But when it comes to the normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings, they might just as well be a damn herd of wild buffaloes. (*GDM* 147)

In the deputy's formulation, the African American belongs not to the category of the human, but to the category of the animal. The grief, confusion, and outrage over his wife's sudden death, the very feelings that lead Rider to drink excessively, reject human company, perform rash and dangerous actions, and, ultimately, to kill a white man, are dismissed as complex decisions and expressions impossible for what the deputy understands as the unfeeling, black "animal." The deputy's animalization of Rider exempts the white official from responding thoughtfully to Rider's negotiation of a devastating event. Further, the deputy refuses to consider Rider as a fellow emotional subject capable of experiencing a range of feeling after the loss of his wife.

I linger on Faulkner's "Pantaloon in Black" and the deputy's animalizing rhetoric to ask: how does a discourse that relies on the privileging of one species, that is, *Homo sapiens*, at the expense and the detriment of every other species, function through language? Moreover, beyond the deputy's obvious refusal to attempt to encounter Rider on terms other than those that perpetuate the existing discourses of dominance and exclusion, what are the consequences of prioritizing the human at the expense of the animal on a *human animal* marked as animalistic? For Faulkner's deputy who decries the race he names "animal," we can observe how this language, when deployed against people as well as animals, fails to account for material differences and for differences in lived experience in the name of marking difference abstractly. Using Rider's story to

characterize the black other, the deputy casts Rider as the synecdotal *part* representative of the *whole* black race. Rider's actions become not the result of individual, lived events, but as the symptomatic and predictable behaviors of his "inhuman" race. In other words, Rider is not particular and singular but an abstraction: he is not one black man, but *all* black men. The figure of the black race as a "herd of wild buffaloes" further emphasizes this point: any one animal is substitutable for and emblematic of the many, of the "wild" and identically-minded herd (147). The language of animality therefore allows the deputy to speak generally and reductively about the character and experience of a vast collection of individuals. What gets left out of the deputy's generalization is the possibility of encountering Rider as a material, embodied force capable of varied responses to lived experience. Instead, the deputy's language makes Rider into a figure, a metaphor: as a symbol for the black race, Rider is reduced from a person into an abstraction.

The production of the category of "the animal" in general may function in ways analogous to familiar discourses of exclusion and subjugation frequently leveled against members of the human species, including racism, sexism, heterosexism, classism, and so forth. What makes the discourse of speciesism particular *as* a discourse, both historically and in the present day, is its naturalization of the status of the animal as ontologically available for killing. As I explored in my first chapter, even as the barrier between human and animal is continually and convincingly called into question, the animal remains subordinated to the human in this most critical way: only the human can be murdered, while the animal can be killed. Faulkner's novel may be read as a dramatization of the possible effects of speciesism on the human animal through this particular moment in

"Pantaloon" and elsewhere. Indeed, the deputy's choice of animal to characterize African Americans is of no small significance, as equating black persons to buffaloes recalls the widespread decimation of the American bison population in the late 19th century. A major contributing factor to the bison's near-extinction was the US Army's support of and participation in buffalo slaughter, a strategy implemented to force Native Americans, heavily dependent on the buffalo for food and for material, into starvation or onto reservations (Smits 317). General William Sherman, famous for his fiery destruction of civilian property during the Civil War, reportedly remarked that, "the quickest way to compel the Indians to settle down into civilized life was to send ten regiments of soldiers to the plains, with orders to shoot buffaloes until they became too scarce to support the redskins" (quot. in Smits 317). The history of the American bison is therefore inextricably bound up with the history of racialized marginalization and warfare whereby the management, and ultimately, the extermination, of non-human animal life is linked to the management and extermination of human animal life. To invoke the buffalo as a way to condemn the black race is also to invoke the history of a species whose killing, and ultimately, its mass slaughter, is justifiable, even desirable, on the grounds of securing white authority or on the grounds of claiming precedence for a certain varietal of the human.

The suggestion implicit in the deputy's use of an animal figure to characterize Rider and other black persons, and in particular the deputy's reference to an animal whose destruction was encouraged by white Army officials, is that Rider's execution at the hands of a lynch mob is justifiable, even desirable. In the deputy's assessment, Rider

and, in turn, the race that Rider represents, is as available for killing as was the American bison: he is without the rights and privileges accorded to the human. In Rider's case, and in the case of thousands of lynched black men and women, being without the rights and privileges accorded to the human means, in a practical sense, being without the right to a fair trial or even humane treatment. In short, the perceived "wild" nature of the black race, as well as their lack of "normal human feelings and sentiments of human beings," justifies that they be treated as killable animals (147). Through the deputy's speciesist language, the social other named "animal"—in this case, Rider and other black individuals—makes even non-human animals available for killing without ethical calculation. Speciesism thus relies on the category of the animal in general, that is, the animal understood as both everything-other-than-human and, by extension, as an abstraction rather than any singular, living being. In response, I propose that the possibility of responding ethically to human animals and to non-human animals alike requires an attention to material animals, that is, to human and non-human animals understood not exclusively as abstract figures or metaphors disconnected from lived or embodied experience.

Before the deputy's explicit animalization of Rider, however, Faulkner introduces his critique of the way the abstracting, essentializing language of "the animal" is used at the expense of the unique particularities of material lives and beings by linking the discursive treatment of an animal and a man. "Damn the fox"—Uncle Buck's muttered curse against a wild animal—roughly bookends the comic narrative of "Was," the first section of *Go Down, Moses* (7, 30). At the beginning of the story, a captive fox, loosed

from his cage, runs from room to room in Buck and Buddy's house. With the brothers' hounds in pursuit, the fox finally "trees" behind the clock on the bedroom mantel. The link "Was" draws between Tomey's Turl and the escaped fox introduces at the outset of *Go Down, Moses* how the novel as a whole troubles the efficacy of the categories of human and animal to adequately describe that which they name. Throughout "Was," the language used to describe the flight of the fox and the flight of the slave—that of "treeing," "denning," and having a "good race"—makes obvious the comparison between the two "hunts" as well as that between Turl and the fox. Most explicitly, this latter comparison illustrates one of the ways in which the narrative uses the qualities or behavior of animals to explain human behavior. When Uncle Buck describes his pursuit of Tomey's Turl in terms of a foxhunt, telling young Isaac McCaslin during the chase that Tomey's Turl is "going to earth. We'll cut back to the house and head him before he can den," he translates his irritation surrounding Turl's escape into a procedural animal hunting ritual he understands and finds palatable (18). His curse of "[d]amn the fox," then, suggests not only that the fox actually be damned, but also that neither Buck, Buddy, nor Ike should trouble themselves with the escaped animal (5). For Uncle Buck, it is to be expected that foxes will run and dogs will pursue: such animal behavior is anticipatable and known in advance, and is therefore not worth prolonged concern.

Following the connection between fox and slave to its logical conclusion, then, Buck and Buddy should know Tomey's Turl to the same extent they claim to know the fox. During the hunt, Buck chastises himself for forgetting "what even a little child should have known: not ever to stand right in front of or right behind a nigger when you

scare him; but always to stand to one side of him" (19). In Buck's estimation, understanding the pattern of slave behavior allows one to deal with slaves appropriately, and this understanding is so basic that "even a little child" should possess it (19). However, Tomey's Turl does not always behave as his persecutors predict. He disrupts Buck's hunting strategy by acting *unlike* himself, that is, unlike a "nigger": the narrator explains that, because Tomey's Turl is a nigger, he "should have jumped down and run for it afoot as soon as he saw them. But he didn't; maybe Tomey's Turl had been running from Uncle Buck for so long that he even got used to running away like a white man would do it" (9). According to this description, it is impossible for Tomey's Turl to behave as an individual: rather, he can only act as one or the other generalizable characterization, the "nigger" option representing how he "should" act yet somehow does not (9). Although his behavior is supposedly *animal* in its apparent knowability and unvariability, Tomey's Turl's unpredictable actions nevertheless disrupt his white masters' attempts to dismiss his individual qualities.

During the most decisive scene in the story, that of the card game that decides the futures of all the characters involved, the vocabulary of how Tomey's Turl "should have" conformed to the white men's expectations appears once more (9). Hubert Beauchamp, suspicious of the card game's proceedings, tilts the lamp-shade up to reveal the "first creature…animal, mule, or human" retrieved to deal ten cards: Tomey's Turl (27). As Hubert guides the lamp, its light moves "up Tomey's Turl's arms that were supposed to be black but were not quite white, up his Sunday shirt that was supposed to be white but wasn't either" (29). When illuminated by the perceptive "light" of the white man, that

which should conceivably reveal the slave according to the white South's own discourse of racial difference, Tomey's Turl's arms instead show skin that was "supposed to" be black but is not (29). It is because of the dominant discourse and social conventions that Tomey's Turl is racialized black, not because of his physical appearance: the figurative "light" of white discourse, not his own flesh, determines Turl's social position. Nevertheless, the repetition of the phrase "supposed to" used to describe the slave's appearance emphasizes that his fleshy, concrete existence disrupts the white discursive conventions that would reduce his singular, individual qualities beneath an essentialized category of being (29).

In her detailed and thoughtful analysis of "Was," Thadious Davis explores the landmark case of *Pierson v Post* and the case's significance to Faulkner's narrative. A famous case in property law, *Pierson* involved a dispute between two hunters over the ownership of a wild, hunted fox. According to Davis, Faulkner "most likely knew of the *Pierson* case through his friend and mentor Phil Stone who studied law at Yale," and Davis's analysis makes clear some compelling connections between the events of the story and the outcome of the case (Davis 58). The ruling of *Pierson v Post* established that "[o]ccupancy in wild animals can be acquired only by possession, but this possession does not imply actual bodily seizure, but there must be some actual domination over the animals, as ensnaring them, or by other such means which will prevent their escape" (*Pierson v Post* quot. in Davis 57). For "Was," a story in which "possession as physical control impels the narrative" and in which the concerns of a captive fox and a human slave are repeatedly linked, the inspiration Faulkner draws from the *Pierson* ruling

further complicates the comparison the narrative draws between human and animal. As Davis explains, in *Pierson* "the fox was a thing to be owned and claimed as property," as is both the fox and Tomey's Turl in "Was" (60). Neither fox nor human here have the authority to claim ownership of themselves: they are things to be owned. Following Davis's analysis, I find the language of the ruling itself is particularly pertinent for an analysis of the category of "the animal" in Faulkner's work: indeed, the ruling states *physical domination* by way of "ensnaring" or by "other such means which will prevent [the animal's] escape" as necessary for claiming ownership over an animal (57). In Faulkner's "Was," it is physical domination that is at stake in the twins' pursuit of Tomey's Turl as well as their recovery of the loosed fox, and it is Tomey's Turl's physicality in particular—his skin which was "supposed to be black but [was] not quite white"—which acts as a bodily marker for the inefficacy of white discourse to adequately represent or to fully capture his individual, concrete, material existence (Faulkner 29). Even though Tomey's Turl and the fox cannot claim ownership over their own bodies (as noted above, they are things to be possessed), their physical existences still resist complete discursive domination. Despite the fact that they are already spoken for and already given over to the white discourse that determines in advance what can be done with their physical bodies, those physical bodies themselves resist total "capture" within discursive conventions.

Indeed, as "Was" draws to a close, the fox that is metaphorically linked to Tomey's Turl escapes his cage again, and Uncle Buck curses it. The humorous repetition of the fox's escape brings the narrative to a comfortable conclusion, one that suggests that

the simple routine of Buck and Buddy McCaslin will continue regardless of the events and changes depicted by the story. However, the fox's repeated escape from his enclosure reminds us of the curious reversal faced at the story's end whereby Buck finds himself newly contained within an undesired marriage arrangement to Sophonsiba Beaucahmp while Tomey's Turl willingly enters into a long sought-after marriage with his lover from the Beauchamp plantation, Tennie. We may therefore say that just as the fox continues to escape from his cage, so does Tomey's Turl continue to escape complete confinement in abstracting, white discourse: by evading and outsmarting his white pursuers, Turl not only wins the ability to marry Tennie, but also he proves he has individual characteristics irreducible to the racial or behavioral categories on which the brothers depend. The narrative's comparison between the fox and Turl persists through the end of the section, therefore, not in order to characterize Turl as a knowable, dismissible "animal" in the style of Buck and Buddy, but rather to show that the language of abstraction employed to categorize groups of nonhumans and humans alike fails to account for the material, embodied existences of individual humans or nonhumans.

In both "Was" and "Pantaloon in Black," a critique of the rhetoric of animality and the use of the category of "the animal" as a way to determine how certain creatures and creaturely bodies can be treated emerges primarily through Faulkner's depiction of human characters. As *Go Down, Moses* proceeds, however, the language of "the animal" more directly marginalizes, speaks for, and *animalizes* animals, often in order to legitimate those very animals' destruction. Continuing his exploration of the ways embodied life does not perfectly "fit" into systems of representation and discourse,

however, Faulkner and his animals show how the very bodies that language attempts to speak for and appropriate may also resist such appropriation by and through their very materiality.

Eruptive Animal Bodies, or Why Ike Should Have Hated and Feared Lion

In the fourth summer Isaac "Ike" McCaslin spends with the hunting party led by Major de Spain, General Compson, and Sam Fathers, Ike witnesses the gradual transformation of Old Ben from an immortal bear to a mortal one. In the second section of "The Bear," Sam discovers one of Major de Spain's colts missing and the colt's mother frantic with fear. Sam reports the colt's absence to the Major, and all the men who hear the news realize that only a very large animal could have separated the colt from its mother. Major de Spain responds to Fathers' news of the missing colt as follows:

> It was Old Ben...I'm disappointed in him. He has broken the rules. I didn't think he would have done that. He has killed mine and McCaslin's dogs, but that was all right. We gambled the dogs against him; we gave each other warning. But now he has come into my house and destroyed my property, and out of season too. He broke the rules. (202)

Major de Spain's reaction—that Old Ben "broke the rules" by killing his colt without warning and out of season—reveals much about the ways in which de Spain and his fellow hunters have both rationalized their annual hunting activities and mythologized the animals (in this particular case, Old Ben) who are the objects of their pursuit. That "Old Ben," a giant bear named for his long life, ability to evade hunters and their dogs, and his

one foot mutilated by a trap that could not contain him, should be expected to play by "rules" that include those of property, hunting season, fair warning, and of which animals are and are not available as prey, reveals the imaginative construction of an animal not simply anthropomorphized, but one whose very mythic character depends on its *not* acting like a bear. According to Major de Spain's list of disappointments, Old Ben's existence as a wild, living bear does not "fit" into the myth constructed of and around him. Old Ben disappoints precisely because he does not conform to the requirements for proper legendary bear behavior.

The discrepancy between Old Ben as a living, embodied agent and Old Ben as a symbolic bear representative of the Big Woods poses a problem for the humans who depend on his function as an idealization. When this bear supposedly breaks the "rules," he reveals himself as an actual, material animal, a reality that does not coincide with the larger-than-life abstraction that is "Old Ben." I argue that, for the latter half of *Go Down, Moses*, when the utility of animals as myths or as abstractions no longer function according to the discursive "rules" humans have established for them, those humans begin to shift the meaning of "the animal" to signify a more suitable category of being for the creatures they encounter. Once-"immortal" animals become killable animals when their immortality no longer advances human interests, as well as when a growing number of environmentally-destructive technologies demand that revised narratives legitimate the large-scale killing of animals and the elimination of their habitats. In short, the events of "The Bear" and subsequently of "Delta Autumn" document the transition between understanding animals as infinite in their self-renewing and self-preserving capacities and

understanding animals as available for indiscriminate killing due to their *insignificance*, a subtle shift in rhetoric motivated by the encroachment of modern industry into formerly "wild" spaces.

The "rules" to which Major de Spain refers are not exclusively applicable to Old Ben; rather, the existence of rules at all to account for how the natural world and its inhabitants are expected to behave reflects the hunters' attempt to construct both the Big Woods and its animal life according to an ideal of an eternal, untainted Nature that functions according to ancient and knowable laws. As Timothy Morton suggests, the very concept of nature is an *invention*, one that is "set up as a transcendental, unified, independent category" despite the slipperiness of its definition (13). Morton illustrates the difficulty of pinning down exactly what Nature *is*, writing that, "Nature is... animals, trees, the weather...the bioregion, the ecosystem. It is both the set and the contents of the set. It is the world and the entities in that world" (18). In Faulkner's work, Ike McCaslin's Big Woods embodies the characteristics of this transcendental, unified Nature. Ike imagines this wide, forested area as a space separate from the world of men, as well as one that participates in rituals familiar to men: both animals and hunters alike find themselves "ordered and compelled by and within the wilderness in the ancient and unremitting contest according to the ancient and immitigable rules which voided all regrets and brooked no quarter" (181-2). Contrary to the idea of a wilderness space characterized by disorder, unpredictability, or even *wildness*, Ike's Big Woods is governed by a contest, that played between hunters and their prey, as well as by the rules of that contest which "compel" those who enter the words to abide by them (181).

Important to Ike's ordered and structured Big Woods, too, is its existence as a place fundamentally separate from men, as if men's activities within it are of no consequence. Indeed, the Woods stand before the entering hunters every year as a "tall and endless wall of dense November woods...sombre, impenetrable," the surrey which carries the men "dwarfed by that perspective into an almost ridiculous diminishment...as a solitary small boat hangs in lonely immobility...in the infinite waste of the ocean" (184-5). That Ike's Big Woods is at once beyond the influence of man (it is "impenetrable" and stands before him both immobile and "infinite") *and* complicit in his pursuit of game animals and other natural resources (men and animals are, as mentioned above, the key players in the Woods' "ancient and unremitting contest" with its "ancient and immitigable rules") describes a Nature which not only invites its own use by humans, but also remains unaffected by this very use. In other words, Ike and the hunters imagine a Big Woods that humans can enter, exploit, and exit without measureable consequence to the woods itself. Ike's Nature is infinitely self-renewing and thus infinitely available for use.

Ike's construction of this wilderness space as the immortal Big Woods marks a clear discrepancy between material reality and symbolic meaning, a discrepancy that demonstrates the hunters' use of the narrative of immortal Nature to naturalize and legitimate their annual exploits. In *Go Down, Moses*, however, the narrative of immortal Nature is not itself invulnerable. Just as when Old Ben, accused of having killed Major de Spain's colt, disrupts his symbolic function by acting unlike the myth constructed about him, similarly the reality of the rapidly disappearing wilderness space of the Mississippi Delta troubles the hunters' claims about the Big Woods' immortality. The events of "The

Bear" are largely set in the decade of 1880-1890, and the environmentally-destructive forces that began encroaching on the wilderness during the course of Faulkner's narrative are quite similar to those that destroyed what wilderness areas still remained during the time of Faulkner's writing. Analyzing the geographical details of Faulkner's work and the influence the changing landscape of his old hunting grounds had on his storytelling, Charles Aiken suggests that "Faulkner's theme in 'The Bear'--that landscape change cannot be halted or even arrested once a land use is outmoded and altering forces are set in motion—was based in part on his attempt to preserve the past at Stone's camp" (166). Referring to the hunting camp belonging to the family of Faulkner's friend and mentor, Aiken explains that, by the mid-1930s, few large wilderness areas remained in the Yazoo Delta, and over-hunting and deforestation caused much of the wildlife to disappear (166). In an attempt to preserve some of the last of this remaining wilderness area, Faulkner helped organize the Okatoba Hunting and Fishing Club for the purposes of aiding and assisting in "the preservation of game and fish on the lands on which the corporation shall acquire hunting and fishing privileges" (166). The club ultimately failed to fulfill its mission of preservation, however, and, as Aiken writes, "in 1937 the Stone family disposed of the land on which the hunting camp was located, the timber rights were sold, and the wilderness was logged" (166).

Faulkner's failed attempt to preserve his beloved wilderness area from the forces of modern industrialization resonates with the plan invented by General Compson and Walter Ewell towards the end of "The Bear" to "corporate themselves, the old group, into a club and lease the camp and the hunting privileges of the woods," a plan which even

young Ike McCaslin recognized "for the subterfuge it was...a baseless and illusory hope" that such an idea or gesture could halt the impending destruction of the woods (300). Despite his skepticism, Ike still finds the extent of the destruction brought by the lumber company difficult to accept. Faulkner's narrative depicts the shock and "grieved amazement" Ike feels after returning to the old hunting camp almost two years after the final hunt and seeing the land Major de Spain sold the lumber company already transformed:

> [A] new planing-mill, already half completed which would cover two or three acres and what looked like miles and miles of stacked steel rails red with the light bright rust of newness and of piled crossties sharp with creosote, and wire corrals and feeding-troughs for two hundred mules at least and the tents for the men who drove them, so that he arranged for the care and stabling of his mare as rapidly as he could and did not look any more. (302-3).

The sheer quantity of material *things* Ike observes on his return to the old grounds sets up a contrast between this inventory of objects and the Big Woods, imagined to be immeasurable in vastness and scope. The measureability of the objects themselves and the determinable distances of forested land they would traverse—the mill that would cover two to three acres, the troughs for two-hundred mules, the tracks which would cover miles and miles—conflicts with Ike's earlier construction of the wilderness as "impenetrable" and "infinite" (184, 5). This catalog of material things threatens to make calculable the wilderness, and measureability itself challenges the idea of a boundless

Nature. In the process of measuring, too, these *things* Ike observes would reduce not only the forest's actual physical breadth, but also its mythologized import and thus its construction as an infinitely self-renewable natural resource. Dedicated to maintaining his imaginative construction of the Big Woods, however, Ike McCaslin leaves the area of the mill "rapidly" and "did not look any more" on the scene lest the intrusion of these material objects challenge his old fantasies further (303).

Still speaking largely through Ike's point of view, twice the narrator insists that in the years prior to Major de Spain's selling the old forested land to a lumber company, "It had been harmless," the "it" denoting the yearly activities of the hunters and the introduction of train tracks and locomotives into the woods (303, 4). Putting aside for the moment its implicit denial of any long past harm possibly inflicted by the hunters, the statement's simple acknowledgment that harm *has* and *is* being done to natural life marks a shift away from conceptualizing the woods as an immortal space of Nature separate and immune from the actions of men. With the advance of the destructive technologies of the lumber industry and the subsequent changes to the Southern landscape, the old ways of understanding and of representing the wilderness become ineffectual. In an interview, Faulkner described Old Ben and the woods he once occupied as "obsolete," explaining "change is going to alter what was...change must destroy...the splendid, fine things which are a part of man's past, too, part of man's heritage, too. But they were obsolete and had to go" (*Faulkner at Virginia*). The account of change that Faulkner gives in "The Bear," then, dramatizes the transition between understanding the Big Woods as a defining narrative and understanding it as an outmoded one, as well as the differentiation between

the mythologization of fauna and forest and the encroaching reality of their disappearance. For Old Ben, obsolescence and having "to go" means becoming expendable and ultimately, becoming available for killing. The changes brought about with industrialization call for a new narrative to replace the obsolete one and to account for man's increasingly destructive and dismissive treatment of animal life. Moreover, these changes necessitate that the new narrative of human-animal relations accounts for man's killing of animals without the impossible-to-sustain rhetoric of renewal. Motivated by the need to account for reality in new ways and through the use of revised abstractions, the hunters of "The Bear" demonstrate when and how dominant discourses begin to shift the definition of "the animal" to mean all nonhuman creatures mundane, undifferentiated, and available for indiscriminate killing.

Therefore, when Major de Spain finds that Old Ben ceases to fulfill his symbolic function and acts not as a mythologized beast but as a living, material bear, his subsequent proclamation implies that the bear's ontological status be altered. In place of the myth about Old Ben as an immortal, humanlike animal comes the gradual emergence of a new narrative, one that constructs the old bear as another kind of abstraction: that is, as just like any other bear or any other animal who displays wild (that is, un-humanlike) and therefore unremarkable (or merely *animal*) behavior. After de Spain's announcement that Old Ben broke the rules, the narrative emphasizes the visceral reality of the slaughtered colt: its throat is "torn out and the entrails and one ham [is] partly eaten," and it "lay not as if it had been dropped, but if it had been struck and hurled" (203). The brutality of the scene starkly contrasts with the earlier pastoral descriptions of the woods

and of the hunting camp. When material reality empties a symbol of its significance (in this case, what Old Ben used to represent), the literal, that which is still to be appropriated by discourse and by narrative, remains as so many bloody entrails on the ground. This moment of material emergence initiates Old Ben's movement in dominant discourse from signifying *the* bear to *just* a bear.

Of course it is not actually Old Ben who kills Major de Spain’s colt, but Lion. Even after the hunters discover that the colt died in the jaws of the great blue-colored mongrel dog, “better than thirty inches” tall with “cold yellow eyes” and “an almost impersonal malignance like some natural force,” Old Ben does not have his “immortality” restored (207). Instead, the arrival of Lion signals the coming death of Old Ben as a figure *and* as a living creature: Lion's killing the colt begins to divest Old Ben of his symbolic status, and it is Lion who the hunters soon recognize as the dog who will hold the giant bear at bay. The sudden arrival of Lion at the scene of the camp recalls Ike's earlier abrupt realization that Old Ben, despite the tales told about him, was “a mortal animal and that they had departed for the camp each November with no actual intention of slaying it, not because it could not be slain but because so far they had no actual hope of being able to” (190). The stories about Old Ben's immortality, then, serve for as long as the hunters do not have the means to kill him. Lion, of course, provides the very means the hunters require to hold and to kill the bear, and thus it is Lion's utility as a hunting dog as well as his slaughter of the colt that ultimately makes Old Ben “mortal.” Further, Lion's arrival and the subsequent emergence of Old Ben's mortality parallels the encroachment of the lumber company and the revealed “mortality” of the Big Woods: for

both bear and forest, “immortality” is simply the narrative result of men not having yet developed or acquired the necessary means for making this animal and this space “mortal.” As soon as such means are acquired, neither bear nor forest can endure.

When the narrator of “The Bear” repeatedly insists that Ike “should have hated and feared Lion,” then, it is precisely because Lion's arrival exposes the unsustainability of Ike's idealizations. Soon after Lion's appearance, Ike recognizes that changes to his ways of understanding are imminent, yet he never fully processes the extent of those changes: “[i]t was the beginning of the end of something, he didn’t know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too” (214). Even as he acknowledges that Lion brings change, Ike persists in ordering Lion's sudden presence as evidence of the dog and the hunting party's participation in a meaningful structure, one in which a metaphysical force “found” him “worthy” to witness the end (214). Ike should hate and fear Lion because the dog's entrance into the camp means not only that the great bear can no longer stand for the endurance of Nature, but also that the bear and the dog—the animals themselves— will not survive their climactic encounter with one another, a fact that necessitates the hunters redefine their relationship to the wilderness.

Eruptions of grisly, bodily, material detail bookend Lion's appearance in the narrative as if to reinforce the challenge to preexisting structures of signification that he poses. Major de Spain's slaughtered colt and its scattered remains announce Lion's arrival, and as I will discuss more fully in a moment, additional animal bodies turned inside-out characterize the manner of Lion's death. Lion's animal form, too, also

commands Ike's attention, and not simply for its impressive size and strength. As he observes the dog prior to the group's setting out in pursuit of Old Ben, Ike finds a curious absence of meaning when Lion returns Ike's look with his own animal gaze:

> Then the dog looked at him. It moved its head and looked at him across the trivial uproar of the hounds, out of the yellow eyes...free...of meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness. They were just cold and sleepy. Then it blinked, and he knew it was not looking at him and never had been, without even bothering to turn its head away. (225)

When Ike meets Lion's yellow eyes, he attempts to read in the dog's look some recognizable sign of character, perhaps even some evidence of Lion's comprehension of the import of the hunt on which the group is about to embark. Rather than any trait or affect discernible as “meanness or generosity or gentleness or viciousness,” Ike sees, quite simply, the eyes of an animal, opaque and unreadable, “cold and sleepy” (225). Ike fails to attribute metaphoric or anthropomorphic significance to Lion's look or to his eyes: that is, Ike can only describe what he sees; he cannot attribute meaning to what he sees. Indeed, when Ike realizes that Lion “was not looking at him and never had been,” the possibility for communication between Ike and the dog is lost (225). Lion does not confirm Ike's place in the ordered wilderness with a look of recognition any more than he gives indication that he “understands” his own role in Ike's narrative of the Big Woods. Lion's eyes challenge even Ike's steadfast powers of metaphorization. His unreadable, incomprehensible animal look indicates a material life that resists appropriation into human systems of meaning, and rather than extend himself to respond to Lion's look

without resorting to his comfortable, established systems of meaning, Ike settles on the conclusion that Lion was never looking at him in the first place. Ike understands a “look” from an animal to mean only some kind of confirmation of his own narrow conception of animal life or of animal comprehension.

After Old Ben and Lion's final confrontation, all three carriers of the “taintless and incorruptible” blood of the Big Woods perish: bear, dog, and old Sam Fathers die almost simultaneously (181). For Ike, all blood passed down from then on will be “tainted,” gesturing to the future depicted in “Delta Autumn” in which racial mixing combined with the disappearance of the eternal and idealized Big Woods is the much-feared reality that Ike confronts. More immediately, however, Lion’s grisly death exposes the way in which the body of a material animal violently disrupts the efficacy of the hunters' animal abstractions. Boon Hogganbeck's hysterical, high-voiced reaction to Lion's evisceration reveals the trauma of the literal's intrusion into the otherwise idealized woods: Boon's urgently repeated question, “[c]ant you see his guts are all out of him?” communicates the shock he experiences when his symbol fails to remain a symbol (229). Lion's guts confront the hunters with that which cannot be abstracted away: the dog's spilled intestines are literal, material, concrete, and of the body. The Lion about whom Boon had attempted to construct a legend, about whom he spoke in Memphis to a “negro waiter and all the other people in the restaurant who couldn't help but hear him and who had never heard of Lion and didn't want to,” the blue, fierce, untamed Lion suddenly becomes a literal, mortal dog (222). As Boon’s panic illustrates, abstractions are not supposed to have guts, just as “black” slaves are not “supposed to” have light-colored

skin as Tomey's Turl does (29). In other words, Lion's literal guts make his role as a symbolic, figural animal unsustainable, and as a result, Boon reacts to Lion's being rendered open as if his world is falling apart and not simply the body of his dog. Without the familiar animal figures and thus the familiar abstractions of white, male, Southern discourse to help structure men's relationship to the natural world and its inhabitants, Faulkner's characters are forced to contend with the fact that their fantasies do not match up with reality, that the animals and people they once treated as known have actually eluded their conceptual grasp all along.

By the time of the events depicted in "Delta Autumn," the section of *Go Down, Moses* immediately following "The Bear," the destructive forces that began to penetrate and transform the woods in the previous story have since stripped the land of its former breadth and diversity of life. Hunters now drive long distances out of town (in their cars rather than in their wagons) to reach wooded areas still populated by game animals. Even in these locations, however, game remains scarce, and Ike McCaslin, now an old man, experiences a profound nostalgia for the glory days of hunting, of the time when a "man shot a doe or a fawn as quickly as he did a buck" (319). The scarcity of game animals prevents men from killing does. Further, the "long hooting of locomotives" have replaced the "scream of panther," suggesting that the fictive divide between Nature and Culture, between a world understood as separate and protected from men and the world of men's exclusive influence, has collapsed under the weight of modernization (324). That said, old Ike still maintains a spiritual and narrative commitment to a reified Nature, a testament to the influence of imagining the worlds of animals and men as fundamentally

separate. Indeed, Ike thinks of himself as "the last" of the band of hunters, and he privileges his relationship to animals not because he possesses "affinity for them as creatures, beasts," but because he had lived "insulated...from the corruption of steel and oiled moving parts which tainted the others" (319, 26). That Ike imagines himself as untainted and "insulated" from the forces of modernity emphasizes his persistent ordering of Nature as separate from Culture, a separation that makes Ike himself, as a human rather than an animal, possess not an "affinity" for animals or a sympathy for them grounded in mutual interest, but rather an exclusively instrumental understanding.

As anticipated in "The Bear," the narratives that the hunters once spun about their relationship to animals—of the animals' "immortality" and ability to endure—have also undergone a transformation in accordance with the years of environmental degradation that has occurred, and again, only Ike maintains a fidelity to the old ways of thinking. In place of past idealizations, new generations of hunters now speak of the animals they pursue in terms of the animals unremarkability, or mereness. The last mention of an animal in both the story and the novel as a whole is that of a felled deer, one which Will Legate, one of the young hunters, refers to as "just a deer...nothing extra" (347). After Legate leaves to bring the dead deer into the camp, Ike muses, "It was a doe," recalling the prohibition on killing does and thus to the transformed state of hunting.[14] Within these depleted and shrunken woods, the story men tell themselves about their relationship

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[14] Of course, the word "doe" itself is, in "Delta Autumn," exercised as a crude slang term for women, a clear contrast with the high symbolic significance previously attributed to animals and animal figures. For the purposes of my analysis, I focus on the language of "just a doe" as it bears on the men's treatment and understanding of animals, though it is worthy of mention that Ike's proclamation "It was a doe" can refer both to the actual felled deer as well as to the mixed-race mother of Edmonds' child, a so-termed "doe" to whom the men previously refer.

to animals has changed accordingly: even the animals that are supposedly off-limits have no actual significance that would prevent their being killed. Importantly, however, both the old and the new narratives about animals have in common a dedication to the separation between the categories of human and animal. Whereas the idealizations that characterized the language surrounding Old Ben and the Big Woods insisted on a spatio-geographic separateness between the human world and the animal world (that of Nature), these revised narratives which emerge with the destruction of the woods posit the existence of the insignificant animal, the animal distinct from the category of the human because of its available, violable body, a body that is *merely* animal: *just* a deer. In this way, the separation between human and animal does not disappear with the emergence of these modern narratives. Instead, after the animal is no longer understood as "immortal," the fact of the animal's mortality is accounted for by dismissing the importance of that very mortality, and further by differentiating it from the fact of *human* mortality through the language of mereness, justness, or dismissability. Even does, supposedly off-limits to hunters, are constructed as "just a deer...nothing extra" when their killing requires any form of legitimation (347).

Recalling Faulkner's essay "His Name Was Pete," the language of "just a deer" that concludes *Go Down, Moses'*s exploration of human-animal relations during a time of sweeping environmental change and social upheaval again calls attention to Faulkner's engagement with humans' dismissive treatment of animals. Faulkner's pointer dog Pete was also "just an animal" for whom ethical consideration was not extended by the driver of the car that killed him. Despite Faulkner's renowned experiments with language,

narrative structures, and complex figures, the resistances to symbolic representation that embodied, material animals present in his work suggest that animals are one of the many facets of lived reality that words—even Faulkner's words—do not "fit." The extensive and varied engagement of Faulkner's work with the language used to describe and to legitimate violence towards animals, as well as the sparse critical attention dedicated to these issues, clearly demonstrates the need for continued exploration of the ways in which discourse marginalizes the concerns of animals and legitimates violence against animal bodies.

Chapter Three

Stuffed Animal Semiotics:
Disturbing Taxidermy in James, Hemingway, and Hogan

How to do Things with Dead Animals

Prior to the February 14, 2013 debut of its reality competition series *Immortalized*, the television network AMC released a series of promotional commercials that gestured to what the new show would feature: a pair of taxidermists vying to create the most imaginative, well-constructed animal mount in response to an assigned theme. Rather than offer a glimpse of the action that would take place during the show itself, the ads emphasize *Immortalized*'s celebration of campy absurdity by staging brief encounters between taxidermied animals. The ads pervert the snapshots of "nature" offered by the taxidermy dioramas common to museums of natural history: instead of integrating dead animals into the artificial environments of the dioramas, the ads call attention to the animals' position as dead and posed. Motionless fish hang in empty space against a painted river backdrop, and the trophy head of an antelope floats in a flat, dimensionless desert. Their artificiality accentuated without the traditional diorama's reproduction of a habitat setting, these dead animals in lifelike poses appear jarringly out of context,

suspended in meaningless voids. As the camera shots alternate between mounts and species, the commercials culminate with a taxidermist's artful intervention. Camera close ups reveal gloved, human hands modifying the mounted creatures, and when the ads cut to a wide shot, the products of the taxidermists' work are revealed: a fox sports sunglasses, a bear wears a salmon for a tie and carries a suitcase made of fish, and a desk lamp replaces the head of a hen and light bulbs the heads of her two chicks. Twice re-constructed, these dead animals offer no image of the "natural world" but rather an image of taxidermy itself: the re-presented animal.

The promotional commercials for *Immortalized* playfully advance one of the chief principles implicit in taxidermic reconstructions of animals. Prior to the human hand's entrance into the scene, dead animals lie inert, in need of a legitimating narrative to give their lives and deaths value and significance. When the taxidermist intervenes, animals once doomed to decay and decomposition become *found*, rescued from meaninglessness by human language and their appropriation as cultural objects. In the name of science or art or some combination of both, the taxidermist re-forms the body of the animal, gives it new life in the afterlife, and what was incomplete—the dead animal in the forest, desert, prairie, or tundra—the taxidermist's artistry makes whole. The clever trick of the *Immortalized* ads, then, reveals itself in the way the twice-modified taxidermied animals resist a narrative justification for their existences: baby chickens with light bulb heads, for example, appear even more baffling than before the taxidermist's latest revision. Rather than provide a narrative fix for the animals' uncanny presences, these taxidermists

craft more confusion. None of the narratives that typically account for the mounting and display of dead animal skins apply here.

Like the ads' confusion of the mounts' signifying function, *Immortalized* itself offers little explanation of its own purpose as a television show about competitive taxidermy. The pair of taxidermists who face off in each episode do so for nothing more than the prestige of winning: the show offers no prize for the winners and no discernible consequence beyond disappointment for the losers. Regarding the absence of clear incentive for the show's participants, one television reviewer remarked, "Why does this show even exist?" (Keene). Outside some too-generalized, unsatisfactory appeal to entertainment value, the question of why the show exists, I would argue, emerges in large part because of its central focus on taxidermists and the manufacture of animal mounts, taxidermy itself maintaining a persistently ambiguous value as a cultural object. Why *taxidermy* "even exists" therefore remains a nagging question.

In response, I argue that despite its popular recognizability, its ubiquity in institutions of education and science, and its prevalence in private residences and places of business, American taxidermy, the practice and art of preparing, mounting, and displaying animal skins, has no clear or stable referent: it does not simply represent either the animal or the human. Owing to its referential ambiguity, taxidermy evokes particular uncertainties and anxieties, and the taxidermied animal as a literary and cultural trope calls attention to the shifting boundaries between what is proper to the animal and what is proper to the human. On the one hand, taxidermy troubles the boundaries between human and animal by emphasizing what humans and animals share, including material bodies,

corporeal vulnerability, and mortality itself. On the other hand, taxidermy crystallizes the still-rigid dividing lines between humans and animals: only animals can be taxidermied, and only animals are available for indiscriminate killing, bodily manipulation, and public display during both life and death.

Many critical evaluations of taxidermy displays highlight their historic utility as cultural signifiers of white, colonial dominance over the natural world. Reading taxidermy through this lens alone, however, risks overlooking how taxidermy's referential ambiguity imperfectly captures and reflects human values. Many scholars credit Donna Haraway's fascinating and rigorous "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908-1936" for informing and invigorating their own cultural, semiotic, and literary studies of taxidermy since the piece's original publication in the winter 1984-1985 volume of *Social Text* and later in Haraway's seminal collection *Primate Visions* (1989). Through an analysis of the habitat dioramas Carl Akeley designed for the American Museum of Natural History in New York City during the early twentieth century, Haraway argues that the museum's taxidermy displays reflected an ideology of white male supremacy. Through the arrangement of dead animals in seemingly "natural" poses, exhibited as if untouched by the hands of human intent, the museum crafted a narrative embracing racial purity. As Haraway writes, "[t]axidermy was about the single story, about nature's unity, the unblemished type specimen...What is so painfully constructed appears effortlessly, spontaneously found, discovered, simply there if one will only look" (38). Because Akeley wanted to present "an immediate vision" of animals in their natural state, Haraway strives to, in her words,

"dissect and make visible layer after layer of mediation" (35). Without a doubt, Haraway's contribution to studies of taxidermy cannot be understated, and beyond analyses of the ideological underpinnings of habitat dioramas, too, Haraway's insights have proved applicable. Pauline Wakeham, for example, expands on Haraway's article in her study of representations of Native Americans. Wakeham writes that, "[i]f taxidermy denotes a material practice--the dissection, hollowing out, and restuffing of a corpse's epidermal shell--its connotative specters revive fantasies of white male supremacy in 'the sporting crucible,' of colonial mastery over nature, and of the conquest of time and mortality through the preservation of the semblance of life in death" (5). In short, a compelling connection between taxidermy and colonial oppression and white male supremacy has been aptly and thoroughly made. That said, the tendency to read taxidermy through this lens alone misses instances in which taxidermied animals act in ways that resist the investments of the humans who assemble them.

Moreover, Haraway's strategy of making visible the "layer upon layer of mediation" that comprises the presentation of the taxidermied "real" of the American Museum of Natural History may not serve as well when confronting the practice and display of contemporary taxidermy, many instances of which exhibit the artificiality of mounted animals. Just over a month before the premiere of *Immortalized*, for example, another reality television show featuring taxidermists and their work debuted on Animal Planet: *American Stuffers*. Unlike *Immortalized* which self-consciously exploits its strange premise, *American Stuffers* frames the unusual specialization of one taxidermy business—the freeze-drying of people's dead pets—within a narrative about traditional

American family values. As the website for *American Stuffers* boasts, taxidermist Daniel Ross "makes his business a family affair, including wife LaDawn, who handles the books, and his three young boys, who help out around the shop, which is right in their backyard!" ("*American Stuffers* About the Show"). *American Stuffers* attempts to naturalize the potentially disturbing practice of mounting dead pets by placing such work in the familiar frame of a "family affair." In so doing, the show promises to center on the humans of its narrative, Daniel Ross, LaDawn Ross, and their three young boys, rather than the pet corpses disemboweled in their backyard. The show's focus on taxidermists rather than dead animals implies a significant departure from the "spontaneously found" taxidermy of AMNH: in contrast, the animal mounts in *American Stuffers* are visibly *made*.

The show's depiction of the taxidermic process appears even more radical following an investigation into the modern pet preservation industry. Daniel Ross and other taxidermists who specialize in the mounting of pets promote and depend on the suggestion that their practice produces that which is "natural."[15] "We'll make him look real and natural again," Ross explains in an episode of *American Stuffers* as he extracts a stiff pet's body from a freezer ("Freeze-Dried Pets"). Freeze-drying technology, combined with the taxidermist's artistry, obscures the violence of the taxidermic process by constructing stunningly lifelike animal bodies. In a letter to the pet preservationists at Anthony Eddy's Wildlife Studio, for example, Kathleen, owner of the freeze-dried basset hound Peanut, praises the freeze-dryer's ability to make animals appear that they had not

[15] *American Stuffers*' depiction of the taxidermic process is additionally striking, too, when we consider the fact that the animals being processed are known and loved pets rather than anonymous specimens against whom such invasive violence might be, for many viewers, more comfortably leveled.

"truly...passed from this life." With regards to the preserved body of Peanut, Kathleen comments that visitors to her home respond with praise after glimpsing the dead dog: "Everyone who has been here to see her have all had the same reaction and the same words; 'she looks so natural'. And in that lies the beauty of your work. I so much appreciate your small touches that mean so much to me; the wrinkles of skin between her ears and eyes, and especially her little tuft of fluffy fur by her tail" ("Customer Letters"). Kathleen expresses gratitude for the preservation of detail unique to her pet, detail that makes the taxidermist's work not only beautiful, but "natural."

Such a narrative falters, however, when *American Stuffers* depicts the methods taxidermists employ to construct these images of the natural. In one episode, Ross demonstrates for his new, inexperienced assistant how to carve open the tiny body of a customer's dead chihuahua. Moving from a shot of the dog's soft, upturned belly to the assistant's face, the camera shows her shuddering and retching as Ross cuts into the animal with a scalpel. The episode also depicts the taxidermists removing the dog's eyes and replacing them with glass replicas. Finally, before entering the freeze-dryer already packed with rows of dead animals, Ross stuffs the little dog's body with straw and arranges it on a flat platform, pinning down its limbs for stability ("How to Preserve Your Pet Forever").[16] This meticulous, technologically-assisted process produces the preserved

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[16] The procedure for preserving a pet requires a significant amount of advanced planning on the part of the dying or deceased pet's owner, and many pet preservationists make clear the procedures involved in mounting a pet, further suggesting that the industry, despite its reliance on the look of the "natural" animal, increasingly publicizes the manner of its labor. Most preservationists recommend inserting a newly dead pet into a plastic bag and then into a freezer as soon as possible. Once the corpse arrives at the taxidermist's, it is prepared for the freeze dryer. As Dave Madden describes it, the taxidermist begins by making "a small incision to start, choosing a spot on the body that'll be hidden on its final pose... Through this incision he removes all the internal organs: the heart and liver and lungs and stomach and intestines," as these parts

pet, its "natural" look deriving from its imitation of liveliness as well as the invisibility of the taxidermist's labor. The depiction of this process in *American Stuffers*, however, undercuts the pet preservation industry's claim to produce "natural" re-presentations of animals. The limp, bloodied body of the hollowed-out chihuahua haunts the still, clean form of the final, mounted product presented to its weepy owner at the conclusion of the episode.

Unlike the habitat dioramas of Donna Haraway's analysis, the televised taxidermy of *Immortalized* and *American Stuffers* exposes the mediation that goes into producing a taxidermy mount. Despite the legitimating narrative that attends *American Stuffers* in particular, the invasive process of taxidermic preservation depicted therein lingers over every dramatic reveal of the finished product: the stuffed animal itself.[17] Although Haraway's endeavor to "dissect and make visible layer after layer of mediation" in taxidermy reveals much about the ideological investments that influenced many natural history museum dioramas, the fact that contemporary taxidermy often puts the artificiality of animal mounts on display demands an approach other than one that focuses exclusively on making mediation visible.

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contain toxins that could mar the appearance of the pet over an extended period of time. Further, "eyeballs are all water," so the taxidermist cuts them out. "Then he runs a drill up into the skull cavity and scatters the brains." Brains are "more of a grease product than anything else," one taxidermist explains (Madden 22). Finally, before entering the freeze-drier, the corpse is posed with wire and stuffed with straw.

[17] Not only does the illustration of taxidermy's constructedness violate the supposition that it reflects "the natural," but also the fact that *American Stuffers* shows the preservation of pets in particular suggests that animals, rather than simply being acted upon, contribute to taxidermic presentations. Returning to Kathleen's praise of her dog Peanut's freeze-dried appearance, the "wrinkles of skin between her ears and eyes, and especially her little tuft of fluffy fur by her tail" emerge as what the owner treasures most, attributes unique to her particular, known, and loved animal ("Customer Letters"). These details distinguish the dead dog *as* Peanut after death; her wrinkles and tuft of fluffy fur shape the real that makes Peanut, Peanut.

Taxidermy, its practitioners, and its places of exhibition, varies as much as the animals it represents.[18] Rather than ignore the rich and informative history of taxidermy within and outside the space of the natural history museum, I show how authors as diverse as Henry James, Ernest Hemingway, and Linda Hogan grapple with the permutations of taxidermy as a cultural object. In so doing, I tease out the ways their representations of taxidermy engage with its history, often in order to critique it or to suggest alternatives for taxidermy's use. These authors' focus on taxidermy's status as representation, as appearing not as if "natural" or "spontaneously found" but as the product of human labor and sophisticated technologies of dead animal preservation, challenges not only taxidermy's traditional and long-standing association with a single and particular strain of "realism," but also its affiliation with human dominance over animals. I thereby analyze literary taxidermy against the dominant scholarship that confines its analyses to taxidermy's function as a technology of white colonial representation. Instead, I show how the taxidermy of previous generations as well as contemporary animal mounts break with their historical affiliation with colonial conquest and self-representation. In so doing, I highlight the critical potential of taxidermy not only as a tool for thinking through human-animal relations, but also its strange, varied, and *disturbing* semiotic function in literary texts. By violating its correlation with white male dominance over nature, taxidermy not only disturbs critical readings that reduce it

[18] Far from the exclusive product of museum preservationists, the wide availability of taxidermy supplies has democratized the modern practice of taxidermy and has multiplied its practitioners, further suggesting the need for analyses of taxidermy that account for its multiple forms and creators. Taxidermy mail order catalogs and websites (including the popular McKenzie Taxidermy Supply) offer for purchase everything from pre-molded plaster casts of commonly hunted species such as white-tailed deer and rarer animals such as tigers, to substitute ears and tongues, glass eyes, and various kinds of specialized knives, scissors, needles, groomers, and other such products to aid in flensing, fleshing, cleansing, sewing, and mounting.

to a single symbolic function, but also retains the power to disturb onlookers with its uncanniness, its life beyond death, and the way taxidermy mounts maintain an animacy that outlives the animal's own life.

The Stuff of Sickness: Henry James's Animal Artworks

Central to the conflict in Henry James's 1896 novel *The Spoils of Poynton* is Owen Gareth's impending marriage to Mona Brigstock, a woman who Mrs. Gareth, Owen's mother, describes as "ignorant and vulgar" owing to Mona's lack of aesthetic sensibility (53). Once married to Owen, Mona stands to inherit the amassed treasures of Poynton, the collection of antiques and artistic curiosities Mrs. Gareth spent her lifetime acquiring, arranging, and adoring. Unlike Mona, Mrs. Gareth finds in Fleda Vetch a woman of exemplary taste and a worthy inheritor of the special "old things" at Poynton, and she encourages Owen to marry Fleda instead. While many scenes and conversations in the novel contrast the superior taste of Mrs. Gareth and Fleda with Mona's Philistine values, a single, curious figure animates the complexities of this conflict: that of a taxidermied animal. Located at Waterbath, the country home of the Brigstocks, this single piece of taxidermy questions the extent to which decorative objects succeed in bestowing on their owners the appearance of cultural refinement, or whether such odd flourishes as dead, stuffed animals resist their ornamental status altogether. As Thad Logan suggests in *The Victorian Parlour*, taxidermy, "largely because of its association with studies in natural history, [had] a cultural prestige it generally lacks today...Stuffed birds, in particular, were not only common but the sign of cultural refinement" (147). The

taxidermied animals in James's work, however, do not simply function as a sign of refinement: rather, James uses taxidermy to interrogate the cultural values informing mounted animals' use and popularity, particularly the values that imply a stuffed bird in one's parlor indicates aesthetic discernment or "good taste."

In Poynton's garden, a place for the cultivation of both organic life and an aesthetic of nature, Fleda recalls having seen the comparatively horrid taxidermied animal of the Brigstock's. As she departs Poynton, Fleda stumbles upon Mona in the garden, and as the two women converse, Mona suddenly tells Fleda of her astonishment that Mrs. Gareth "never had a winter garden thrown out," and that Mona herself "mean[s] to have one" if ever she were to have a place of her own. Mona's proclamation dismays Fleda who, imagining the "vulgar" woman's impending takeover of Poynton as "her own place," visualizes Mona's intended winter garden as "something glazed and piped, on iron pillars, with untidy plants and cane sofas; a shiny excrescence on the noble face of Poynton" (53, 5). Fleda bases her assumptions about Mona's dubious ability to assemble and maintain a winter garden on an earlier visit to Waterbath that illustrated for Fleda the horrors of the Brigstocks' decorative efforts. Fleda "remembered at Waterbath a conservatory where she had caught a bad cold in the company of a stuffed cockatoo fastened to a tropical bough and a waterless fountain composed of shells stuck into some hardened paste" (55). At the same time Fleda's memory of the stuffed cockatoo emphasizes the close connection between her aesthetic and affective sensibilities (indeed, Mona's poor taste physically afflicts Fleda, who falls ill during her visit to Waterbath), the mounted animal also suggests significant differences between the quality of objects at

Poynton and those at the Brigstock's family home, as well as how those objects represent the people and places aligned with them. The stuffed cockatoo and Fleda's revulsion upon seeing it also suggests much about the cultural practice of preserving and displaying dead animals as art objects at the time of James's writing.

Taken as akin to the other flourishes on display at Waterbath, the stuffed cockatoo, one of the "imbecilities of decoration" comprising "the aesthetic misery of the big commodious house," initially appears to acquire its repulsive quality because it is arranged among objects similarly regarded as unoriginal or inauthentic (35). While the works of art at Poynton are unique, irreplaceable works of art, Waterbath's décor consists of poor reproductions or widely available objects: as Mrs. Gareth laments to Fleda "[t]he world is full of cheap gimcracks in this awful age, and they're thrust in at one at every turn," and further that were Mona to take over Poynton, she would surely "bring in her own little belongings and horrors," those cheap pieces so prevalent at the time, to "thrust in here on top of my [Mrs. Gareth's] treasures" (53-4). Mrs. Gareth's resistance to Mona's inheritance of her possessions shows that the high aesthetic value of the pieces at Poynton arises not from how much they cost when purchased, but in their originality, the fact that they, in their uniqueness, are not "thrust in at one at every turn" (53).

In his famous "Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin discusses the decline of the "authentic" work of art during the emergence of methods of technological reproduction around the year 1900. Although Benjamin focuses much of his discussion on photography, the changes he explores in the public reception of both unique and mass produced works of art applies well to a consideration of the

artworks in James's *Poynton*, both those one-of-a-kind pieces at Poynton and the mass-produced, widely available decorative items purchased and enjoyed by members of the middle class, including members of the upper-middle-class such as Mona Brigstock and her family. Benjamin argues that the original work of art possesses the element of a singular "presence in time and space, its unique existence at the place where it happens to be." The unique work of art depends on its being the only one of its kind as well as its independence from technical reproducibility. Benjamin clarifies, explaining that, "[t]he presence of the original is the prerequisite to the concept of authenticity," an authenticity that technical reproducibility cannot itself reproduce (220). Importantly, however, the acceleration of technical processes of reproduction results in the decline in the "authentic" work of art's poignancy, a poignancy that depends on originality as an aesthetic value. For Benjamin, "by making many reproductions [the technique of reproduction] substitutes a plurality of copies for a unique existence" (221). In the age of mechanical reproduction, the proliferation of copies render an art work's potential originality an insignificant and obsolete concern. Benjamin's discussion of technological reproduction contrasts unique art works associated with originality and authenticity, those that once commanded aesthetic appreciation, with the "plurality of copies" that flood the industrial marketplace around the turn of the century (221). James's *Poynton* illustrates the tension between the two types of artworks, the unique and the mass-produced, through the objects housed at Poynton and Waterbath, respectively.

The stuffed cockatoo of Waterbath is like the other "cheap gimcracks" on display insofar as taxidermied animals, and especially taxidermied birds, were a common fixture

in middle and upper class homes in turn-of-the-century England when and where the events of the novel take place. As Rachel Poliquin explains, by the mid-nineteenth century, taxidermy "had reached its apotheosis in western Europe, and most particularly in England," and that perhaps the widespread popularity of taxidermy could be at least partially attributed to "the urbanizing effects of the Industrial Revolution, the waxing of romantic rustic nostalgia, and a growing sense of dislocation from the countryside" (67). Following Poliquin's inference, European consumers may have looked to taxidermy and other widely-available art objects, including those proliferating via the technologies of reproducibility that Benjamin discusses, to meet a desire to reconnect with the countryside and rustic lifestyle that those same industrialized technologies had helped render remote. Poliquin elaborates on the ubiquity and availability of taxidermied animals in general and stuffed birds in particular:

> Any Victorian household would have at least one or two stuffed birds under glass, along with some small natural history collection: pressed ferns on the parlor wall, a collection of butterflies, or at least a few shells, feathers, or minerals...But stuffed birds were hardly limited to the entrance halls of the upper classes...Taxidermy was everywhere, from the conservatories of the wealthiest patrons to the market stalls, and everywhere in between. (69)

We may take Poliquin's assertion that "taxidermy was everywhere" as further evidence of the Victorian public's desire to reconnect with nature through commodity consumption. Taxidermied animals helped capture an exotic and romanticized natural world that could

be enjoyed without leaving the comforts of one's own home. Owing in part to its conflation with the exotic and the natural, the popularity and ubiquity of taxidermy shows that the ethic of reproducible artworks that Benjamin details coheres in late-nineteenth and early twentieth-century mounted animals. Taxidermied animals were not necessarily regarded as unique and particular works of art, but as decorative accents available to anyone of any social class swept up in the Victorian fervor for all things natural history (69).

A brief look to another piece of James's fiction shows that the abundance and availability of mounted animals did not escape his attention: published as a serial in *The Atlantic Monthly* from 1885-1886 and then as a book in 1886, James's *The Princess Casamassima* also draws on the figure of stuffed birds as a way to illustrate the correlation between aesthetic taste and social class. Stuffed birds first appear in the novel when Hyacinth Robinson, a young man of noble blood who is raised in an impoverished household, imagines the sorts of tokens of social standing his working-class friend Millicent Henning would desire. In Hyacinth's estimation, Millicent, "at bottom a shameless Philistine," "summed up the sociable, humorous, ignorant chatter of the masses...their ideal of something smug and prosperous, where washed hands, and plates in rows on dressers, and stuffed birds under glass...would symbolise success" (*Casamassima* 145-6). Like Mona Brigstock, Millicent undervalues art. According to Hyacinth's portrait of Millicent, too, her desire for "stuffed birds under glass" suggests that such objects, as commonplace and unremarkable as "plates in rows on dressers," would content and satisfy a simple working-class woman such as Millicent (146).

Hyacinth's regard for stuffed birds as representative of low taste and modest income gets confirmed later in the novel when Princess Casamassima, after selling her fine possessions to give to the poor, takes a home in the squalid Madeira Crescent. Describing the area, Hyacinth compares the Princess's new home to her former one, thinking that "the descent in the scale of the gentility was almost immeasurable"; then, approaching the house, Hyacinth sees in the window to the parlor "a glass case containing stuffed birds" (157). In Hyacinth's mind, stuffed birds would be for Millicent the very symbol of social success, yet for a high-born, wealthy individual such as Princess Casamassima, the stuffed birds become representative of how far she has lowered herself. Because "taxidermy was everywhere," stuffed animals become, in James's fiction, symbolic of the masses' lack of aesthetic discernment (Poliquin 69).

The ubiquity of taxidermy seems to support Samuel J. M. M. Alberti's suggestion that even known, recognizable taxidermied animals remain "metonymic for their species, redolent of places far away and times long ago" (8). The popularity of taxidermy mounts at the time of James's writing also escalated another ideal, that of the taxonomic category, into widespread prominence, with individual animals standing in for not only "nature" or "the exotic," but also the whole of their species. In his analysis of *Poynton*, Peter Betjemann's claim that Mrs. Brigstock, Mona's mother and the assembler of the items at Waterbath, classifies and organizes objects according to a "formula of admiration" (*Poynton* 51) by which she "read[s] and name[s]" things recognizable from magazines and society papers (Betjemann 209). Mrs. Brigstock, Betjemann suggests, "translates everything into this or that style," whereas "[t]he decor at Poynton, by contrast, can never

be put into words" (201). Mrs. Brigstock is therefore a kind of "taxonomist," a characterization that fits alongside the nineteenth-century England's interest in the discovery, the naming, and the grouping of animals. The stuffed cockatoo fits into a class of decorative objects representative of a beautiful and increasingly remote natural world, just as the animal itself stands in as a representative of its species as in a museum display.

Despite taxidermy's ubiquity, perhaps what unsettles Fleda about the stuffed cockatoo's inclusion in Waterbath's conservatory is the taxidermied animal's destabilization of what counts as original and what counts as reproduction. As both a unique, individual animal and widely available decorative specimen at the beginning of the twentieth century, a mounted animal occupies the paradoxical position of being at once original *and* reproduction. Contrary to the cultural values attached to it, the stuffed cockatoo at Waterbath does not simply represent its species, an idea of nature, or an aesthetic of good taste: it disrupts these ideals and values with, as Fleda experiences, a distressing animal individuality irreducible to taxonomic categories or classification as a "reproduction." At the same time that taxidermied animals serve a symbolic function, the materiality of an animal, the particular skin and fur and feathers of a once-living being, persists even in the most anonymous taxidermy mounts. In short, the nagging fact that an individual animal once bore the skin now on display disrupts any exclusively symbolic reading of taxidermy's function. This is also the case in James's fiction: even though stuffed birds like the cockatoo at Waterbath were widely available and, for Fleda, Mrs. Gareth, and Hyacinth, represent low taste or squalor or both, these massively available, reproduced decorative items were, in spite of their reproducibility, all one-of-a-kind

objects owing to the fact that they originated from particular, individual animals. In her exploration of “animal things,” both things made from animals and animals read as things, Erica Fudge, drawing inspiration from Bill Brown’s thing theory, suggests that “objectified animals, that is, animals living or dead, can and should be read as having active presences in the world: they are ‘asserting themselves’ (Brown’s phrase) or are recalcitrant (mine),” the latter a word Fudge defines through the *OED* as “‘kicking against constraint’” (44). Fudge’s suggestion that dead animals and “animal-made-objects” remain “truly active presence[s] in the world” emphasizes that despite the best attempts to claim animals as objects, even dead animals persistently construct “new meanings, beginnings, and relationships” potentially “against human intention” (45). The disruption of a field of meaning initiated by dead animal bodies shows that no stuffed bird under glass can be simply read as emblematic of the exotic or as representative of a species: taxidermied animals insist with their unknowable histories and past, particular lives. The insistence of a particular animal into an established field of meaning may well be part of the sickness that inflicts Fleda Vetch as she sits beneath the stuffed cockatoo at Waterbath. The dead animal disrupts the clean dichotomy between what counts as “authentic” and what counts as “reproduction,” the very dichotomy on which the specialness of Poynton’s objects depend.

Emphasizing the particularity of the stuffed cockatoo while simultaneously drawing out its similarity to the other “tasteless” objects at Waterbath is the very likely possibility that the stuffed bird was inexpertly constructed. The popularity of taxidermy brought about or was facilitated by a multiplication of taxidermists, particularly amateur

taxidermists trained in unrelated trades and who offered taxidermy services as a supplement to their primary business. Poliquin accounts for the unskilled, shoddy taxidermy that proliferated as a result:

> But if taxidermy flourished in the nineteenth century, it is hardly given that techniques improved. As ever, quantity does not necessarily mean quality. In fact, laments about disastrous taxidermy continued almost unabated throughout the century...Most taxidermy produced in village shops and by nature lovers was hardly well done. This is not to say that no good taxidermy was produced in the nineteenth century, only that a good percentage was distinctly amateurish. (71)

Building on Poliquin's account, we might also surmise that two stuffed cockatoos of the same species from the period could likely have borne two quite different appearances depending on the skill and experience of the taxidermists involved, not to mention their familiarity with the appearance of living cockatoos. The multitude of unskilled taxidermists practicing at the time of James's writing therefore increases the likelihood that the stuffed cockatoo at Waterbath was anatomically incorrect or awkwardly fashioned. Such a mount probably offered a visual presentation akin to what Steve Baker calls "botched taxidermy," or an instance "of recent art practice where things...appear to have *gone wrong* with the animal...but where it still *holds together*" (55-6, italics original). Whereas traditional modern taxidermy emphasizes accuracy, realism, and above all the re-presentation of the dead animal as if it were alive, the amateur taxidermy of the nineteenth-century, by "botching" the presentation of the animal, often emphasized

the fact of the animals' reconstruction. Awkward-looking mounts likely displayed the "gone wrong"-ness of animals and by extension their look of deadness (71).

The all-too-visible death of the stuffed cockatoo at Waterbath, the mounted animal that cannot conceal its absence of life through artful reconstruction, violates taxidermy's status as merely reproducible: the particularities of the dead animal are likely to become even more individuated with unskilled craftsmanship. By casting the stuffed cockatoo as its primary figure, we might read James's description of Waterbath in contrast to Poynton as presenting *death* as one of Waterbath's primary aesthetics. As Fleda looks back to the visit that caused her to fall ill beneath the cockatoo, she also recalls "a waterless fountain composed of shells stuck into some hardened paste" next to the stuffed animal. The waterless fountain certainly recalls the name of the country home itself: Waterbath. By thinking of Waterbath as like the objects it houses, as water*less*, the absence of vibrancy seems to characterize the entirety of the residence. Moreover, the waterless fountain is composed of "shells stuck into some hardened paste," a detail that draws further attention to the dead quality of these things, and particularly the dead quality of these *animal* things. The shells on the waterless fountain are likely seashells, the protective outer layer of many marine animals that persist after the animal that developed the shell dies; the shell itself does not readily decompose or become food for other animals (55). The "conservatory" at Waterbath in which Fleda sees such decorative items is therefore not a conservatory that cultivates organic life but a conservatory of dead things. Moreover, the objects at Waterbath appear as if twice dead: once because the stuffed cockatoo and the waterless fountain with its shells gesture toward dead creatures,

and twice because the objects' position within Waterbath itself does not animate them. In contrast, lively objects fill Poynton: as Mrs. Gareth explains, "They're living things to me; they know me, they return the touch of my hand...There's a care they want, there's a sympathy that draws out their beauty" (53). Mrs. Gareth's care animates the things and keeps them alive, and the vibrancy of the treasures at Poynton makes Mona's impending takeover all the more dramatic. With only Mona's neglect to nourish them, the lively things will literally and figuratively perish.

In the preface to *The Spoils of Poynton*, James describes the "stray suggestion" that inspired the novel by drawing on the figure of a subtle sickness, a virus:

> Such is the interesting truth about the stray suggestion, the wandering word, the vague echo, at touch of which the novelist's imagination winces at the prick of some sharp point: its virtue is in all its needle-like quality, the power to penetrate as finely as possible. The fineness it is that communicates the virus of suggestion, anything more than the medium of which spoils the operation (23).

Looking again at Fleda's sudden illness as she encounters the stuffed cockatoo, the "virus of suggestion" that inspires James's novel bears a certain resemblance to the sickness that afflicts Fleda as she spies the inventory of dead things at Waterbath (23). In *Poynton*, the cockatoo distresses Fleda with the suggestion that the dichotomy between what is real and what is imitation, the dichotomy upon which the vibrancy of Poynton's objects depend, may not endure the industrial turn to modern technologies of reproducibility and mass consumption. The cockatoo confronts Fleda with the knowledge that what is dead,

those inanimate objects at Waterbath, will paradoxically outlive the lively things of Poynton as the proliferation of redundant art-objects fill the marketplace with like things. In this way, the sickness the cockatoo spreads makes Fleda feel in her body the threat of her own death, of her growing insignificance of a woman of "taste" and cultural refinement. As a thing saved from spoiling and rotting through the preservative work of taxidermy, the stuffed bird's infection of Fleda threatens to "[spoil] the operation," the subtle conditions and standards of taste, that Fleda holds dear and which animate her, Mrs. Gareth, and Mrs. Gareth's things. Here, a dead but nevertheless *active* animal-thing resists its tropological function as a signifier of cultural taste, a resistance that undoes the very logic that undergirds not only its display, but also the popularity of taxidermy in turn-of-the-century England. James's novel ultimately suggests that to death go the spoils, and also that dead birds can still bite.

Hemingway's Unbought Stuffed Dogs and Cultures of Commemoration

During an iconic moment in Ernest Hemingway's 1926 novel *The Sun Also Rises*, Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton, two American expatriates, come upon a taxidermist's shop as they stroll through the streets of Paris. The inebriated Bill takes a prolonged interest in the mounted animals for sale, going so far as to insist that Jake purchase one:

> 'Pretty nice stuffed dogs,' Bill said. 'Certainly brighten up your flat.'
>
> 'Come on.'
>
> 'Just one stuffed dog. I can take 'em or leave 'em alone. But listen, Jake. Just one stuffed dog.'

'Come on.'

'Mean everything in the world to you after you bought it. Simple exchange of values. You give them money. They give you a stuffed dog.'

'We'll get one on the way back.'

'All right. Have it your own way. Road to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs. Not my fault.'

We went on. (72-3)

Besides the humorous tone of Bill's insistence that Jake buy a dead dog to display in his home, the conversation outside the taxidermist's shop proliferates with possible interpretations. Scott Donaldson reads the moment as testament to Bill's comedic talents, while George Cheatham sees Bill's push for a dog as a drunken excess and appeal to financial superfluousness (Donaldson 322, Cheatham 102-3). As the conversation shows, too, the stuffed animals have dubious value at best, and exchanging money for them as Bill suggests is unlikely to imbue them with the significance he predicts Jake will feel. In contrast to Jake and Bill's comic dialogue, narratives supporting the "value" of taxidermy and taxidermic displays proliferated during the time of Hemingway's writing and his characters' stay in postwar Paris. By attending to the specificity of taxidermy and of stuffed dogs as cultural objects, I argue that rather than mere comedic props, Hemingway's dead dogs draw attention to their unspeakable, ambiguous histories to forge an unlikely affinity with the disoriented veterans of the 1920s.

Much of Hemingway's interest in and experience with taxidermy likely developed from what Susan F. Beegel calls his "naturalistic upbringing": that is, his training, as a

boy and young man, to observe, study, and appreciate the natural world and its animal inhabitants. In keeping with the conservation ethic popular during Theodore Roosevelt's presidency (1901-1909) and beyond, such appreciation of animals typically meant killing and preserving them for public display. As a boy, Hemingway himself "collected" animal specimens: according to Beegel, some of his earliest hunting "took the form of scientific collecting, as father and son shot animals to prepare as study skins or to taxiderm for the [Agassiz Club's] natural history 'museum.'" Young Ernest himself personally contributed "seaweeds, horseshoe crabs, shells, and a large swordfish bill," and "at age fourteen he was fined for shooting a protected great blue heron" he had wanted for the school museum (76).

In addition to the collecting he did himself, Hemingway grew up as the adventures of famous "collectors" to Africa and South America were both popular and abundant: these hunter-naturalists (of which Teddy Roosevelt was one) pursued big game to ship back to America for public display. Roosevelt was a particular favorite of young Hemingway's. As Ernest's grandson Séan Hemingway attests, "when Roosevelt came to Oak Park on a whistle-stop after his African safari of the previous year, Ernest in his own little khaki safari outfit...cheer[ed] on the great African hunter and rough rider...the thrill of the hunt...would captivate Hemingway for the rest of his life" (xxvi). Along with the stories of Roosevelt's exploits, Hemingway grew up visiting Chicago's Field Museum of Natural History on the weekends with his father and siblings during the period that the famous hunter-naturalist Carl Akeley, often regarded as the father of modern American taxidermy, worked for the museum collecting and mounting animals. Akeley was a friend

and hunting-companion of Roosevelt's, and the two public figures forged a popular correlation between adventure, big game hunting, and taxidermy arrangements in the early twentieth-century. The Akeley African Hall in the American Museum of Natural History continues to display an example of the pair's hunting success: the exhibit features a group of bull elephants taxidermied by Akeley, and two of the elephants were shot by Roosevelt. As a visitor to the Chicago Field Museum during Akeley's tenure, young Hemingway would have been thoroughly exposed to the narrative linking taxidermy to adventure: Beegel explains that "[i]n 1905, the year Ernest turned six, Akeley collected the elephants for the Field Museum's famous 'Fighting Bulls' group. The boy continued to follow Akeley's adventures even after Akeley left the Field Museum." The famous taxidermist and his collecting expeditions likely lingered in Hemingway's imagination later in life, too, as "Akeley's memoir, *In Brightest Africa*, was part of Hemingway's adult library" (77). Indeed, Hemingway's frequent exposure to both the practice of collecting as well as to famous taxidermists and their acquisitions shows that his familiarity with stuffed animals was hardly limited to the specimens for sale on the streets of Paris in the 1920s.

Also during the period of Hemingway's boyhood, taxidermic displays and mounted animals, beyond reflecting an appreciation of nature, secured for hunters and naturalists proof of a rugged masculinity linked to bravery, adventure, and the conquest of nature. The professional and public association between Carl Akeley and Teddy Roosevelt, too, establishes a strong connection between Roosevelt's promotion of manly, restorative outdoor activity and the development of Akeley's taxidermy dioramas.

Roosevelt actively supported the connection between hunting, toil, and masculine ability; as Jeanette Eileen Jones explains, "[f]ears that cosmopolitan life feminized white men led Teddy Roosevelt to advocate the pursuit of 'the strenuous life.' He warned Americans of the dangers of living a life of 'ignoble ease,' lambasted 'over-civilized' men for their laziness, and scorned men of 'dull mind," urging them to seek rebirth through communion with nature (19). Jake Barnes himself recommends hunting for its ability to invigorate men: in a conversation with Robert Cohn, Jake suggests "going to British East Africa to shoot" as a way for Cohn to "really [live]" and dispel his fear of ennui and a wasted life (E. Hemingway 10). The hunting, skinning, and mounting of animals to look as if alive thereby emerged in the early twentieth-century as a highly visible, material demonstration of a hunter's "rebirth through communion with nature" (Jones 19). In particular it was the attitudes in which the animals were mounted that highlighted the heroics of the hunters and that crafted a narrative that naturalized male dominance by figuring it through the postures of animals. Sally Gregory Kohlstedt explains this phenomenon well when she writes that "[o]ne means of emphasizing the fierceness of wild animals was to highlight the courage, strength, and sense of adventure required by those who obtained them for display The heroic posture of explorers reached its apogee with the wealthy big game hunters at the end of the century" (112). Because many taxidermists performed their own collecting (as Carl Akeley did), "[t]he taxidermist is integrated into the presentation, actively formulating the narrative while presenting critical data" (123). During young Hemingway's visits to the Chicago Field Museum with his parents, such exhibitions of hunter-naturalist heroics and displays of masculine

ability became commonplace, and certainly Hemingway's own public persona as a tough, adventurous hunter of big game evolved in large part due to this popular conflation of masculinity and the killing of wild animals.

If it was the case that Hemingway was most familiar with taxidermy as a medium of masculine display and that he himself participated in similar rituals of collecting, what is the relationship of the stuffed dogs for sale in *The Sun Also Rises* to this history of specimen acquisition and preservation in early twentieth-century natural history museums? What does it mean, too, that these stuffed animals are available for purchase (and subsequent personal or public display) without the ennobling and gender-affirming ritual of the hunt? To be sure, these dead animals for sale on the streets of Paris signify quite differently than do the bull elephants and leopards in the halls of natural history museums, and our comparison of the two illuminates that the taxidermied animal acquired by hunting privileges the experience of the hunter as one demonstrating skill and bravery. Yet, when a stuffed animal can be bought without the labor of the hunt, any masculinity bestowed by the taxidermied animal becomes fraudulent and hollow. The stuffed dogs violate the tradition of dead animals mounted for their association with masculine ability and become a souvenir instead for an absent experience. In this way, the stuffed dogs resemble military veteran Mike Campbell's medals, those he borrows from his tailor so as to look impressive for a fancy dinner. After the dinner flops and Mike re-discovers the unworn medals in his pocket later that evening, he gives them all away to women in a nightclub as a "[f]orm of souvenir." Retelling the story, Mike reports that the medals persuaded the women he was "hell's own shakes of a soldier...Dashing

fellow" (136). Rather than commemorating an accomplishment or experience Mike endured, the medals become a symbol for all Mike did not accomplish during his wartime service: they become part of his oft-told story that commemorates a lack of military accolades and by extension his lack of masculine achievements.[19] The medals and stuffed dogs are both a "[f]orm of souvenir" that, instead of securing masculinity for those that possess them, give material form to absent experiences (136).[20] The stuffed dogs in *The Sun Also Rises* therefore stand in an uncomfortable relation to the narratives of conquest supported in Roosevelt and Akeley's collecting expeditions and natural history displays. Unlike the wild elephants and other game animals killed and mounted by Akeley, for example, the stuffed dogs lack a narrative that legitimates and celebrates their death and subsequent display, and their significance as commemorative objects remain unclear.

The uncertainty of what the stuffed dogs of the narrative commemorate, what they will "mean" to those who purchase them, persists even after taking into account dogs' status as companion animals. Even though many of the taxidermied animals with which Hemingway grew up (including those he collected himself) commemorated human

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[19] In contrast to Mike's empty medals stand the bull ears Pedro Romero wins for his performance in the bullfighting ring. Unlike Mike's medals, too, the bull ears present another form of souvenir (akin to Roosevelt and Akeley's taxidermy mounts) that imbues dead animal parts with the power to represent and to reflect masculine ability. Rather than remain on display, however, Romero misguidedly presents the bull ears as a present to Brett who eventually "left both ear and [Jake's] handkerchief, along with a number of Muratti cigarette-stubs, shoved far back in the drawer of the bed-table that stood beside her bed in the Hotel Montoya, in Pamplona (E. Hemingway 199). Discarded as so much trash, the bull ear—ostensibly the novel's only "legitimate" animal souvenir—quickly depreciates in value when removed from the sphere of cultural spectacle: depending on context, the same animal-object that once commemorated an activity can quickly become an object of disgust.

[20] David Tompkins persuasively suggests that Hemingway emphasizes material objects that "commemorate *immaterial* events" in order to show that "the absent or lost "thing"…matters…and defines rather than undermines every generation" (746). By this logic, the narrative's stuffed dogs emphasize several losses as this chapter shows: the loss of the possibility of human-animal companionship, the loss of a gender-affirming narrative, as well as the dogs' own loss of life.

achievement and an appreciation of nature through the figure of the hunted, skinned, and stuffed animal, preserved companion animals, reproducing as they do the form of an animal regarded as an individual rather than a specimen, represent the animals they were in life rather than the anonymous animals of natural history museums.[21] In short, preserved pets focus on the preservation of a particular animal rather than a largely symbolic one (those that represent wildness, masculine conquest, or both). According to Poliquin, many people consider pets and dogs in particular as distinct from other taxidermied animals. She points out that people looking at stuffed companion animals often feel a certain "queasiness": above all, many see stuffed dogs as "something different from a stuffed weasel, hummingbird, or lion" (215). Poliquin ventures that the exceptional status of dogs as companion animals may produce the discomfort many spectators experience when seeing them taxidermied. She elaborates, writing that, "the emotional intimacy we share with our domestic companions ensures that they are never 'just' animals. They are friends, and the transition of friend into animal-thing is unsettling and perhaps even unseemly...Perhaps the human-dog bond is too intimate for such postmortem bodily invasion" (215). Unlike wild animals, humans know dogs and other pets closely, and humans extend these animals extensive care and emotion. When it comes to deceased pets, too, the individual, familiar animal matters, and consequently what happens to that individual's body matters. The personal relationship and connection

[21] Haraway emphasizes the importance of the construction of the "typical" specimen to scientific displays in natural history museums, the typical animal supposedly embodying an imagined real. She asks, "But how could he know what was typical, or that such a state of being existed?" (40). Haraway's question unsettles the ideology of the representative specimen, the idea that a single, individual animal might act as a synecdoche of a species. In this way, too, companion animals (especially dogs) are almost never treated as representative specimens; instead, humans treat dogs and other pets as particular individuals rather than undifferentiated things.

between dogs and humans accounts for much of the revulsion or discomfort the sight of a stuffed dog often provokes.

Rivaling Hemingway's reputation as a big game hunter is his renowned fondness for cats and other companion animals: Hemingway once had fifty-seven cats and twelve dogs roaming his Cuban farm alone (H. Hemingway xi). That said, critics generally gloss over Hemingway's complex relationship to animals: although his love of companion animals is well known, the author's public persona as an adventurous and manly big game hunter garners far more frequent analysis, and the stuffed dogs thereby deserve attention for their particularity as companion animals. Despite the number of pets Hemingway owned in his lifetime, he doted on them all: according to his niece Hilary Hemingway, the author and his fourth wife Mary Welsh treated their "twenty-three cats and five dogs...as royalty...He and Mary called the cats 'purr factories' and 'love sponges' that soaked up their love and in return gave them comfort and companionship" (xii). Hemingway also mourned the death of his beloved animals: a testament to his devotion, in 1953 Hemingway wrote to his friend Gianfranco Ivancich of having to put down his cat Uncle Willie after he was hit by a car. Describing his grief, Hemingway writes, "Certainly missed you. Miss Uncle Willie. Have had to shoot people but never anyone I knew and loved for eleven years. Nor anyone that purred with two broken legs" (quot. in Cohen). Hemingway's intimate relationship with his pets and his tender treatment of companion animals shows that their lives carried a personal significance for him in contrast to the animals he hunted: like many pet owners, Hemingway treated cats and dogs as knowable individuals, not anonymous wild things. Ryan Hediger puts it well,

writing, “Hemingway resisted the disposable approach to companion animals that dominated then even more than today” (222).

Hemingway’s close relationship with his pets further mystifies the appearance of the stuffed dogs in *The Sun Also Rises*: as discussed previously, these dogs were not mounted to commemorate or secure masculine ability in the face of untamed nature, and the apparent anonymity of the dogs suggests they did not enjoy a close relationship with humans during their lives. Although stuffed dogs were not wholly uncommon in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Paris, most such mounted pets were the prized possessions of their bereaved owners: indeed, the taxidermist’s shop Bill and Jake come across could have provided stuffing services to wealthy mourners. Kathleen Kete explains that disposing of a dead pet in Paris was a particular problem until the first pet cemetery in Paris was founded in 1899. Even after the founding of the cemetery, some pet-care books continued to recommend that Parisians of means get their pets “stuffed and mounted for posterity” after the animals’ passing (90). Mme Charles Boeswillwald, author of a manual for rich pet owners, suggests as much in 1907: describing methods of dealing with the bodies of dead pets, she proposes, “Or you could have him stuffed in which case you will have with you, always, something that will recall your favorite to you” (quot. in Kete 90). The dogs’ presence in the taxidermist’s shop, however, suggest they were neither someone’s “favorite” nor were they intended to be “with...always” a human who loved them (90). Rather, these stuffed dogs are for sale, a mere commodity to be exchanged rather than an irreplaceable treasure commemorating a life. Ownerless and anonymous, the lives and individual histories of these dead dogs are unknowable and

beyond recovery. In addition to the “revulsion” Poliquin describes many people feeling as they look at mounted companion animals, the narrative’s stuffed dogs also suggest an obfuscation of the animals’ individuality, something Hemingway took seriously when caring for his own pets. As unfamiliar as a wild animal, these strange dogs come closer to the specimens of a museum than to Hemingway’s named, known, and loved pets.

When Bill Gorton turns to Jake Barnes outside the taxidermist’s shop and declares that a stuffed dog would “mean everything in the world to you [Jake] after you bought it,” his proposition appears additionally dubious when we consider the stuffed dogs’ persistent failure to *mean* (E. Hemingway 72). Despite the cultural significance attributed to taxidermied animals in natural history displays and to pets preserved to aid in their owners’ remembrances, the stuffed dogs of Hemingway’s narrative seem as hollowed-out as their bodies: they resist the narratives of conquest and of adoration that typically attend mounted animals. Positioned outside of the museum and the home, too, these animals-out-of-context disturb the affirming rituals of acquisition and preservation that circulate around other taxidermy mounts: their strange, meaningless presence reveals the heavy burdens of human meaning borne by most other stuffed animals. Hemingway’s narrative therefore questions the efficacy of animal signs in general and taxidermy specifically: do these animal representations reflect the human, the animal, or a combination of both? Considering Hemingway’s love of companion animals, too, his novel troubles the suggestion that stuffed dogs represent *animals* in their individual complexity. The fog of meanings that surround taxidermy mounts conceal the banal yet essential fact that, with taxidermy, the remains of a particular animal stands before viewers.

Out of the confusion surrounding the stuffed dogs in Hemingway's narrative emerges an unlikely kinship between Jake Barnes and the mounted animals behind the window of the Parisian taxidermist's shop. A veteran of World War I, Jake suffers from an unnamed injury that renders him impotent: Jake admits he was "hurt" in the war and that there's "not a damn thing" he and Brett Ashley can do to act on their affection for one another (17, 26). Throughout the novel, Jake struggles to reconstitute a suitable public and private identity after his military service, and the narrative stages a conflict between Jake's inward sensitivity and the cultural pressure to secure a masculine authority in spite of (or because of) the war's failure to produce rugged, battle-hardened men. Instead, "shell shock" and physical wounds (as in Jake's case) "feminized" men, thereby destabilizing their cultural value as heroes and authority figures. Todd Onderdonk reads the word "bitched" as invoked in one of Hemingway's letters as a sign of the author's "modernist despair," and for Onderdonk, Hemingway's despair surrounds "a loss of an ostensibly masculine autonomy and certainty to what is seen as a feminizing modernity." Onderdonk takes Jake as emblematic of a "bitched" Hemingway character, asking, "How do we square...this sensitive, socially passive observer, given to tears and private resignation, with the public and private legend of machismo that was already developing around Hemingway at this time?" (62). Although he does not dwell on this particular valence of the word, Onderdonk's invocation of the word "bitched" to describe Jake emphasizes the war veteran's connection with and similarity to female dogs in particular and to the stuffed dogs by extension.

If a “feminizing modernity” makes Jake into a bitch as Onderdonk claims, we should stress not only the gendered implications of this term, but also the animalizing ones. In what ways, we might ask, has postwar culture made Jake a stuffed dog? In this vein, the production of stuffed animals resonates with Jake’s war injury: that is, while the war destroys Jake’s identify-defining parts, the taxidermic process removes the dogs’ “animal” parts. Geoffrey N. Swinney accounts for this particular aspect of the taxidermic process that produces immaculate animals:

> Preservation and reconstruction divest the animal of those aspects of its animality--its beastliness--which serve to remind we humans of our own biology and of the beast within. Reconstruction, involving processes of flensing and cleansing, absolve the animal of the necessity for such base functions as urination, defecation, and the overt signaling of sexual receptivity and eagerness to mate...It is an animal which is chaste and without vulgarity. (221)

Jake and the taxidermied dogs are similarly neutered and hollowed-out: the war “unmans” Jake just as the process of animal preservation de-animalizes the dogs. Chaste, cleansed, and “without vulgarity” and “sexual receptivity,” the stuffed dogs persist as the hollowed-out shells of their former “animal” selves: what defined them in life is removed from their bodies in death (221). Neither fully animal nor fully human, taxidermy mounts straddle two poles of being. Jake, too, finds himself without a definitive postwar identity: “less” than a man, his physical disfigurement in turn disfigures the narrative of machismo

developing at the time, not unlike the way in which the stuffed dogs resist popular narratives about taxidermy's cultural function.

The connection between Jake and the stuffed dogs illuminates one of the novels' central questions: what kind of identity formation is possible without a culturally-intelligible corporeal grounding? What kind of value do disfigured bodies maintain? Alternatively, might bodies without identity-defining organs remain open to a multiplication of unforeseeable significances, meanings, and opportunities for re-configuration and re-figuration? Returning to Bill Gorton's insistence that Jake's purchase of a stuffed dog will "[m]ean everything in the world to you," we might say that what is for sale is one of the two narratives of taxidermy, or the possibility for stuffed dogs to *mean* (E. Hemingway 72). What Bill urges Jake to *buy into*, in a sense, is the possibility of a creative refashioning of post-traumatic meaning, for the possibility that value can be restored to even the deadest of objects. Contrary to the traditional narratives surrounding taxidermy and to war veterans, neither Jake nor the stuffed dogs emblematize masculinity; they are also not traditional objects of affection. To "value" the dogs and to "value" Jake, then, requires new configurations of companionship and of identity after a destabilizing event, new narratives of personal worth and selfhood that might be "brought" into, invested in, or believed. According to Dana Fore, "Bill's praise of out-of-place, nonstandard bodies and his certainty about their value seem to constitute a metaphorical expression of...open-mindedness" as well as Bill's commitment to "a nontraditional code of behavior" that allows him "to see value in bodies that the larger society would declare worthless or 'dead.'" (81). Bill's open-mindedness and ability to

see “value” in Jake and the stuffed dogs implies, too, that Bill’s friendship might help Jake constitute a suitable postwar identity, just as the dogs were refashioned with new insides following their death and disassembly. Following the scene with the stuffed dogs, Jake calls Bill a “taxidermist,” gesturing to Bill’s help putting dead things back together or with giving old things new meanings (75). Bill’s quip that the “[r]oad to hell paved with unbought stuffed dogs” therefore recalls Brett’s repeated remark that she put men through the solitary “hell” of perpetual longing (73, 26). Like a life pursuing the slippery Brett Ashley, the hell of unbought stuffed dogs—stuffed dogs without a new narrative to legitimate their persistent, dogged existence—is a hell characterized by loneliness and the reluctance to see the value in non-normative identities.

Enlivened through Taxidermy: Reclaiming Realism in Hogan’s *Solar Storms*

When Angel, the protagonist and primary narrator of Linda Hogan’s 1994 novel *Solar Storms*, enters LaRue’s home for the first time, the collection of dead and preserved animal remains she sees there fills her with discomfort: Angel thinks of LaRue, “a taxidermist and dealer in bones, pinned butterflies, hides, traps, and firearms,” as inhabiting a “terrible” and “frightening place,” and she encourages Bush to seek employment that does not require her to assist this man in the preserving of animals (28, 95). Bush, Angel’s grandmother, assists LaRue in his taxidermy practice: he pays her to “assemble the bones for schools and museums,” and also to arrange the skeletons of animals that would “one day look like a living animal, with eyes of glass, clean fur” (95, 106). In response to Angel’s protest of her contributions to LaRue’s taxidermy, Bush says,

"when I put the bones together...I help the soul of the animal...When I put them together I respect them...I feed them and consider their skills. I think of their intelligence" (95). Rather than imagine the display of dead animal parts as a form of exploitation or show of mastery, Bush sees her careful reconstruction of animals as an act of respect, as well as one that encourages an attentiveness to the animal that once lived, the animal that possessed particular "skills" and "intelligence" (95). In this way, Bush's taxidermy enlivens the animal through memory, and likewise respects the complexity and diversity of animal life rather than celebrating its destruction. Bush's practice of a taxidermy of respect thereby resists animals' reduction into mere trophy as well as their appropriation as symbols of human dominance.

Bush's taxidermy of respect disturbs both the common narratives that attend taxidermy (including those of masculine achievement discussed previously) as well as many critics' appraisal of taxidermy's continued function as a cultural signifier. For Wakeham, taxidermy's past cultural meanings "continue to resonate in the present," a fact that, if overlooked, risks missing "the persistence of colonial ideology...in taxidermic reconstruction" (15). Many contemporary taxidermy displays certainly reflect the long tradition of mounting animals to showcase white, colonial power or masculine achievement, particularly those specimens collected in museums of natural history or the felled animals featured in hunters' private collections. Read this way, the re-constructed bodies of animals in "life-like" attitudes represent an ideal or value outside of themselves; that is, they offer up for viewing less the actual animal that died and more the triumph of the hunter or the carefully concealed artistry of the taxidermist. Writing about

the taxidermy in *Solar Storms*, T. Christine Jespersen reads La Rue and Bush's mounts in a way that resonates with Wakeham's insights: Jespersen suggests that La Rue and his followers express their identities through a "deadening taxidermy" closely affiliated with the typically male pursuit of rugged, invigorating adventure popularized by Roosevelt and Akeley (287). She suggests, too, that La Rue's collection of curiosities that includes mummies and taxidermied animals "weds LaRue to the history of western anthropologists and museum curators who collected, studied, and named Native peoples" (278). For both Wakeham and Jespersen, taxidermy mounts reliably operate in the service of colonial power, an argument that maintains a great deal of merit. That said, two aspects of the taxidermy in *Solar Storms* disrupt a clear and consistent correlation of mounted animals with colonial forms of representation. Importantly, not only do Native American characters (including Bush, LaRue, and as I will show, Agnes as well) perform the labor of animal preservation and the re-assembling of parts, but also their taxidermy offers a narrative of "realism" rooted in native traditions rather than in white ones. By harnessing a representational technology typically wielded by their colonial oppressors, the native taxidermists in *Solar Storms* take back from western anthropologists, museum curators, and contemporary white exploiters the ability to tell stories about themselves and about animals.

It is important to emphasize that native self-representation itself may act as a form of social protest against one of the most pervasive tropes circulating about Native Americans by way of books, paintings, film, photography, and museums: that of the vanishing Indian. By implying that native peoples and native cultures have virtually

disappeared under the effects of colonial westward expansion and the widespread dispossession of native lands, white colonialists free themselves to represent native peoples as if their murder, exploitation, and forced removal were a necessary casualty to the realization of Manifest Destiny. Importantly, too, the trope of the vanishing Indian obscures the social, cultural, and legal struggles of native people that persist in the present day: the trope implies that Native Americans, like their political concerns, are dead and of the past. Any form of native self-representation, David L. Moore suggests, comes up against the restrictive image of the vanishing Indian; for Moore, it remains a "tacit discursive moniker...against which Native writers must speak," and further such a regulative discourse "offers no idiom for either the suffering or the survival or Indian communities and identities. America's recidivist investment in manifest destiny in the press and publishing world, and in Hollywood, does not allow for descriptions of American Indian cultural struggle, much less tribal sovereignty" (61). Modern media's portrayal of the disappearance of American Indians lends significant credence to Jespersen's claim that, in Hogan's *Solar Storms*, "survival is resistance" (291). Living in the shadow of the white American narratives that claim native people and their struggles are of the past, the endurance of native people and their efforts for self-representation rewrites the stories that insist on and perform their disappearance.

Many scholars have argued that the taxidermy displays of natural history museums actively participate in the construction of the vanishing Indian trope, particularly when native artifacts and exhibitions designed to teach the viewing public about Native American culture are positioned alongside dead, mounted animals.

Museums therefore regulate both native cultures and animals to an inventory of once-living creatures dominated by modern civilization. Pauline Wakeham illustrates how taxidermy displays accomplish such an implicit comparison between dead animals and dead cultures in her reading of the Banff Park Museum in Banff, Alberta. Wakeham explains:

> While the Banff Park Museum deployed skins and mounted corpses and synecdoches of wildlife, it similarly displayed aboriginal cultural objects--reframed according to the category of ethnographic 'artifacts'--as remnants of an endangered population...The Banff Park Museum, however, did not stop at the display of such artifacts: rather, it assumed proprietary and exhibitionary rights over 'the bones of an Indian chief long dead,' thereby drawing an insidious connection between taxidermic display of dead animals and the exhibition of Indian remains that effectively rendered the native one more species under Euro-Canadian control. (47)

In addition to the display of native artifacts that solidify the suggestion that the Indian has disappeared, leaving behind the material vestiges of its now-antiquated ways of living, this museum's display of Indian remains animalizes native people in order to legitimate their destruction and subsequent display.[22] The very structure of the spectator-exhibition

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[22] In a fascinating analysis of the plastinated cadaver bodies featured in the popular Body Worlds exhibits, Jane Desmond suggests that the skinless forms of these displays—highlighting muscles and other rarely-viewed inner workings of the human body—operate as a form of anti-taxidermy. Such anti-taxidermy helps illuminate the differences between how contemporary culture differentiates the human from the animal through the display of their dead bodies. For Desmond, the absence of skin on the Body Worlds cadavers "facilitates a de-individuation that remains in tension with our understanding of each human body as a unique subject" (349). I would add, too, that the idea of the animal "specimen," of the representative animal that stands in for a whole species, that informs many taxidermy displays reveals that animals are not

relationship offered by the museum further exacerbates the human/animal dichotomy established by the display of Indian and animal remains: human spectators, presumably white tourists, perform the activity of looking and studying, whereas the passive, notably dead animals (here, both the actual taxidermied animals and the native artifacts and remains) exist to be looked-at and examined. The juxtaposition of taxidermied animals with native artifacts thereby connects histories of colonial subjugation. Viewed through its historical association with white male triumph over the natural world, animal life, and the "animalistic," taxidermy displays construct both the trope of the vanishing Indian as well as a separation between the lively and civilized white Americans of the present and the dead animals of a conquered past.

Although I agree with Wakeham that taxidermy frequently appears as a representational technology of white colonialists, I see the characters of *Solar Storms* harnessing such technology to narrate their own story as well as the story of animals. By liberating taxidermy from its entrenchment in a single tradition, I urge that it may also be considered as a potential medium for social and political critique. As a novel deeply invested in Native Americans' struggles for political and cultural self-representation, *Solar Storms* attends to the shifting meanings surrounding taxidermic displays: the narrative shows that taxidermied animals, like the native peoples to which such creatures are often implicitly compared, do not signify or reflect a single narrative history. That the reclamation of representational tools accomplished by the novel's native taxidermists

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privileged with the status of unique subjects as are humans, enabling their skin to be put on display (whereas displaying the skin of dead humans remains almost universally taboo). Humans are not taxidermied, making the alignment of the taxidermied animals with the Native American artifacts and remains in many natural history museums additionally striking.

takes place through places of western education--the schools and museums to which LaRue sells his and Bush's re-assembled animals--is especially noteworthy; as John Dorst notes, the modern natural history museum in particular became "one of the primary--if flawed--vehicles for teaching the public to appreciate and admire" American Indian cultures (177). By selling reconstructed animals to such institutions, Bush and LaRue seize an opportunity for self-representation in traditionally white spaces. As Wakeham reminds us, too, "taxidermy is not an invention of native cultures but, rather, a product of colonial enterprise. A genealogical analysis of taxidermy's historical development as a concept and material practice demonstrates that it is a decisively European and Euro-North American technology of representation and imperial intimidation" (8-9). The fact that the native artists and taxidermists of *Solar Storms* harness and deploy taxidermy, conventionally associated with white taxidermists and white spaces of education and representation, emphasizes the potential for their taxidermic acts to perform in ways that subvert the uses to which taxidermy is traditionally put.

Although their choice to sell their dead animals to museums and schools initially seems to align LaRue and Bush with the project of colonial mis-representation, their native taxidermy resists narrative inventions of the white world, particularly those that posit a fundamental divide between nature and culture, human and animal. Throughout the novel, the Native American characters attend to the concerns of the local ecology and to animals, and Angel realizes, "the division between humans and animals was a false one" (Hogan 81). By telling the story of the liveliness of animals, the native artists of

Solar Storms tell a story of their own liveliness, and further of cultures that celebrates and respects ecological interconnectivity. When Angel describes watching Bush at work re-assembling animals, she reads the work of taxidermy as creation, as the giving-of-life: Angel says, “If I could watch Bush long enough, I thought, I would see the meat and skin and fur return to the bones. I would see an animal begin at a bony center and grow. The wolverine eyes would start to shine. It would breathe” (94). This vibrant, lively taxidermy, a taxidermy of respect, protests the reduction of taxidermic artistry to a single colonialist impulse: that is, to other, conquer, and kill. Taxidermy as reclaimed by the native artists of *Solar Storms* offers a form of social protest, one that insists on liveliness rather than “vanishing.” In this way, such taxidermy communicates an alternative vision of what constitutes “realism.”

Looking back at LaRue’s home and taxidermy mounts, evidence of an alternative, markedly *native* “realism” emerges through taxidermy. As Angel waits for Bush to finish conducting business with LaRue, she looks around his house at the examples of his taxidermic works; narrating what she sees, she says, “There were bear teeth, a pheasant with a red face. Curiosities, he called them. A stuffed bobcat with a cigar in its mouth” (95). Angel does not offer a more thorough description of the “curiosities” she encounters in LaRue’s home, yet her echo of LaRue’s phrase “curiosities” suggests that these mounts display creatures about which knowledge has not yet been codified. Unlike the known animals in museums, those taxidermied in the name of taxonomy, LaRue’s curiosities maintain an unqualified strangeness generative of curiosity. Unlike the catalog of named animals and things typically found in museums, LaRue’s mounts offer an alternative to

the animals preserved as a testament to what white colonialists destroyed for knowledge and trophy. The curious bobcat and its out-of-place cigar thereby produces an alternative "realism," one that invites continued study rather than the comfortable termination of a closed subject.

Angel's brief mention of the stuffed bobcat demands attention for its production of a particular "real." The cigar thrust between the bobcat's jaws subverts traditional forms of taxidermic realism seen in museum dioramas, wherein taxidermy becomes, according to Haraway, "a servant of the 'real.'" Haraway goes on to explain that "[t]axidermy became the art most suited to the epistemological and aesthetic stance of realism. The power of this stance is in its magical effects: what is so painfully constructed appears effortlessly, spontaneously found, discovered, simply there if one will only look. Realism does not appear to be a point of view" (38). In traditional taxidermy, mounts should neither bear marks that reflect the manner of their death nor should they bear traces of the human artist: the hand of the taxidermist should be effaced, leaving behind only a "lifelike," dead animal. As Haraway puts it, the "painfully constructed" must appear "effortlessly, spontaneously found" (38). LaRue's stuffed bobcat offers no such obfuscation of the work of the taxidermist, however. The cigar forced into the mouth of the mounted animal reveals not only the artifice of what might otherwise appear "natural," but also it calls attention to the bobcat's demise and subsequent reconstruction. Rather than masquerade as a live animal, the mounted bobcat recalls its living cousins, those that continue to endure despite shrinking habitats and pursuit by human hunters and trappers. For the bobcat and for the native peoples of the novel, "hell was cleared forests and killed

animals" (Hogan 86). By confronting onlookers with the fact of its own death, the bobcat refuses to offer a window into an idealized Nature populated by transcendent animals without urgent concerns. In this way, the "point of view" expressed through the form of the bobcat bespeaks a decidedly *native* realism, one that draws attention to the plight of animals, a plight that through no coincidence closely parallels the struggles of the Native communities in *Solar Storms* (Haraway 38). Indeed, the cigar in the bobcat's mouth presents an image of impurities flooding the animal's body, and recalls that white "progress" threatens to uproot the Native Americans of Adam's Rib and the surrounding areas by diverting waterways to flood their homes and drown land (Hogan 58). Far from an inert "specimen," LaRue's cigar-smoking bobcat offers a version of realism that reflects native experience, one that challenges the trope of the vanishing Indian with an image of polluted breath rather than a comforting narrative of past struggles concluded long ago.

Beyond LaRue and Bush's mounted animals, Agnes' beloved bearskin coat further liberates taxidermy from its traditional association with colonial mastery expressed through arranged animal skin on a manikin. The skin arranged over Agnes's own living body rather than over a hollow, animal-shaped one creates a vibrant, enlivening taxidermy, one characterized neither by stillness nor, even more importantly, a separation between human and animal. When Angel first sees Agnes coming through mist toward her, she notices the "blue-gray fur coat, worn in places, sloppy, and unbuttoned," and that it made her "look like a hungry animal" that "just stepped out of a cave of winter" (23). Angel's first visual impression of Agnes confuses human and

animal: just as the coat shields Agnes from the outdoors, so does she keep the bear's memory alive by donning its fur. Agnes explains, "When I wear this coat, Angel, I see the old forests, the northern lights, the nights that belong to something large that we don't know" (54). In addition to memories of the "old" that the bear coat evokes, the "something large that we don't know" suggests a resistance to codified knowledge, to the stifling taxonomy and claims to knowledge made by traditional taxidermy (54). Importantly, too, even though Agnes killed the bear, she does not do so in order to affirm her own ability; instead, she kills the bear out of compassion, to save it from a tortured life in captivity. In addition to commemorating the bear's life, then, Agnes keeps the old bear coat as a reminder of the torture experienced by animals at the hands of careless white men. The coat therefore becomes a literal and figurative burden for Agnes, and as Dora-Rogue comments to her, "That bear clutches at my heart every time I see it. I still don't know how you can wear it" (32). Even though Dora-Rogue recognizes the difficult past bound up in Agnes' coat, she also realizes how the bear's skin forms Agnes as a person. Recalling Agnes' reclamation of the bear skin, Dora-Rogue says, "*I see those eyes and that large paw brushing Agnes' back and I hear her sing and I get a feeling, just a feeling, Agnes is becoming something. Maybe the bear. Maybe she knows her way back to something*" (48, italics original). Agnes' becoming-bear suggests that human and animal identities are fluid and unstable, a view supported by many of the native characters in *Solar Storms*.[23] As a form of resistance to white forms of identity that

[23]Here I gesture toward Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's "becoming-animal" as explored in their *A Thousand Plateaus* which unseats the subject from a stable identity position or definition. For a more thorough exposition, see Deleuze and Guattari.

espouse a strict separation between the ontological positions of human and animal, too, Agnes' becoming-bear illuminates a lively form of taxidermy that presents both Agnes as a native person and the bearskin she wears as resistant to white identity categories. Like taxidermy itself, Agnes and her bear coat are neither completely human nor completely animal: their resistance to taxonomic definitions demonstrates in turn their resistance to codification into white systems of naming and knowing.

Conclusion: Re-Presented Animals and the Possibilities of Skin

In Garry Marvin's analysis of hunters and their animal trophies, he suggests that "in order to represent any animal, most of it must be discarded, and only those parts—skin, skull, hooves, claws, and teeth—that can be preserved from biological deterioration are kept to replicate the whole" (211). This key step in the taxidermic process provides a useful model for thinking through what it means to represent an animal, in literature and elsewhere. In taxidermy, fragments of an animal represent a once-living creature, and as Marvin notes, only those fragments that resist deterioration are kept: the other parts, including the animal's internal organs, eyes, and brain, are all removed in order to re-present the animal as if it were "whole" (211). Despite a rapidly expanding body of scientific literature on the cognitive and emotional lives of animals, representations of the "inner" lives of animals still necessarily rely on human constructions, imagination, and phenomenological experience. We may say, then, that as in taxidermic re-presentations of animals, the portrayal of an animal in literature depends on the human artist to stuff it with artificial materials.

Rather than despair at the restrictions imposed on our representational abilities, we might take the possibilities illuminated by taxidermized animals as encouragement to embrace skin as a point of encounter between human and animal worlds. Acknowledging animal phenomenology as a limit to human representation might therefore multiply and foment imaginative possibilities, points of connection, and compassionate relations for beings other to ourselves. Ron Broglio ventures that, "[b]y recognizing the impossibility of knowing from the fur of the Other, animal phenomenology asks us to think our own fragility. The problem announces in advance that our worldview has limits that prevent our pursuits (and our claims arising from them) from being all-encompassing" (xxii). Broglio further suggests that concentrating on what happens on the surface "when we encounter animals as unassailably animals," we might open up the surface as "a positive site for production" (xxiv, 85). Taking inspiration from Broglio's suggestions, I propose that instead of a simple demonstration of humans' command of "the real," taxidermy provides a figure for the existence of innumerable alternative, animal realisms. Rather than feel dominant when we encounter taxidermy, the animal re-presented on the surface, we might feel humbled before that which we cannot appropriate, a creature whose insides can only be discarded, never captured. The taxidermied animal invites and confounds our imagination: far from a reflection of something dead and past, taxidermy tells of future possibilities for both animal representations and relations between humans and animals.

Chapter Four

Endangerment, Extinction, and the Unknown: Recent Fiction and the Loss of Animals

Animals beyond Species

While overseeing the project to save the native species of Santa Cruz, one of a chain of islands off the coast of California, National Park Services biologist Alma Boyd Takesue of T.C. Boyle's 2011 novel *When the Killing's Done* confronts, for the first time in the flesh, one of the animals exterminated per Alma's own mandate. Up until this late point in the novel, Alma has spoken widely and adamantly of the necessity of eliminating invasive species in order to facilitate the survival of the island chain's native, and often endangered, species. For Alma and the Park Services, invasive species, including rats and wild pigs, do not belong in the island chain's delicate ecology. However, as she stands over the bloodied, still body of one of the condemned creatures, a wild boar, Alma experiences an unexpected and disorienting sorrow. Detailing the dead pig's individual features, she sees the boar not as one of the hundreds of its invasive kin to be destroyed, but as a particular, and as she says, "perfect" creature (304). She marvels at the boar's "dense tangle of fur," the "delicacy of the lashes," and the hooves which she had "never seen...up close before...so neatly adapted to its task" (304). The ears, too, Alma examines:

they "stand straight up, like a German shepherd's, to collect and concentrate the sounds that only come to us peripherally" (304). Standing in spite of the weakness in her legs, Alma "feels the sorrow in the back of her throat, the sorrow of existence," and she struggles to keep in mind the logic that guides the pig cull: that "[t]hese animals have to be eliminated and if you stop to see them as individuals you're done" (304). Alma's feeling of loss for the boar conflicts with her understanding of invasive species as necessitating extermination: glimpsed outside the lens of species—of organisms of like kinds, specific ecological niches, and breeding populations—the boar's death becomes tragic, not strategic. This animal violates Alma's ordering of species according to the logic of native or invasive, and by extension as essential or expendable. In this moment, the boar appears to Alma as an animal beyond species.

What is it about the dead boar that challenges Alma's logic of species, the logic of organizing organismal complexity into taxonomic categories? Observing the features of the boar that she finds "so neatly adapted to [their] task," Alma in fact glimpses the tools to navigate another world, a world in which the human ways of ordering, perceiving, understanding, and establishing relations are not at the center. Indeed, the boars' fur, lashes, hooves, and ears that "collect and concentrate the sounds that only come to us [humans] peripherally" indicate a mode of existence beyond our ability to describe and to order (304). Of course, Alma only becomes cognizant of the depth of the boar's existence after its death. If the loss of one boar means the loss of one particular, experiencing animal, the qualities of such experience we can only understand "peripherally," how could the term *species extinction* possibly capture the extent of what is lost when entire

populations of animal kinds disappear? At the very least, Alma's encounter with the dead boar shows the importance of thinking animals beyond categorizes of human perception and organization alone.

In what follows, I investigate the epistemological uncertainty that attends the figure of the vanishing or vanished animal in recent fiction. For the novels of my study, the vanishing or vanished animal represents an animal the earth stands to lose, yet the quality of this loss remains unmeasurable. In my analysis, Richard Powers' *The Echo Maker* (2006), Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006), and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) represent species extinction as an epistemological rupture. By leaving animals in a space of unclassifiable difference, these novels advance the notion that animals signify more than their species membership. By showing animals' resistance to human systems of knowing and ordering, such literature helps seek new vocabularies of expression for the complexities and ethical imperatives posed by extant animals both numerous and few. My contention will be that species are always and at once particular and multiple: they are not constituted by a set of discrete properties or even entities precisely locatable at a certain moment in time. Instead, "species" are always a constellation of forces both internal and external to the creatures themselves.

Boyle's novel provides an exploration of how concepts of species shape human-animal relationships as well as how they serve as one of the predominant frameworks through which humans understand, order, and rank the moral and ecological value of

animal kinds.[24] The question of which species are worthy or unworthy of life drives Boyle's narrative, and the conflict between Alma and Dave LaJoy, an aggressive and impatient animal rights activist, shows how two perspectives that both purport to help animals may diverge in approach according to their understanding of animals as members of species. The United Nations estimates that the earth now loses about 200 species a day to extinction, a thousand times the normal background rate of extinction ("The State of the Planet's Biodiversity"). During this historical moment, what many scientists have called the Sixth Great Extinction Event on earth, Boyle's narrative provides timely insight into how species concepts reflect scientific and cultural perceptions of what is lost when animal kinds die or disappear. For example, Alma defends the Park Services' plan to poison the invasive rats of Anacapa by explaining that the native species affected by the rat cull, including a kind of island mouse, will have their populations replaced after the rats are dead. As Alma explains, "[o]ur field biologists...have taken the mice into account and we've trapped a representative population for captive breeding and release after the rats have been extirpated—and we expect them to reproduce very quickly in the absence of competition from the rats" (61). According to Alma's utilitarian rationale, the survival of the species of mouse matters while the individual mice who will be poisoned

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[24] As Kenneth Shapiro suggests, how we regard species—as made up of individuals or as a reified abstraction—has a direct consequence on how we act toward animals. In one example, Shapiro explains that, for a hunter, a newly killed deer as an individual may be either forgotten or nonexistent "while the abstract and absent species is all there is." Instead, "[w]hat there is an impersonalized, deindividualized but reified abstraction…this reification of the species dissolves the individual deer and invests the aggregate of, now, non-individuals with a kind of unified being that allows members of the species to be killed as if they were so much grass being mowed" (185). Members of species understood as a kind of "unified being" therefore further reduces the possibility for animals to be encountered as singular creatures with a unique and particular history, reducing animals to their human-imposed categories of being. For a full exploration of the ways animals are made "ontologically vulnerable," see Shapiro.

alongside the rats do not. Alma's explanation further implies that the viability and value of species (here, conceived of as reproductive units) differs from the viability and value of animals as having both species-specific and individual history and memory.

Despite the ubiquity of the term in both popular and scientific parlance, there exists no single, universally agreed-upon definition of "species" among biologists. According to a recent count, over 24 different concepts of what constitutes "species," that is, over 24 different species concepts, have been formalized, proposed, and exercised (Hey 4). Charles Darwin revolutionized studies of organismal kinds by refuting the longstanding inference that they were fixed and unchangeable in essence, and Darwin understood then, too, that the term "species" exists for the sake of convenience, not because of a fundamental difference between organismal kinds termed "species" and kinds termed, for example, "varieties."[25] Reading Darwin, Timothy Morton explains the arbitrary practice of species-naming well, suggesting that "[e]vents of awareness, recognition, and naming retroactively posit the existence of new creatures, cutting into the smooth continuum of slight changes. There are no rivers as such, only river stages. Recognizing and naming species and varieties is like putting a stick in a river and saying, 'This is river stage *x*'" (63). In modern evolutionary biology, too, who is doing the species-naming also affects the outcome of what does and does not count as a species, with botanists, zoologists, and microbiologists often preferring different species concepts.

[25] Regarding the distinction between what constitutes a "species" as opposed to a variety, Darwin writes in *The Origin of Species* that "From these remarks it will be seen that I look at the term species as one arbitrarily given, for the sake of convenience, to a set of individuals closely resembling each other, and that it does not essentially differ from the term variety, which is given to less distinct and more fluctuating forms. The term variety, again, in comparison with mere individual differences, is also applied arbitrarily, for convenience' sake" (69). Darwin's comments show that, in his estimation, "species" as a term may not have an essential feature that differentiates it from other terms that attempt to categorize organismal kinds.

According to the biological species concept, for example, arguably the most popular species concept, two taxa from different species cannot interbreed successfully. The biological species concept encounters difficulty accounting for species that do not reproduce sexually and in instances where species regularly hybridize (plants are the most recognized example, but there exist many cases of animal species hybridizing as well, including the "eastern coyote" or coywolf, a cross between a coyote and a wolf).[26]

Despite the arbitrariness or uncertainty that attends the term "species," the practice of naming and categorizing organismal kinds according to a variable range of criteria has real implications for actual organisms. The Endangered Species Act of the United States (ESA), for example, the primary piece of legislation implemented to help preserve the nation's biodiversity, does not offer a definition of species. According to the language of the Act, "[t]he term 'species' includes any subspecies of fish or wildlife or plants, and any distinct population segment of any species of vertebrate fish or wildlife which interbreeds when mature" (Section 3 Point 16). By including "subspecies" as protectable entities but not defining the term "species" itself, the ESA leaves species as a concept open to scientific determination on a case-by-case basis. While such an opening may allow for a greater number of species to find protection under the ESA, the many ways in which scientists can delimit species taxa can have major implications on what organisms qualify as endangered. While E.O. Wilson recently estimated that between 1.5 and 1.6 million species have been described out of a total of 5 to 30 million, such

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[26] As an alternative to the biological species concept, botanists sometimes use the ecological species concept, which defines species as organismal kinds that occupy a particular ecological niche.

numbers vary based on the species concept exercised to make such counts. Martha Rojas explains:

> [Wilson's] numbers…are unlikely to be the same if we are considering biological species, cladistics species, or evolutionary species…If taxa currently treated as subspecies, races, varieties, or breeding populations are considered as the basic units of diversity, we will get yet another much higher figure. On the other hand, if a polytyptic species concept is used, the total species numbers will be reduced. An example from New Guinea illustrates this situation, as there may be one or thirty species of *Drimys*, depending on the species concept used (Stevens 1988). If the total number of species taxa increases, the 'coverage' of species diversity by the existing protected areas would be reduced, and the number of extinct, threatened, or endemic species would be increased, making the conservation task more difficult or less successful. (173)

How scientists define what constitutes a species has implications for not only the areas that species inhabit, but also for population counts (based on numbers of taxa): in the case of the *Drimys*, for example, fewer separate, identified species would mean larger overall population counts, making those species less qualified for protections than if a greater number of different species with smaller populations were determined to exist.

As demonstrated by the ambiguity that surrounds what constitutes "species" as well as which and how many species currently face extinction, the diversity of life on the planet thwarts humans' ability to categorize organisms into agreed-upon, ordered systems

of knowledge. In consequence, the term *species extinction* remains insufficient to describe what it means for humans, other organisms, or ecosystems when a "species" goes extinct, much less what it means to be living through the Sixth Great Extinction Event on earth. *Species extinction* implies the disappearance of a single, determinable thing at a certain place in time, and as such belies the ambiguity and uncertainty that attends the term *species* in the first place. Beyond the common usage of "species," too, some modern conservation initiatives perpetuate a misunderstanding of the term as something known and unambiguous. "Conservation by numbers" approaches, for example, base their management strategies on numbers of animals in a population (which, as should be noted, represents a human-imposed value) rather than the groupings (including social groups) that the animals themselves determine and maintain. For instance, scientists recently found that elephants whose family members had been culled exhibited long-term behavioral abnormalities. Young male elephants orphaned after culls exhibit surging hormones and a lack of social learning ten years after their family members were killed, symptoms scientists liken to post-traumatic stress disorder in humans (Morell). Highly social species like elephants defy concepts of "species" that reduce them to "populations" or reproductive units, categories that do not accommodate the complexity of their own ways of organizing and surviving. Here, there exists a dangerous disconnect between the complexity of animal life and the strategies implemented to manage them.

Anti-extinction initiatives (I am reluctant to call them "conservation" initiatives for reasons that will become clear shortly) that rely on a version of the genetic species

concept present another instance of defining species at the exclusion of animals.[27] Frozen zoos, including the Zoological Society of London, the Natural History Museum, and University of Nottingham's Frozen Ark Project, is one such example of a species-oriented conservation initiative. By taking small samples from members of extant species currently in danger of extinction, the stored genetic material "will enable conservation biologists to reverse the dangerous loss of genetic variation that can cause infertility and early death in breeding programmes," according to the Frozen Ark website ("Background"). In this instance, saving a species from extinction means preserving its DNA, and the hope that such genetic material could help prevent "infertility and early death in breeding programmes" assumes, by extension, a population of creatures kept alive through the work of extensive technological mediation. In response, I want to ask: will robust, flourishing animal lives be engineered due to the efforts of the Frozen Ark program, or merely a collection of creatures in "breeding programmes" displaced from the ecologies in which they initially evolved? Species-resurrection or de-extinction projects which, like species DNA banks, aim to utilize stored or recovered cells to create clones of extinct species raise similar questions. Although many de-extinction advocates suggest that bringing dead species back to life presents an opportunity for humans to right past wrongs, to give species a second chance after human actions brought about their potentially premature demise, critics such as John Wiens, an evolutionary biologist at Stony Brook University, suggest that efforts to resurrect dead species does so at the expense of the extant species currently in need of protection, not to mention those extant

[27] Briefly and simply, the genetic species concept holds that species are constituted by organisms that share a common gene pool.

species that have yet to be discovered (Zimmer). In short, both frozen arks and de-extinction efforts have in common a view of species as genetic data, something fixed and reproducible in time.

Understandings of species as genetic data risks neglecting the complex ways species constitute and are constituted by the worlds they occupy. Reintroducing a wooly mammoth or an Australian thylacine to the regions they used to occupy does not mean reintroducing them to the same ecosystem. Further, beyond environmental changes that take place over time, individual members of resurrected species come with behavioral, psychological, and physical needs. Lori Marino describes some of the possible harms de-extinction could inflict on animals:

> Although DNA preserves the genetic template of a species, it does not preserve the way these genetic instructions unfold in the physical, social and psychological context to yield the whole animal in all of his or her essence. Beside the fact that it's essentially impossible to reconstitute a complex ecosystem of the past, the introduction of revived species into present habitats puts current species at risk. (Marino)

A thinking of "the whole animal" necessitates a conceptualization of species as more than mere reproductive units or sets of genetic material. Instead, the whole animal, with all of its physical, social, and psychological complexity, remains deeply and intricately connected to a world. In this way, Marino's "whole animal" represents not a predictable set of hard-wired behaviors, but a creature that learns, adapts, and evolves. In her reading of biologist Jakob von Uexküll, Elizabeth Grosz provides some additional insight into the

ways species represent active entities. Through Uexküll, Grosz suggests that "[a]nimals are not complex machines but living forms, whose bodies are not randomly produced but are specifically 'tuned' to coordinate with their milieu, with the melody with which they must coordinate or harmonize." Grosz further suggests we can "understand the living animal in terms of how it moves, with what it functions, what it makes and does, what connections it makes, what relations it establishes" (177). The activity of living animals and the centrality of their milieu to their constitution extends the definition of species beyond genetic material alone: the whole animal is comprised of individual and world, species and habitat, the living form and its relations.

Thinking about species extinction as the loss of *a* species, that is, the loss of one discernable kind of thing, locatable in time, undermines the idea that the individual members of what humans call "species" are also constituted by what is external to them (and therefore not written in a DNA sequence), as well as by their ways of being in the world. Species' particular behaviors, tendencies, ways of processing information and interacting with their environment and other organisms, develop and articulate themselves through the work of individual members and groups in time. When a species goes extinct, then, the loss extends beyond what can be measured through population counts: the loss of a species disturbs and changes the entire milieu of which the lost organisms were a part. While extinctions are a natural part of evolution in which competing species often take advantage of an ecological niche in another's absence, the current, rapid rate of extinction will drastically reduce current levels of biodiversity, resulting in the proliferation of "weedy species," or what Lawrence Buell, drawing from

David Quammen, calls "our pets and our pests" (Buell 98). A reduction in the complexity of beings that comprise and compose the earth will have wide-ranging effects, from the appearance of landscapes to the spread of disease.

As explored above, because the whole animal cannot be separated from its milieu, a thinking of species as a group of living, changing forms instead of a set of fixed, immutable properties presents one way of performing what Timothy Morton calls "the ecological thought," or a way to "join the dots and see that everything is interconnected" (1). Importantly for Morton, too, "[e]cological thinking has as much to do with the humanities wing of modern universities as with the sciences," and particularly for our investigation of species, literary studies and the sciences may be productively brought together to think the ecological thought (4). While we may not be able to fully imagine what it is like to be a bat, our representations and aesthetic approximations can inch us closer to a better understanding of nonhuman difference. Further, such productive imaginings can also help us think through the loss that would be a world without bats or other animal kinds. As I will show, several important works of recent fiction endeavor to think the ecological thought by imagining the impossible: how the world would change without nonhuman animal difference.

World(s) of Species in Cormac McCarthy and Richard Powers

Often hailed as both the most lyrical and most opaque passage in the novel, the final paragraph of Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006) departs from the human-focused narrative that dominates its pages to settle, finally, on an image of brook trout.[28]

> Once there were brook trout in the streams in the mountains. You could see them standing in the amber current where the white edges of their fins wimpled softly in the flow. They smelled of moss in your hand. Polished and muscular and torsional. On their backs were vermiculate patterns that were maps of the world in its becoming. Maps and mazes. Of a thing which could not be put back. Not be made right again. In the deep glens where they lived all things were older than man and they hummed of mystery. (287).

"Once there were brook trout" and now there are not: in the novel's post-cataclysmic setting, these fish, along with all other animals, have disappeared from the earth. In their absence, a cold earth grows colder without the sun to warm it, and a monotonous, ubiquitous gray washes the landscape in a desolate monochrome. The vision of trout at the end of the novel presents a rare glimpse of pre-apocalyptic activity and color: a current that flows amber, white edges of wimpling fins, shining bodies, details made

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[28] Numerous critical explanations have been offered in attempt to account for the novel's peculiar yet essential final passage. Allen Josephs reads the trout as an intricate symbol, suggesting that they stand "for all the particular natural miracles that have been destroyed," whereas Dana Philips suggests that they be read "simply as brook trout…as survivors from Appalachia northward" (Josephs 142, Philips 187). The conflict surrounding whether to read the trout literally or metaphorically is equaled by the debate on whether or not they signal the possibility for regeneration: as Ben De Bruyn writes, the image of trout is "reassuring and unsettling at the same time," speaking to the heart of the uncertainty that attends their appearance (776). I, like Philips, prefer to read the trout literally, as bearing on their backs the maps that tell not of human redemption, but of the trout-particular ways of being and becoming lost after the end of the world(s).

precious by their place in a narrative otherwise characterized by stillness, decay, and ash. I suggest this pairing of animal life and visual wonder at the end of *The Road* is no coincidence, and that the world mapped by the backs of McCarthy's trout is compassed by much more than human powers of perception alone.

The "maps of the world in its becoming" traced in "vermiculate patterns" on the backs of the trout stand out for the way they suggest, as Dana Phillips writes, "the foreclosure of the future, yes, but also the foreclosure of the past" (McCarthy 287, Phillips 187). The foreclosed past is inscribed on the backs of trout themselves, the maps a record of how the world was made told by and through the bodies of animals. These "vermiculate" patterns, "vermiculate" coming from the Latin *vermiculus* meaning *a small worm* or *wormlike*, tell the story of prehistoric worms evolving into fish, connecting these modern book trout to their 500 million-year old ancestors (McCarthy 287). The foreclosed past in McCarthy's novel, then, is at once ancient and recent, the brook trout's emergence as a species articulated by their modern bodies. Species-formation and world-formation are thus inextricably connected, as the world mapped by the trout is also the perceptual world of the trout, its species-specific way of being and relating. In an exploration of animal-being that uncannily echoes McCarthy's prose, Elizabeth Grosz writes that "[t]he body of an animal is an inverted map of its world," a reflection of its milieu and a living record of how that animal exists (182). With Grosz, we begin to see how the world mapped by the backs of McCarthy's trout is already multiple: it is formed, shaped, and populated by innumerable nonhuman beings and forces. The vision of

nonhuman vitality and color offered by the final passage of *The Road* illustrates a world composed by and comprised of species life.

The trout make their world just as their world makes the trout, and in their "mystery," the final word of *The Road*, the trout resemble Richard Powers' sandhills cranes in *The Echo Maker*: as Powers' narrator says of the cranes, "[w]hat does a bird remember? Nothing that anything else might say. Its body is a map of where it has been, in this life and before" (443). In the same vein, what a trout remembers is also nothing that anything else, or any other species, might say according to its own specialized repertoire of being, of existing and interacting with and in the world which is always multiple. Thomas Nagel famously suggests in his 1974 essay "What Is It Like To Be A Bat?", "I want to know what it is like for a bat to be a bat. Yet if I try to imagine this, I am restricted to the resources of my own mind, and those resources are inadequate to the task" (439). An animal's way of being in the world, especially an animal like the bat that navigates and hunts by echolocation, a sense for which humans have no comparable equivalent, emerges as a limit to our imaginative capacities. Ron Broglio finds such sites of phenomenological otherness and radical difference replete with creative possibilities at the sites in which human and animal worlds intersect. Broglio writes:

> While humans and animals live on the same earth, they occupy different worlds. If we cannot access what it is to live from the standpoint of the beast, then our understanding of the animals and their worlds comes from contact with the surfaces of such worlds—the sites where the human and animal worlds bump against each other, jarring and jamming our

> anticipated cultural codes for animals and offering us something different. (xix)

With Broglio, we might imagine the creative possibilities, the “something different” offered to us by animals’ phenomenological otherness as contributing to the making and unmaking of our worlds, too. I further suggest that the loss of animals and by extension the loss of the “something different” they offer discolors our world by depriving it of difference and diversity of life. By keeping in mind animals’ diversity and complexity of occupying and shaping the world(s), we begin to arrive at a richer understanding of the unimaginable (in the sense that, due to animals’ otherness, we cannot imagine what is lost) losses entailed in mass species extinctions.

In Grosz’s reading of Uexküll and his exploration of animal *umwelt*, or an animal’s inhabited, semiotic world (the aspects of the animal’s world that it recognizes as meaningful), Grosz suggests that Uexküll’s conceptualization of species as necessitating a thinking of *umwelt* “enables a rare access to thinking not only about animals but, above all, about the worlds that animals inhabit, worlds they sometimes share with us, worlds waiting to be invented, worlds that may inform our understanding of our own inhabited worlds” (173). *The Road* takes Grosz’s suggestion one step further, implying not only that the worlds of animals inform and influence our understanding of our inhabited worlds, but also that their influence is so fundamental so as to often exceed human perceptibility altogether. In the novel, the father of the boy possesses a range of memories of life before the unnamed cataclysm, while the boy, born after “the end,” knows only devastation; consequently, the father continuously struggles to reconcile the richness of

his former life with the desolation of the present. He finds his very vocabulary fading in the absence of the things to which his words once referred: "[t]he world shrinking down about a raw core of parsible entities. The names of things slowly following those things into oblivion. Colors. The names of birds. Things to eat. Finally the names of things one believed to be true...The sacred idiom shorn of its referents and so of its reality" (McCarthy 89). Here, human language suffers in the absence of animals, a privation that extends beyond the names of the birds themselves. Not only have the birds themselves disappeared, depriving the earth of their morphological diversity in the form of often vibrant plumage and bodies as varied as those of the emu, osprey, egret, and hummingbird, but also what birds once *made* has disappeared. By inhabiting and acting in their respective *umwelts*, different species of birds build elaborate nests, engage in complex courtship routines, and pollinate plants, activities that shape and color both their world and ours. The absence of birds also leaves the earth in cold silence: as the father reflects, "[o]nce in those early years he'd wakened in a barren wood and lay listening to flocks of migratory birds overhead in that bitter dark….He never heard them again" (53). Referencing McCarthy's Border Trilogy, Julian Murphet suggests that the loss of the howl of the wolf also characterizes the post-apocalyptic silence in *The Road*: she writes, "[t]his is what it is like to lose a world, to feel it come apart around you, in the absence of animal speech" (114).

The Road therefore figures the loss of animal life as something that cascades in its effects, shrinking both the range of human expression as well as the spectrum of the visible world(s). With only human actors remaining to influence the shape and color of

the earth, a monotonous, lonely gray overtakes every surface: as Chris Danta observes, "[i]t is impossible to read *The Road* without noticing how gray everything looks: days are gray; dusks are gray; dawns are gray… the city is gray; tree stumps are gray; the ash is gray; the water is gray...the human body, both living and dead, is gray; hair is gray; teeth are gray; viscera are gray" (10). The absence of animals actively engaged in their *umwelten*, not to mention the lack of opportunity for, as Broglio writes, "human and animal worlds [to] bump against each other," helps account for the gray that dominates *The Road*'s post-apocalyptic earth (Broglio xix). The absence of sites of meeting between human and animal worlds deprive the world of productive, interspecies intersections, leaving behind, as the father imagines, only a "raw core of parsible entities" (McCarthy 89). Parsible here implies at once that which can be parsed, as in a sentence, in order to identify such parts and analyze their relations: with so few entities remaining after the cataclysm, only a fraction of the former possibilities for relations exist. Relatedly, "parsible" also echoes of *possible*, and for a consideration of species, fewer possible entities therefore suggests the foreclosure of evolutionary possibility, of all the entities that may have been possible had their existences not been cut short. In this way, the unanticipatable quality of extinction emerges: not only does it entail fewer entities overall, but also the future entities that would have been possible are never to evolve.

In *The Road*, the foreclosure of evolutionary creativity goes hand-in-hand with the foreclosure of human imagining, the latter, as Broglio explores, finds inspiration in animals' radical difference, their disparate and strange phenomenological worlds. Even without a memory of animals in life, the boy finds imaginative inspiration through the

father's memories of animals. When the boy asks the father about their present location, the father answers with a phrase unfamiliar to the boy:

> Do you know where we are Papa? the boy said.
>
> Sort of.
>
> How sort of?
>
> Well. I think we're about two hundred miles from the coast. As the crow flies.
>
> As the crow flies?
>
> Yes. It means going in a straight line.
>
> Are we going to get there soon?
>
> Not real soon. Pretty soon. We're not going as the crow flies.
>
> Because crows dont have to follow roads?
>
> Yes. (156)

In this exchange, the boy tries to imagine navigating like a crow, of nonhuman travel unrestricted by roads and maps. In this way, the boy compares the world he and his father occupy to the world once occupied by crows, a place of infinite, possible "straight lines" between points (156). Such a comparison between species-being, or species-*umwelten*, enables a phrase like "as the crow flies" to carry meaning: without crows, however, the novel raises the question of whether or not such an imaginative perspective-taking could take place. The boy lingers on the thought of crows and their capabilities:

> After a while the boy said: There's not any crows. Are there?
>
> No.

> Just in books.
>
> Yes, just in books.
>
> [...]
>
> Can I ask you something?
>
> Sure.
>
> If you were a crow could you fly up high enough to see the sun?
>
> Yes. You could.
>
> I thought so. That would be really neat.
>
> Yes it would. Are you ready? (158-9).

Following the confirmation from his father that crows only exist in books, the boy's question of what a crow could see—including the possibility for it to fly high enough to see the sun—emphasizes the limits to human experience and the imaginative possibilities inspired by animals' ways of being. With the father's death at the end of the novel and the boy's uncertain future, the fact that the only crows left are those "just in books" implies the dramatic decline of both humans' memory of crows as well as the ways of imagining-otherwise, of seeing the earth "as the crow flies" (156, 8). Without nonhuman difference, humans' creative potential is itself uncertain, a sentiment captured at the conclusion of the father and son's conversation about crows: as they prepare to move again, the father asks the son, "What happened to your flute?", to which the boy replies, "I threw it away" (159). The boy's abandoning of an instrument for creative production seems to go hand-in-hand with the absence of birds to imply the fading possibilities for compositions inspired by incomprehensible animal difference.

Richard Powers' *The Echo Maker* takes the connection between human perceptual ability and animal life to a related extreme by representing the loss of kinship (and, by extension, the loss of species life) between humans and animals as a kind of sickness. Late in Powers' novel, Karin Schulter arrives at the recognition that "the whole [human] race suffered from Capgras," the delusional misidentification syndrome in which sufferers mistake their close friends and kin as strangers (Powers 347). While severe brain trauma causes Mark Schluter's Capgras syndrome, humanity's misrecognition emerges from its investment in a sense of its own species autonomy, that is, its failure to recognize the extent to which humans are related to other animals. Karin's observation resonates with Marion Copeland's review of *The Echo Maker*. Copeland notes the "almost total exclusion" of the importance of sandhill cranes and their impending disappearance from major media reviews of Powers' book despite the cranes' centrality to the novel's title, narrative, and meditations on both crane behavior and history of human-crane relationships. Copeland's review responds to this oversight by focusing on the ways Powers' cranes remind us that "we, like them, are part of an amazingly tenacious—yet fragile, web of life" (302). The cranes' importance to a novel largely characterized as "human" resonates with Karin's own realization that humans and cranes share much in common. Watching the cranes, she thinks, "[t]hose birds danced like our next of kin, looked like our next of kin, called and willed and parented and navigated all just like our blood relations. Half of their parts were still ours. Yet humans waved them off: impostors" (347-8). Finding evidence of physical, biological, and familial kinship in the birds' bodies and movement, Karin resists the tendency to dismiss the nonhuman as

categorically foreign and unfamiliar, broadening the definition of human "kin" to include the nonhuman.

Elsewhere Powers' novel emphasizes how Capgras sufferers experience failures of recognition that cross species lines: while he recognizes his lover and friends, for example, Mark believes both his sister and his beloved border collie have been replaced by impostors. Returning home after his accident, Mark does not greet his dog with affection, seeing an unfamiliar animal in her place: "another border collie, not Mark's" (85). Mark's misrecognition of his dog as a generic member of the border collie breed instead of a known, individual animal named Blackie with whom he shares a history echoes Karin's revelation that humanity's Capgras syndrome causes it to misrecognize animals as strangers. In the novel, local Nebraska developers also fail to recognize the history humans and cranes share. The development project purporting to raise public environmental awareness and increase the cranes' visibility to tourists will also drain the river from beneath the sandhills' feet. As Karin discovers late in the novel, this "Living Prairie Museum" will facilitate bird watching when the sandhills stop over for two months in the Platte River and double as a water park in the off-season (411). As one character explains, further depletion of the river could initiate the cranes' final undoing, making the museum the possible "large habitat break" the cranes will not survive (57). The developers' plan, in addition to possibly driving the cranes into extinction, depends on the misrecognition of cranes as unlike humans, on the demarcation between the watching, human tourists and the performing, migrating cranes. In addition to threatening to decimate the cranes' habitat, such a project evinces no recognition of cranes as sharing

such fundamental traits with humans, even one as simple as the need for water. Instead, the project implies that humans are autonomous entities: "crane peepers" rather than crane kin.[29]

The narrative depicts the violence of the shift from regarding cranes as kin to regarding them as strangers by tracing the ways the history of human-crane relationships depicts neither species as stable or isolated entities. As Powers' novel describes, *Grus canadensis* bears other names as well, including the Persian "kurti," the Arabic "ghurnuq," the Chinese "xian-he," names that invoke shared histories beyond the Latinized name's capacity alone to describe (182). The history shared by humans and cranes troubles the suggestion that *Homo sapiens* and *Grus canadensis* are discrete animal kinds. To explore this shared history, the narrative reviews several of the ways in which humans have recognized cranes, including stories of humans becoming cranes in Greek, Australian, Irish, and Japanese lore. Powers' novel also details how when cranes spoke, humans listened and let themselves be changed by naming themselves after cranes: "The Aztecs called themselves the Crane People. One of the Anishinaabe clans was named the Cranes...the Echo Makers." They also integrated the cranes' calls into their own means of communication, "Crow and Cheyenne carved cranes' leg bones into hollow flutes, echoing the echo maker," and the form and sound of cranes still haunt the foundations of writing in the West, as "[t]he Greek Palamedes invented the letters of the alphabet by watching noisy cranes in flight" (181-2). For Powers' novel, humans' misrecognition of

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[29] Characters in *The Echo Maker* refer to the tourists who travel to Kearney, Nebraska to witness the sandhill cranes' annual migration "crane peepers," and it is to those tourists that the Living Prairie Museum intends to cater during crane-watching season.

cranes as kin entails a failure of self-recognition as well, a forgetting that part of what it means to be human is to have evolved alongside other animals. As Weber says of Mark, “[h]e stops recognizing his sister because some part of him has stopped recognizing himself” (132). Extending Weber’s analysis to humans and cranes shows that, rather than depicting an impending extinction as the loss of a single species, the sandhills’ disappearance will entail the loss of a rich legacy of co-evolution, one that helped make humans, humans.

Beyond the loss for human cultures, too, the extinction of the sandhills necessitates the extinction of something that none of our many languages have evolved to describe: sandhill crane memory, narrated by the activity of crane bodies. Looking at a crane who looks at him, Weber thinks, “[s]omething looks out from the prehistoric bird, a secret about him, but not his” (424). In this moment, Weber glimpses the “secret” of a nonhuman way of being in the world, one inaccessible to his human ways of knowing. For other species, translating the breadth of the cranes’ species-specific memory and behavioral repertoire represents an impossible task, and the cranes speak this untranslatable history through the work of their bodies. The novel imagines the cranes’ secrets in terms of not only what it sees in any present moment, but also what it has learned from thousands of years of migration. The Platte River thereby helps constitute the sandhill cranes as a species: as the narrative suggests, “[w]hat does a bird remember? Nothing that anything else might say. Its body is a map of where it has been, in this life and before” (443). The sandhills’ bodies reflect the Platte River and the other stops on their annual migration: without the Platte, the cranes lose an essential part of what makes

them particular as a species. Further, the memory of individuals augments and evolves out of species-memory: as the narrative explains, the body of the crane maps "where it has been, in this life and before" (443). Sandhill cranes do not represent a fixed entity.

By emphasizing both the history of human-crane relationships as well as the depth and specificity of crane memories, the novel gestures toward what would be lost if the cranes go extinct, both what we misrecognize as unlike ourselves and what remains inaccessible and crane-specific. As with the trout at the conclusion of *The Road*, Powers' sandhill cranes represent a mode of occupying, navigating, and shaping the world in ways that humans perceive only impartially. For this reason, the threatened extinction of the sandhill cranes, like the disappearance of all species in *The Road*, will have consequences that cannot be fully anticipated, as species extinction means a loss of both particular entities and their ways of acting and interacting on the earth. To further illustrate the necessity of thinking animals and their lived worlds together in any consideration of species, I demonstrate how Margaret Atwood's 2003 novel *Oryx and Crake* depicts both the possibilities and dangers of considering species as entities separable from their lived worlds. Atwood takes the values espoused by modern, industrialized animal agriculture and the popular, environmental concept of "sustainability" to their logical extremes by showing how decoupling species from world, and further by considering species as a sequence of genes or set of cells and tissues, can produce animals recognizable as such by name only.

Efficient Animals and Sustainable Species in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

On February 19, 2012, *The New York Times* published an Op-Ed by Missouri Farm Bureau president Blake Hurst entitled “Don’t Presume to Know a Pig’s Mind.” In the piece, Hurst responds to a recent television commercial released by Chipotle Mexican Grill that highlights the restaurant chain’s initiative to offer only “naturally raised” meats. Chipotle’s commercial depicts a family farmer who succumbs to the high-efficiency methods of industrialized animal agriculture before recognizing the errors of his ways—the pollution, the dependence on antibiotics, and the high-density confinement of animals to tiny cages—and then ultimately returns to the environmentally-friendly, pasture-based farming method with which he began. In addition to attacking the sentimentalism that shapes the ad’s portrayal of family farms, Hurst directs the bulk of his criticism at one of the ad’s central implications, namely that pasture-raised animals are *happier* than those raised in factory farms. “For all we know,” Hurst writes, “pigs are ‘happier’” in the “warm, dry buildings” of the factory farm “than they are outside,” and he further suggests that, “Since we can’t ask the pigs what they think, we know only one thing for sure about the effects of scrapping our most efficient farming systems: the cost of bacon will rise.” The implications of Hurst’s proclamation are clear: while pig happiness cannot be measured, the cost of bacon *can*, and further that were other companies to follow Chipotle’s move away from, to cite one example, the use of gestation crates to house pregnant sows, the current low price of meat would become unsustainable.

Hurst’s criticism of the Chipotle ad’s idyllic portrayal of pigs on small (that is, non-industrial) farms betray his investment in separating animals’ existence from animals’ inhabited worlds. In his example, the so-called “happiness” of pigs does not represent an

essential factor for a consideration of pig life, generally speaking. Factory farmed animals—those whose species-specific tendencies are not permitted within the conditions of their confinement and reproduction—present one example of merely sustained animals. Even when keeping in mind all the figures that claim industrialized animal agriculture is the largest producer of greenhouse gas emissions, that it devastates local ecosystems and human communities, that it requires 47% of the soy and 60% of the corn produced in the United States to feed livestock, and so forth, the modern factory farm is, paradoxically, a marvel of sustainability according to the term's popular, catch-all usage: to maintain a current state of affairs through the effective management of resources. When in his op-ed piece Hurst calls for the preservation of "efficient" farming methods—"efficient" being a word he invokes three times in the course of this brief article—he recalls the language of sustainability, that of production, management, and resource maintenance. Pigs, of course, are a resource *and*, when they are managed ineffectively, a threat to *other* resources: as Hurst's language suggests, when pigs respond to the conditions of their confinement within Animal Feeding Operations, or AFOs, such behavior disrupts the pigs' own sustainability. Hurst explains: "[Gestation] crates do restrict pigs' movements, but...When hogs are grouped in pens together, aggressive sows eat too much and submissive sows too little, and they also get in violent fights at feeding time. The only other ways to prevent these problems are complicated, expensive or dangerous to the pigs" (Hurst). From this account, we can surmise that to sustain them as a resource, the behaviors of animals, constituted by complex interactions of instinct, learning, experience, sociality, decision-making, and so forth, must, within the confines of the AFO, be strictly regulated

for the sake of efficiency. Importantly, because pig "happiness" is incalculable in contrast to the cost of meat, what *counts* from a resource management perspective is what can be *counted*, and what can be counted can be sustained. Although factory farms sustain animal life to the extent that the animals' ability to live and to die is carefully controlled, the kind or the *quality* of animal life produced may not be easily recognizable as *animal* at all. Vibrant and varied animal lives do not fit easily into the language of efficiency and effective management, and so sustainability as a popular concept may be radically insufficient for the promotion and facilitation of full and complex nonhuman animal lives.

Animals and species more broadly present a problem for the concept of sustainability because they do not fit squarely within one of sustainability's established categories of concern: animals are neither simply part of the "the environment" to be preserved—what environments? And which animals?—nor are they simply part of agricultural or industrial economies as resources to be multiplied and consumed. Economic sustainability, social sustainability, environmental sustainability: all the various sustainabilities have in common an interest in human well-being, though how that well-being should be maintained, as well as what aspects of well-being should be prioritized is often highly contested. Further, such sustainability initiatives, even those dedicated to the preservation of natural resources or "the environment" writ large, tend to focus on the future prosperity of human life while excluding a rigorous consideration of the future of nonhuman animal life. Stacy Alaimo questions the extent to which the term sustainability has become "articulated too firmly to a technocratic, anthropocentric perspective," one that fails to render "the material world" anything more than "an abstract

space....an invisible anywhere." Absent, too, from many accounts of "the environment" to be sustained are the members of the lively world, the "life forms, agencies, habitats, and systems other than those of humans" (562). The "environment" to be sustained, therefore, is frequently rendered an ecology without animals despite the fact that climate change is presently eliminating the habitats of many animal species, and unfettered human consumption and development will affect many species' abilities to survive. The question remains as to what extent animals constitute members of the environments to be sustained, what animals count as sustainable, and whether and which animals comprise one of many resources to be reproduced for future use. As is visible in Blake Hurst's defense of gestation crates, the priorities of environmental sustainability and economic sustainability may have opposing ideas about how animals figure into their respective priorities. As explored previously, too, many species can be effectively "sustained" outside of their native habitats in built environments such as zoos, laboratories, and factory farms. Does it matter for a thinking of sustainability that many of these confined but nevertheless sustained species are prevented from exhibiting species-specific behaviors? Merely sustained animals, therefore, are those whose species-specific behaviors are circumvented or radically restricted, and likewise who are divorced from rich, stimulating *umwelten*.

In *Oryx and Crake*, Atwood imagines a near-future in which models of sustainability and efficiency focus on the multiplication of useful animal bodies, those that do not require that the scientists that engineer them concern themselves with the preservation of either the animals' "natural" habitats or their "natural" behaviors. As a

result, the merely-sustained animal emerges as the norm for animal existence in Atwood's vision of the pre-apocalyptic future, a norm upended after the near-total obliteration of the human species allows engineered animals to flourish. In *Oryx and Crake*, numerous species extinctions are one of the casualties necessary for the scientific advancements showcased by the scientists of megacompanies such as OrganInc Farms, HelthWyzer, and RejoovenEsence, companies that customize animals to better accommodate human demands. The novel's protagonist Jimmy (later Snowman) finds himself caught between conflicting ideas about how to regard the modification of species. Listening to a fight between his parents, Jimmy hears first-hand a bio-engineer's take on the fundamental properties of animal life. In response to Jimmy's mother's charge that his manipulation of pig brains to incorporate human neocortex tissue constitutes "interfering with the building blocks of life," Jimmy's father, a bio-engineer, responds, "[i]t's just proteins, you know that! There's nothing sacred about cells and tissue" (57). Echoing something like the genetic species concept which defines species according to particular genetic codes, Jimmy's father's assertion that he manipulates "just proteins," cells, and tissues divorces "animal life" from the conditions of animal being, and thus neglects to think through the implications of how "genetic instructions unfold in the physical, social and psychological context to yield the whole animal in all of his or her essence" (Atwood 57, Marino). Following the demise of species such as the black rhino, komodo dragon, and swift fox, the proliferation of biological "splices" in Atwood's fiction—the hybrid creatures Jimmy's father helps develop and that include pigoons, wolvogs, bobkittens, snats, rakunks, and so on—ask not only that we imagine what might

happen when engineering animals becomes more *sustainable* than living alongside the forms of life already in existence, but also theorizes how even the most efficiently-designed custom animals resist the aims of their engineers with their species-specific, animal qualities, or their refusal to be merely sustained.

Pigoons, huge pig-like creatures designed to grow "an assortment of foolproof human-tissue organs…that would transplant smoothly and avoid rejection," are one of the engineered animals featured in *Oryx and Crake* whose multiple functions and overall efficiency the narrative continuously highlights: a testament to the pigoon's physical resilience, these animals "could be reaped of [their] extra kidneys; then, rather than being destroyed, [they] could keep on living and grow more organs," a strategy for maximizing the "food and care" invested in developing and sustaining a pigoon (22-3). Pigoons are not only good for medical transplants, either: even though advertisements for pigoon-grown organs claim that "none of the defunct pigoons ended up as bacon and sausages," as "meat became harder to come by," employees of pigoon-producers OrganInc Farms notice the frequent appearance of "bacon and ham sandwiches…on the café menu" (23-4). Later in the narrative, too, we learn that pigoons are also being used to help develop a line of human-skin technologies that could replace old, depleted skin with fresh, replacement skins from pigoon hosts. As producers of vital organs, food, and skin, pigoons serve a variety of useful functions; however, like their traditional pig cousins, pigoons are intelligent, clever, and quick learners, characteristics that have no explicit utility for their human engineers or to those who would use the products made from them. Such intelligence may even pose a threat to humans: as young Jimmy looks at the penned

pigoons, the pigoons look back “as if they saw him, really saw him, and might have plans for him later” (26). The pigoon’s capacity to look at Jimmy and even to *plan* presents animal subjectivity as a potentially malicious force, or at the very least a threat to the illusion of total control implied by the high-security, tightly regulated environment in which the pigoons are housed. Such a threat to human control emerges again later in the novel when a pack of loosed, hungry pigoons pursue Snowman: these animals strategize as a group in pursuit of their potential meal. Trying to anticipate the pigoons’ next move, Jimmy imagines that “[t]hose beasts are clever enough to fake a retreat, then lurk around the next corner. They’d bowl him over, trample him, then rip him open, munch up the organs first,” and as the pigoons look up at him from below his hiding spot, he thinks that “[w]hat they see is his head, attached to what they know is a delicious meat pie just waiting to be opened up” (235, 268). Here the roles of human and animal, predator and prey are reversed and, by extension, obscured, as Snowman the human now possesses the organs coveted for their utility. Both in and out of their pens, Atwood’s pigoons demonstrate how even the animals with the most efficient and valuable bodies may resist reduction into terms of utility by virtue of their excess animal qualities, their ability to plan, make decisions, and to see us as well as we see them.

Wolvogs, the dogs engineered to deceive people, offers an example of an animal produced precisely in order to use humans’ historic relationship with a particular species against them; in this way, Atwood’s narrative shows how decoupling a species from its evolutionary history, including its established behavioral repertoire, can have threatening, even dangerous, consequences. As Jimmy looks at the caged wolvogs during a visit to see

Crake, all the animals gaze "at Jimmy with eyes of love, all were wagging their tails." As Crake warns, however, "[r]each out to pat them, they'll take your hand off...And no way of making pals with them, not like real dogs" (205). The contrast between wolvogs and "real dogs" is at once severe and important: whereas "real dogs" and humans share a long, complex, and mutually-beneficial evolutionary history, scientists design wolvogs to take advantage of this very evolutionary history and humans' affection for dogs. Looking into the cages, Jimmy himself notes that "his old longing for a pet came over him," and it is not until Crake tells him of the wolvog's hardwired viciousness that Jimmy takes a step away from their wagging tails and the eyes in which he initially read love (205). Wolvogs present an example of Atwood's bio-engineers reversing aspects of species-specific behavior by making domesticated dogs wild and even more violent than the wolves from which they evolved. Asked about what would happen if the wolvogs escaped and began breeding, Crake replies, "[t]hat would be a problem" (205). The threat of loss of control undergirds all the advances in bioengineering in Atwood's novel, least of all the risk of animals' escaping their cages.

Atwood's most fully realized critique of the ethic of efficiency and management as it extends to species life can be traced through her richly diverse and varied portrayal of avian life. Through her representation of birds, Atwood challenges the suggestion that definitions of species can separate animal bodies from animal minds, or that animals' genes, cells, and issues be divorced from their lived, inhabited worlds. Birds make a range of appearances in Atwood's novel: they collaborate in Amanda Payne's "Vulture Sculptures" by feeding on the dead animal carcasses she arranges into words, and Jimmy

and Crake nickname themselves after defunct bird species while playing Extinctathon (Crake after the Red-necked Crake and Jimmy, or "Thickney," after an "Australian double-jointed bird that used to hang around cemeteries" (81).[30] The calls of birds also haunt Snowman in his post-apocalyptic isolation: looking across the trashed sea, he thinks that, "[t]he shrieks of the birds that nest out there and the distant ocean grinding against the ersatz reefs of rusted car parts and jumbled-bricks and assorted rubble sound almost like holiday traffic" (3). The birds that sound like "holiday traffic" at the beginning of the novel—a sound familiar, of the pre-apocalyptic world, and above all, human—have fundamentally changed by the novel's end. Listening to those same birds off the coast, Snowman finds that, "[f]rom the offshore towers come the avian shrieks and cries that sound like nothing human" (372). The change in the character of the birds' cries, from sounding like "holiday traffic" to "nothing human," not only emphasizes Snowman's profound loneliness in the absence of human companionship (Snowman finds it difficult to form a fulfilling relationship to Crake's new and improved humans, the Crakers), but also the changes endured by birds themselves in the narrative.[31]

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[30] Extinctathon presents another instance of Atwood's critique of species concepts that do not account for creaturely behavior or phenomenological worlds in their definitions of (particularly animal) life. In the game, players try to discern the name of an extinct species by naming its phylum, class, order, family, genus, and species, including the species' habitat, when it was last seen, and what had caused its demise. The extensive catalog of extinct species recalled by Extinctathon rewards memorization and regurgitation of information rather than a critical engagement with how to account for the loss of these creatures beyond the enumeration of the taxonomic categories to which they belonged.

[31] The beginning of the Crakers' own evolutionary change further suggests that humans are also animals that exceed categorization into species: by the end of the novel, they violate the parameters of their species by creating art, a practice that harkens back to the *Homo sapiens* from which they were modified but that was not included in Crake's design. The Crakers, too, resist being merely sustained or merely kept alive: instead, they actively shape and participate in the shape of their world in a way that cannot be reduced to the function of tissues and cells alone.

The first significant encounter between a human character and a bird occurs when Jimmy, as a kid in grade school, discovers a great source of amusement. Newly able to eat lunch without his parents, young Jimmy entertains himself by watching old instructional CD-ROMS at the library, one of which features a certain famous African Grey Parrot, based on the bird of the same name who lived from 1977-2007:

> If there was any lunchtime left over and nothing else going on, he would go to the library and watch old instructional CD-ROMs. Alex the parrot was his favourite, from *Classics in Animal Behaviour Studies*. He liked the part where Alex invented a new word – *cork-nut*, for almond – and, best of all, the part where Alex got fed up with the blue-triangle and yellow-square exercise and said, *I'm going away now. No, Alex, you come back here! Which is the blue triangle – no, the* blue *triangle?* But Alex was out the door. Five stars for Alex. (52, emphasis original)

Even though Jimmy's father works directly with pigoons, noted for their intelligence, Jimmy educates himself about animals and animal behavior through an obsolete medium: a CD-ROM containing a collection of "classic" studies in the field. That such a groundbreaking study on avian cognition like Dr. Irene Pepperberg's work with Alex the African Gray Parrot appears on CD-ROM—a format that, even in our present reality, is quickly becoming out-of-date—suggests that in Atwood's future world, scientific interest in animal behavior is a thing of the distant past. Instead of studying the species already in existence, scientists concern themselves with creating new species-composites with customized behaviors, tendencies, and capacities. In addition to her exploration of the

cognitive abilities of African Gray Parrots, Pepperberg's work with Alex demonstrated some of the possibilities for communication and collaboration between two very different species. Among Alex's achievements, including learning over 100 English words and demonstrating an ability to mentally represent and distinguish objects based on abstract categories, Alex showed he possessed a sense of self and of others (Carey, Wise 102-6). As recalled in Jimmy's favorite CD-ROM, too, Alex also created new words to represent objects he did not already know (as Jimmy learns, Alex invented "*cork-nut*, for almond," a combination of two objects Alex knew, cork and nut, which Alex likely combined to describe the corklike and nutlike properties of an almond) (Atwood 52). In this example, Alex shows his capacity to invent, to evaluate an object within his world and to create something new in response: a label for communicating. Atwood's narrative reminds readers of Alex's animal inventiveness with the repeated use of "cork-nut": for example, Jimmy borrows the term to casually insult people at school he finds irritating, and later he and Crake call each other "cork-nut" in a playful, affectionate tone, as when Crake greets Jimmy after years apart with, "[h]i there, cork-nut" (198).

In addition to Alex's capacity to invent, he could also clearly communicate his desires by using the word "want." For Stephen Wise, Alex's use of "want" "may reflect Alex's emotional states. But it implies some understanding of personal pronouns. His statement 'Wanna nut' implies '*I* wanna nut.' When Pepperberg places a nut beneath a cup too heavy for him and Alex tells Pepperberg 'Go pick up cup,' this implies '*You* go pick up cup'" (106). Alex demonstrates not only that he possesses desires, but also that he has an understanding of what his words mean in relation to the fellow beings (both

humans and other parrots) with whom he communicates. In the days following his mother's death, Jimmy turns again to Alex the parrot to help mitigate his sadness, as if Alex were an old friend on whom Jimmy could rely for comfort. This second extended description of Alex's abilities focuses more directly on Alex's desires and his articulation of those desires in conversation with his handler:

> On the worst nights he'd [Jimmy] call up Alex the parrot, long dead by then but still walking and talking on the Net, and watch him go through his paces. Handler: *What colour is the round ball, Alex? The round* ball? Alex, head on side, thinking: *Blue.* Handler: *Good boy!* Alex: *Cork-nut, cork-nut!* Handler: *There you are!* Alex would be given a cob of baby corn, which wasn't what he'd asked for, he'd asked for an almond. Seeing this would bring tears to Jimmy's eyes (260, emphasis original).

Seeing how Alex was once denied fulfillment of his desires after articulating a clear request, Jimmy feels near to crying: it is unclear whether or not this particular handler mistook "cork-nut" for corn or whether she ignored his request for an almond altogether (260). Regardless, Jimmy's eyes fill with tears because he recognizes Alex as a being with desires worth honoring, and because he feels the handler fails to adequately respect such worth. Jimmy dwells on this line of thought by thinking, "[i]f Alex the parrot were his, they'd be friends, they'd be brothers. He'd teach him more words. Knell. Kern. Alack" (261). In addition to respecting Alex's desires, Jimmy recognizes the companionship, as well as the kinship, made possible by what he and Alex could share. For Jimmy, that Alex wants, invents, and communicates makes him desirable as a companion. In other

words, Alex's active involvement with the beings and objects make Jimmy long to participate in Alex's construction of world. Indeed, Alex possesses the incredible ability to articulate what fills his world: he provides a window into his own way of being.

Alex's impressive feats help him stand out as an individual animal; however, as Wise reminds us, "African Greys are not unique birds" in their capacities, nor are they unique *animals* in many of their capacities (Wise 109). That Atwood's narrative dwells on Alex's articulation of self, and further that Jimmy recognizes the possibilities for human-animal companionship by watching Alex and his handlers, shows the narrative's investment in exploring what it means to engage animals in their fullness of being. As noted previously, however, the videos Jimmy watches of Alex are obsolete in medium and content, and they depict an avian species dramatically different in cognitive complexity (and morphology) from the "birds" produced in Atwood's near-future. Indeed, the ideals of sustainability and the narrative's critique of the ethic of efficiency are fully realized in the figure of the ChickieNob. To Jimmy, ChickieNobs appear to be "a large bulblike object...covered with stippled whitish-yellow skin. Out of it came twenty thick fleshy tubes, and at the end of each tube another bulb was growing." When Jimmy asks Crake what these tubes and bulbs are, Crake replies "Those are chickens," and when Jimmy persists in his questioning to ask, "But what is it thinking?" one of the bio-engineers laughs in response, laughs at the passé notion that *thinking* should be constitutive to chicken and to animal life (202). The techno-scientific fantasy of producing fully edible, tasty animal parts without the messy, disruptive behaviors of animals coheres in the low-cost, ultra-efficient ChickieNob, the idealized picture of the

merely sustained animal, that which is hardly recognizable as animal at all. In stark contrast to Alex the African Gray Parrot, ChickieNobs offer little in the way of the companionship made possible by Alex's vibrant, active construction of world. Instead, Atwood's bio-engineers work to deprive chickens of this very capacity, that which makes them less efficient or disruptive as a resource, in addition to removing their capacity to feel pain so that, as one scientist notes, animal welfare advocates will have no room to object to the Nobs' production. For Crake and Atwood's scientists, ChickieNobs *are* chickens. By this logic, a species can merely be a sum of its "parts" (in this case, edible breasts, thighs, and legs) rather than a complex constellation of sensory perceptions, actions, connections, and responses, as well as the other objects and beings with whom animals enter into relation. The persistence of ChickieNobs represent one potential future for species life, making the possible loss of bird species such as the thicknee, red-necked crake, and perhaps even the African Grey Parrot, all the more devastating.[32]

Conclusion: Nonhuman Apocalypses

The concept *human* rarely carries the same meaning as the term *Homo sapiens*. To be *human* is typically to occupy a subject position elevated from that of biological species alone, elevated above an evolutionary history with primate origins, as well as elevated above other animal species. In short, to be human seems intuitively to be "beyond" species, to possess a moral and/or metaphysical importance in excess of biology's ability to name. With this study, I have not intended to raise the animal "up" to

[32] Thicknee is misspelled as "Thickney" in Atwood's text.

the level of the human or to reduce the human (with all of its privileged connotations and connections to power) to the humble status of *Homo sapiens*. Rather, by rethinking what it means to be a member of a species in the first place, and further to recognize nonhumans and humans as both embedded and in large part constituted by a world itself shared with and modified by other living beings, I've endeavored to highlight the (often unanticipatable) stakes of the accelerated rate of current species extinctions.

The effects of the possible future extinction of *Homo sapiens* has become a subject of the popular imagination: whole television series such as the History Channel's multi-part documentary series *Life After People* (2008-2010) fantasizes about the changes the earth, including such points of concern as pets and modern structures like bridges and cities, would experience if humans suddenly disappeared from the planet. It seems all too easy to imagine (and to take pleasure in) what earthly existence would be like without humans. These sorts of apocalyptic fantasies hardly participate in the ecological thought, however: imagining how the earth would get on without us is far simpler than imagining how to help the world get on *with* us. Moreover, the apocalyptic genre almost always puts the loss of human life at its center, a focus that, with some exception (*The Road*, I'd argue), reaffirms the human's place as the most important actor in earthly systems by implying that, without the human, everything would return to "normal" or a state of health. The apocalyptic genre thereby too frequently tells only one "end of the world" story: the loss of a/the human world. But what about the multiple, often invisible, nonhuman endings that occur every day? These, also, are ends of a/the world—of perceptual worlds and ways of being. These world-endings, these extinctions, remain cut

off from our own systems of knowledge and perception, and therefore represent losses that cannot be wholly appropriated into narratives that produce knowledge about ourselves and our history.[33] At bottom, species extinctions resist our understanding, yet the imperative to imagine the range of their affects, their implications and consequences, has never been greater. Literature contributes vitally to such imaginings, making clear the importance of bringing together insights from across the humanities and the sciences to address the urgent environmental issues of the present era.

[33] In her study of extinction narratives, Ursula Heise finds that, in many instances, "extinction stories function as a means of representing turning points in human cultural histories, in which the loss of a particular species stands in both for a broader sense of the vanishing of nature and the weakening of human bonds to the natural world" (69). In the narratives I examine here, I show how stories of extinction and of vanishing animals can also reflect on other-than-human losses, losses that humans cannot appropriate for their own uses as in the case of fashioning cultural histories. For a more thorough discussion of extinction stories that connect the disappearance of animals to cultural identities, see Heise.

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