Social Alternatives

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ANIMALS, FICTION, ALTERNATIVES

Animals, Fiction, Alternatives
Clara Archer-Lean

Literary Studies, the Animal Turn, and the Academy
Jennifer McDonell

Hunting Animals in J.M. Coetzee’s
Disgrace and Waiting for
the Barbarians
Paul Williams

Animals and the Question of Literature
Isobel Karrmann

True Love and the Nonhuman:
Shakespeare’s dog Crab and the
animal/human connection
Lesley Kordecki

Service Animals: Serve us animals:
Serve us, animals
Randy Malamud
My first thought for the cover theme for this issue on ‘Animals, Fiction, Alternatives’ was the simple idea of an animal or animals. However, as the various articles in this issue propose, images of animals inevitably reflect our cultural beliefs about them – we don’t really see them as they ‘really are’. This then raises questions about how the cover theme could or should represent animals in the design, particularly as animals do not always fare well in their representation by humans. I thought of shadow-puppets for the theme, as a way to express the cultural-laden human experience of engagement with animals. I had recently been toying with the ancient craft of shadow puppets made of cardboard, animal hand shadows and animal finger puppets, which are often used to tell stories. When I was a child hand shadows were an important theatre for play where we would compete and vie for the best animal representation.

For centuries the art of shadow puppetry has delighted and continues to delight children in story telling. Through shadow puppets children are entertained, as they explore sound, movement and imagination, learning traditional nursery rhymes, their own histories and about other cultures. ‘Puppets provide a means of developing speaking and listening skills, [they] inspire the imagination and motivate creative thinking, providing an exciting opening or drama and creative writing. Stories, music and poetry can be brought to life’ (Coppock 1997: 4) using animated shadow hand or cardboard puppets. For example, the K4 School performs shadow puppets to the popular children’s song ‘Old MacDonald Had a Farm’ as a narrative musical story that educates children about the type of animals and their unique sounds found on a farm. A more complex and modern use of shadow puppetry for ‘Old MacDonalds Farm’ can be found on UTube, ‘The Shadow Puppets Song Box’ which uses a rotating circular frame and an LED lighting system with digital sound.

References:

Videos:
Shadow Puppets Song Box, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMmLub0q7c (accessed 20/1/2014)
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- copyright release form
- title page listing contributing authors, contact details, affiliation and short bio of approximately 150 to 200 words
- abstract of approximately 150 to 200 words
- three - five keywords.

Please use Australian/English spelling and follow Harvard referencing. Submit tables, graphs, pictures and diagrams on separate pages. Remove in-text references identifying authors and replace with [name removed for the review process].

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The last year in Australia has seen the increasing exposure of animal rights and the promotion and validating of animal sentence as a crucial political issue. According to a recent animal rights promotional campaign (Animals Australia 2013: online), we have seen on print and television media and circulating on social media the exposure of puppy farm busts, pressure on retailers to go fur-free, the campaign against live animal exports and the inhumane destruction of unwanted bobby calves in dairy farming. SBS, channel 9 and 10, SBS and ABC news and ABC Lateline have all featured animal rights stories more frequently in the last few years. Large-scale retailers Woolworths and Coles have come to agreements with lobby and consumer groups opposed to cage eggs and pig stall factory farming. Woolworths will remove all cage eggs by 2018 and Coles took their own cage egg brands off shelves in 2013 (Animals Australia 2013: online). Not that Australia should feel particularly proud of these developments, we are merely catching up with much of the rest of the developed world, especially the European Union.

The media exposure of animal cruelty and the refusal of some of the population to accept animal suffering signify the slow movement of animal rights issues from the fringes to mainstream Australian society. Questions of animal rights and liberation are part of a long philosophical tradition recognising the right for animals to live a life without human cruelty and without unnecessary suffering caused by human action (for twentieth century seminal examples, see Singer 1983 and Midgley 1983). In the context of humanities and social science scholarship, where this journal is situated, they also signify a shift in the academy to consider animal questions seriously. Questions on the nonhuman animal in relation to the human animal have often found focus through animal studies, which Greg Garrard defines as ‘the analysis of the representation of animals in history and culture’ (Garrard 2012: 146). The difference between animal rights considerations such as the prevention of puppy farming in Victoria and humanities’ cultural focused animal studies concerns both philosophy and politics. Garrard points to a split between philosophical and political considerations of animal rights and thematic and historiographical exploration of animals in human culture (2012: 146). This issue of Social Alternatives seeks to question and suture this split; to find ways in which the philosophical, political and thematic consideration of animals in culture may lead to considerations that open up debate on questions of animal rights, animal agency and animal sentence.

In light of this, the issue, following organisations such as the Animals and Society Institute (2012), develops a more accurate and contemporary definition of animal studies as involving the interstices between thematic and political considerations. Animal studies can be fruitfully complemented with terms such as human-animal studies and critical animal studies to include the study of relationships and interactions between humans and animals and the understanding that animals do not just play perfunctory or peripheral roles in human lives but that we exist in and interrupt their worlds and are perceived by them: Jennifer McDonell’s (2013) first article in this edition and its excellent glossary provides clarification of these terms. The onus in this edition is on tracing the significance of representations of animals in human culture not just in and of themselves but in order to raise new questions and present alternatives to an oppressive human tradition of animal exploitation and objectification. To this end, each author has re-visited familiar literary and cultural expressions of human animal and nonhuman animal interactions to provide new readings and alternatives to existing scholarship. The last two articles presented in this collection reinter pret quite different cultural events. Lesley Kordecki (2013) examines an example of Shakespearean comedy and theatre in new ways and Randy Malamud (2013) examines the service animal phenomena and uses artistic representation to locate depictions where we might see interspecies communication played out.

It is clear J.M. Coetzee is an author who preoccupies our thoughts on the question of the animal and the first three articles of this edition all touch on Coetzee. This issue is by no means limited to Coetzee’s work: that would have involved a far too human-focused endeavour. Each of the three articles which cover Coetzee contextualises his work in relation to specific historical animal rights phenomenon and against the other expressions of the questions raised. In very different ways Jennifer McDonell, Isobel Karremann and Paul Williams consider the overlaps between the pressing moral dilemmas and the literary experiments raised in Coetzee’s work. It is clear from these articles, that Coetzee’s thematic exploration of animals is both diverse and not always clear cut. As Donna Haraway asks of Coetzee, ‘How do the relentlessly face-to-face, historically situated, language-defeating suffering and moral dilemmas of Disgrace meet the searingly generic, category-sated moral demands of The Lives of Animals?’ (Haraway 2007: 88).

The first article written by leading Australian human-animal studies academic, Jennifer McDonell, pursues these questions well beyond the context of Coetzee. In fact, her article provides expansive coverage of two related objectives: an overview of an insight into the last decade in human-animal studies and how the questions raised in this research area might be illuminated by...
Coetzee's early novels explore the extremities of the exploitative colonial encounter. In J.M. Coetzee's *Dusklands* (1974) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980), themes of human-animal relationships and how narrative can be used to expose the connections between human rights abuses and animal rights abuses are prominent. Williams articulates Coetzee’s obfuscation of the boundary between human and animal cruelty in the extremities of the exploitative colonial encounter. In *Dusklands* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Williams argues, war and hunting are the same things. And philosophically speaking both narratives dismantle the rational position of Cartesian dualism separating mind and body, human and animal as a delusion of colonisation’s will to power. Williams completes his analysis by turning attention to another of Coetzee’s works, *The Lives of Animals* (1999) to suggest humans, through the body, are revealed to be animals and fiction is the medium to transport us to these disturbing realities, to allow us to live imaginatively in the lives of animals and force us to empathy. The question of how literature aids in the reconsideration of animals is furthered by the next article in this edition, Isobel Karremann's ‘Animals and the Question of Literature’ (2013) which draws out the questions raised by *The Lives of Animals* in more detail.

Karremann suggests that the question of the animal allows us to assess the value and function of literature and vice versa through comparative analysis of *The Lives of Animals* and Jonathan Safran Foer’s *Eating Animals* (2009). Her method is to focus on not only the thematic context of the literary form, but on the ways experiments in literary form themselves might present new challenges in animal ethics. This is a compelling argument, as Jennifer McDonell establishes, as animals cannot represent themselves directly in literature and so their representation is a much more complex empowerment of agency and gaze than, say, past feminist and post-colonial revisions. The juxtaposition of *Eating Animals* and *The Lives of Animals* enables complex new questions over how we enter in that necessary sharing of animal ontology with nonhuman animals. Karremann demonstrates that complex literary form is the ideal mechanism to expose the very real intricacies involved in new imaginings of the human-animal relationship but also that the profundity of animal otherness and elusiveness pushes literature to its limits.

Lesley Kordecki looks at a very specific part of the human-animal relationship, that of love and devotion. Her article re-examines Shakespeare’s *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* filling a gap left by avoidance of animal considerations in traditionally literary studies approaches. Shakespeare’s dog character, Crab, in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* is a major character in the play in many ways, and Kordecki proves that his relationship with his ‘master’ Lance presents a poignant foil to the satire of conventional love presented in the play’s other human to human relationships. Kordecki, like Karremann, discusses the particularities of form in displacing assumptions of human dominance; the dog playing Crab is not actually playing anything other than a dog. And his comic disruptions of human expectations and ‘mute judgement’ of the humour are a source of audience enjoyment but also reveal a philosophical truth about the fragility of our control over animals and the extent to which we are engaged in a completely mutually interpreted interaction. Kordecki draws on the work of Una Chaudhuri to explore the ‘post-modern animal’ in relation to the Crab and Lance relationship. The post-modern animal paradoxically shows animals as both part of us yet separate. Like all the authors collected in this edition, Kordecki is focusing on scenes not usually discussed in literary criticism in new ways. In so doing, she is able to discredit human assumptions of superiority and value the complexity, tenderness and sincerity in some human and nonhuman relationships.

Perhaps a human / non human relationship that embodies the complexities of human dependency and dominance and animal servility and genuine tenderness is that of guide dog and the blind human. Randy Malamud’s research commentary piece in this collection provokes new thoughts on this cultural phenomenon in the history...
of human / nonhuman relationships. Malamud’s piece ‘Service animals: serve us animals: serve us, animals’ is founded in etymological tracing of some of the adjectives we apply to the animals who play significant roles in enhancing the lives of humans. Malamud provides an extensive exploration of the ways in which animals have acted as companions and ‘served’ human beings, and acknowledges that humans who are exposed to this service may develop a heightened sense of animal equality, while continually asking ‘what’s in it for the animals?’ This commentary ends with a lengthy reflection on a sample of artistic representations of guide dogs and their often impoverished masters from the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries. These artistic renderings of animal service prompt many questions: what is the nature of this particular human / nonhuman animal relationship; is it exploitative; is it symbiotic and mutually benefiting and how might it speak to broader questions of service and reciprocity in human and nonhuman animal interactions?

The short story in this issue, ‘Fossils’ by Gary Crew (2013), does not deal directly with animal themes. However, ‘Fossils’ does evoke a sense of how the nonhuman other (in this case earth) can speak to our human self and can act as testimony to our memories and experiences. The poignant narrative is gently framed in the understanding that we are part of the visceral earth, not detached actors upon it. The reviews and general articles in this thematic issue of Social Alternatives all relate in some way to the closeness of humans, animals and earth and the necessity for peaceful, sustainable existence.

We are privileged in this edition to feature several specially commissioned poems embedding this academic discussion. The poetry enacts many of the questions raised in the articles, such as the potential to dissolve the human / nonhuman boundary through our common animal existence and, conversely the ways in which animals remain unknowable. Dugald Williamson’s (2013) and Larry Lawrence’s (2013) poems convey a sense of the complexity, fragility and beauty of our shared natural realm. John Kinsella, winner of the 2013 Prime Minister’s Literary Award for best Australian Poetry for his beautiful poems aptly frame the philosophical, aesthetic and intellectual inquiry of this edition’s contributors.

This edition of Social Alternatives has been an exciting venture to edit and I am extremely grateful to all the contributors contained herein for the critical and creative questioning of established evasions and oppressions of our animal peers. What problems do we encounter in locating and articulating an anti-speciesism perspective? How do we decentre our assumptions of superiority and accept and return the animal gaze? How can we use literary and artistic works to create an alternative politics based on inter-species intersections? The creative and intellectual works presented here offer significant new responses to these questions.

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End Notes

1. Readers may like to consider a recent article in this journal on the use of social media to promote the lives of export issue as one evidence of the significance of animal right as a major political event, see Shoenmaker and Alexander 2012: 17-s21.

Author

Dr Clare Archer-Lean is the discipline leader of English Literature at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Her research focuses on animal sentence, environment and representations of cultural identity in literature. She is the author of numerous journal and chapter publications in literary criticism.
literary studies, the animal turn, and the academy

Jennifer McDonell

The rapidly growing field of human-animal studies (HAS) is a vibrant, varied domain of methodological convergences and divergences, united by a shared concern with studying the complex entanglement of human and animal lives. To think seriously about animals on their own terms is to begin to question the co-construction of the categories of the human and the animal that underpins human exceptionalism. Unpicking the human/animal binary, however, is no simple matter: not only is this construction unstable but as prisoners of human language we also have a tendency to reinstate it even as we think we challenge it. This paper will provide an analysis of significant developments and preoccupations in the field of literary HAS. Some of the most vexing questions within this area will be contextualised by way of reference to the Bandit and Michael Vick cases in the US and J.M. Coetzee’s Disgrace, in particular the scenes depicting David Lurie’s encounter with unwanted dogs at an animal shelter.

I

The problem of the animal, Jacques Derrida has argued, poses definitional and practical threats to the discourse of humanism, in which authority and autonomy are ‘attributed to the man (homo and vir) rather than to the woman, and to the woman rather than the animal’ (1991: 114). If human sovereignty is decentred, what becomes of the autonomy and authority that has been definitive of ‘authorship’ since the seventeenth century? The concern in animal studies with such questions as nonhuman agency, the relations between subject and object, inter-species structures of feeling, emotion and affect, the function of animal metaphor and the occlusions of literary historiography necessitates a radical rethinking of core concepts that are often taken for granted in literary studies. I would go further, as other commentators such as Cary Wolfe and Susan McHugh have, and suggest that a systematic, philosophically rigorous animal studies challenges the schema of the knowing subject and its anthropocentric underpinnings that sustain the notion of disciplinarity itself (Wolfe 2009: 568).2

In discussions about the future of animal studies as a discipline, comparisons with the entry of women’s studies and ethnic studies in the academy are common. In redressing the underrepresentation and misrepresentation of these groups one strategy adopted was for women and minorities to represent themselves as subjects within existing structures of power. This analogy can be limiting and misleading: for one thing, animals cannot speak for themselves in the kind of texts that constitute animals as objects of study. If animals cannot represent themselves in rational thought and as it is manifested in language, how can they be read or heard? As Kari Weil puts it: ‘If animal studies has come of age, it is perhaps because nonhuman animals have become a limit case for theories of difference, otherness, and power’ (2012: 5).

It is difficult to work in the area of animal studies and not be troubled by the material one encounters. One reason for this is because ‘the question of the animal’ foregrounds a mutually constitutive relationship between language and violence: violence inflicted upon animals through factory farming, laboratory testing, and through the destruction of habitats and the cultural construction of pet keeping practices, but also the violence inflicted upon animals by human language. Derrida has argued that ‘Animal’, with a capital ‘A’ in the singular, defined by way of difference to the ‘human’, is the primary means whereby the animal/human dualism has been reinforced (2008: 400).4 ‘Animal’ is our abstraction for all that walks, crawls, swims and flies other than ourselves, and as Derrida goes on to argue in both ‘Eating Well’ (1991) and The Animal That Therefore I am (More To Follow), the word does violence to the heterogeneous multiplicity of the living world and therefore enacts what he calls a ‘sacrificial structure’ that opens up a space for the ‘noncriminal putting to death’ of the animal – a sacrifice that allows the transcendence of the human by killing and disavowing the bodily, the materiality, the animality of the human.5 ‘Noncriminal’ killing of individuals and entire certain classes of humans has of course, been justified by marking them as ‘animal’.

Construct an academic course or write an article on the subject of literature and animals, and the textual possibilities are endless, precisely because humans have long conceived of themselves through animal others across most literatures and cultures. Conceptually, such a course might begin with one of the most central questions
to all teachers and scholars of literature: representation. How can attention to animals and their life worlds help us to think differently about aspects of literary form – fable, metaphor, story, say – that are shaped by ideas of human or animal being or by the logic of species? How do texts represent the animality that resides both within nonhuman and human animals? Or affective (emotional) or relational bonds between humans and animals? Other primary concepts might include the question of anthropomorphism, the history of human perceptions of animals, the reception of evolutionary theory, or pressing contemporary issues of our age such as biomedicine, climate change, zoos, species extinction, conservation, the animal industrial complex and biopolitical power.

A major challenge in teaching and writing about animal studies is the daunting interdisciplinarity that is inseparable from its genesis. HAS courses in literature tend to include readings not only from ‘cognate’ disciplines such as history and feminism but also from disciplines such as philosophy, biology, ethnology, ecology, comparative psychology, zoology and primatology which have been hugely influential on HAS in recent years. Contemporary research on literary understandings of animals is exceptionally diverse, and has drawn on concurrent work in various fields in the humanities and social sciences that goes as far back as the 1980s (Ritvo, 1987; Thomas, 1983; Serpell, 1986; Lansbury, 1985; Haraway, 1989). Carol J. Adams, Val Plumwood, Josephine Donovan, Brian Luke, Connie Salamone, Marti Kheel, Andrée Collard, Deane Curtin, Alice Walker, Deborah Slicer, Greta Gaard, Lori Gruen, Lynda Birke, and Karen Warren, among others embarked several decades ago on the project of challenging deeply embedded humanist assumptions concerning gender and animality. In the continental theoretical vein, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus (1987), in foundational philosophy Peter Singer’s Animal Liberation, first published in 1975 and Tom Regan’s The Case for Animal Rights (1983), and in cognitive ethology the public visibility of work by Jane Goodall, Diane Fossey and Diane Pepperburg also paved the way for literary scholars. In the 1990s the field continued to grow with dozens of major works appearing, including Arnold Arluke and Clinton Sanders’s Regarding Animals (1996) and Jennifer Wolch and Jody Emel’s Animal Geographies: Place, Politics, and Identity in the Nature-Culture Borderlands (1998).

A steady stream of important studies covering most of the major literary periods has been published in the past few decades. Joyce Salisbury (The Beast Within, 1994), Karl Steel (How to Make a Human, 2011), Lesley Kordecki (Ecofeminist Subjectivities: Chaucer’s Talking Birds, 2011) and Susan Crane (Animal Encounters, 2012) have produced work on animals and the corpus of medieval writing; Laurie Shannon (Accommodated Animal, 2013), Erica Fudge (Perceiving Animals, 2002; Brutal Reasoning, 2006b; Renaissance Beasts, 2004) and Bruce Boehringer (Shakespeare Among the Animals, 2002) on the Early Modern period; Christine Kenyon-Jones (Kindred Brutes, 2001) and Laura Brown (Homeless Dogs and Melancholy Apes, 2010) on Eighteenth-Century and Romantic period literature; Tess Cossett (Talking Animals, 2006) and Deborah Denenholz Morse and Morton Danahay’s (Victorian Animal Dreams, 2007) on nineteenth century British literature; Margot Norris (Beasts of the Modern Imagination, 1985), Cary Wolfe (Animal Rites, 2003) and Carrie Rohman (Stalking the Subject, 2009) on Modernist literature; Jennifer Mason (Civilized Creatures, 2005) and Colleen Glenney Boggs (Animalia Americana, 2013) on American literature; Alice Kuzniar (Melancholia’s Dog, 2006), Susan McHugh (Animal Stories, 2011) and Anat Pick (Creaturally Poetics, 2011) on modern literatures; Sherryl Vint (Animal Alterity, 2010) on Science Fiction; and Wendy Woodward (The Animal Gaze, 2008) on South African literature. In addition, there are studies that range beyond period boundaries such as Jennifer Ham and Matthew Senior’s Animal Acts: Configuring the Human in Western History (1997), John Simons’ Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation (2002) and Philip Armstrong’s What Animals Mean in the Fictions of Modernity (2008), which deals with novels by Swift, Defoe, Melville and Mary Shelley along with contemporary fictions such as Timothy Findlay’s Not Wanted in the Voyage, Yann Martel’s The Life of Pi, and Margaret Atwood’s Oryx and Crake. Add to this Reaktion Books’s beautiful ‘Animal’ series, edited by Jonathan Burt, which to date has published fifty individual volumes devoted to particular animals, including the frog, ant, wolf, horse, kangaroo, dog, spider, bear, cat, elephant, oyster and penguin. These works explore the natural history of an animal alongside its historical and cultural impact on humankind, including literary representations.


The archives of secondary literary criticism will yield scholarship, including occasionally unpublished theses, dealing with animal topics in the works of major literary figures: insect imagery in Robert Browning’s poetry, the horse as a symbol in D.H. Lawrence’s novels and so on. One literary end of animal studies is the imaginative and empathetic identification with other animals’ lives, and with the philosophical and ethical questions raised by that engagement. The methodological work of animal literary studies includes deconstructing representations of animals that appropriate the animal as merely literary and mythological figures (Derrida, 2002; Haraway, 2008) as well as critiquing the tendency to observe real animals without attempting to meet their gaze. Cary Wolfe has argued that an engaged animal studies has to be more than ‘mere thematics’ because it ‘fundamentally challenges the schema of the knowing subject and its anthropocentric underpinnings sustained and reproduced in the current disciplinary protocols of cultural studies (not to mention literary studies)’ (2009: 568–569). The task of such a literary animal studies would include critiquing representations that are disrespectful to animals, redressing the occlusions of literary historiography itself (in which animals have been largely absent), and taking interspecies structures of feeling seriously, rather than uncritically dismissing such engagements as sentimental. This work moves away from a tradition that sees animals as passive, unthinking presences in the active, thoughtful lives of humans to a tradition which conceives of humans as constructing and having been constructed by animals (Fudge 2006a: 1).

II

As historically specific examples of human perception, use and representation of that most popular of domestic animals, the dog, I now turn to the cases of Bandit and Michael Vick in the US (with a brief foray into Dickens’s *Oliver Twist*) to illustrate a number of important points relevant to any discussion of animal studies. The key contention is that the category of ‘animal’ is contingent and shifts according to the convenience of the dominant; and that human rights are inextricably linked to the question of the animal, making the intersectionality of the categories of the human and animal human a central starting point to any discussion of the field. I conclude with some comments on a novel featuring a protagonist with a particularly conflicted relationship to literature and the academy, J.M. Coetzee’s *Disgrace* (1999b). The concluding scenes of the novel are read as being, among other things, about the limits of the rational thought that human animals have used to distinguish themselves from ‘mere’ animal life.

I begin with a ‘true’ story about a ‘real’ dog, Bandit, who in 1987 was on death row taking a rap for being naturally vicious. The most comprehensive account of the case, *Bandit: Dossier of a Dangerous Dog*, was published in 2002 by linguist, poet and animal trainer, Vicki Hearne. The bare outlines are as follows: Bandit, companion to Mr Lamon Redd, a poor, elderly black man in Stamford, Connecticut, was provoked into biting a neighbour. The neighbour had trespassed on Mr Redd’s property and hit Mr Johnson, one of Mr Redd’s boarders who served as Bandit’s walker, with a broom. Bandit was impounded, during which time he was so ineptly handled that, on his return, his behaviour had changed for the worse – so much so that when Redd beat him for urinating on the porch, the dog bit back. This time the State canine control authority sought to have Bandit killed. Opposing the State of Connecticut’s ‘disposal order’, Vicki Hearne, who was called in as an expert witness, convinced the court to give her permission to retrain Bandit. She discovered in the process that he was a well-mannered and obedient dog, and he was thereafter committed to her care.

This, however, was no simple ‘Heart-Warming True Story of One Dog’s Rescue from Death Row’ as advertised on the cover of a 2007 reprint of the book. The ruling distressed Mr Redd. Having grown up in Virginia, he accused Hearne of stealing his dog: ‘It’s just like in the South, the black man gets something good, the white man takes it away from him’ (Hearne 2002: 293). When Mr Redd rose at the hearing to testify in favour of Bandit he said, to the great distress of Hearne, ‘All the ladies in the neighbourhood like him. Not just the coloured ladies. The white ladies like him too’ (Hearne 2002: 49). As Hearne notes, the remark underlined the straightforward racism that was everywhere present but nowhere acknowledged in the trial (Hearne 2002: 50).

The Bandit case became the centre of a media-fuelled frenzy about whether there are irredeemably vicious dog breeds. Newspapers, canine control authorities and the courts incorrectly designated Bandit as a ‘pit bull’, that is,
an American Pit Bull Terrier. Sounding suspiciously like a modern-day Mr Bumble, one expert said to the court: ‘He has genes. Genes is what these dogs have, and their training is part of their genetics, and it makes ‘em mean’ (Hearne 2002: 1). Discussing the phenomenon of the bad breed, and the Bandit case in particular, Harvard literature professor Marjorie Garber observes that ‘pit bull’ had become what:

...literary critics of a certain genre would call an ‘undecidable’ figure singled out for vilification by the law, yet not reliably identifiable as a breed. ‘Everyone knows’ and ‘No one knows’ what a ‘pit-bull’ is. Everyone knows and, and no one knows, that ‘they’ are dangerous. (1996: 194)

Effectively, human language becomes, for certain animals, quite literally a matter of life and death.

The foregoing discussion illustrates how a mythos of species can naturalise violence towards certain classes of animals and how classificatory language can be used to deny the species-specific traits of individual animals. Such language presents analogies with constructions of gender, race and class in human society. If today’s canine bete noire is the ‘pit-bull’, in post-World War II Europe it was German Shepherds and Dobermans, and in 1830s England it was dogs like Bull’s Eye, Bill Sikes’s dog, in Oliver Twist. Bull’s Eye is by far the most complex canine character in Dickens’s work, and his multivalent name suggests his ties to the Bull and Terrier families, which descended from fighting breeds originally used in bull-baiting and blood sports. The cover of the 2007 Random House Vintage Classics edition of Oliver Twist features an image of a Bull Terrier (as classified by the American Kennel Association breed standard) fitted out with a spiked collar accessory.

Just as Bandit was not a ‘pit bull’, the dog breed pictured here did not exist in 1836–7 when the novel was published. The salient point, though, is that both types of dog signify prominently in what might be called ‘dangerous dog discourse’. A Bull Terrier is pictured on the cover of the Vintage edition because dogs of this breed are misperceived as ‘pit bulls’ and are associated with the drug lords and street gangs who use them in dog fighting and as mascots. In contemporary US culture, moreover, American Pit Bulls and other fighting dogs are routinely associated with African American men. As Meisha Rosenberg puts it in the title of her article on dog breeds and race in contemporary popular culture, ‘Golden Retrievers are white, Pit Bulls are black and Chihuahuas are Hispanic’ (Rosenberg 2011: 113). Ideological investments in this particular species-race intersection were dramatically highlighted in 2007 when Atlanta Falcons quarterback Michael Vick, a former number one pick in the 2001 NFL draft, was indicted on charges relating to a six-year long continuing criminal enterprise of an interstate dog fighting ring known as Bad Newz Kennels.

The kennel name refers to the Ridley Circle housing project in the primarily African American East End section of Newport News, Virginia, the economically-depressed area in which Vick grew up, known for its street gangs and drug-related violence. Allegations included Vick’s direct involvement in dog fighting, gambling, and brutal executions of dogs. Public outcry resulted from widespread media reports of details which included the hanging, drowning, electrocuting and shooting of dogs. Over seventy dogs, mostly American pit bulls, were seized, along with physical evidence during several searches of Vick’s fifteen-acre property by local, state and federal authorities. Many of the dogs bore visible signs of injury. Vick’s attorneys argued that dog fighting was an acceptable part of the black ‘culture’ in the neighbourhood where Vick had grown up, and key figures from the National Association for the Advancement of Coloured People (NAACP) argued that Vick’s treatment was illustrative of the systemic racism present in US culture and its institutions (Kim 2009:16-17). People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), on the other hand, characterised Vick as a sociopathic monster unfit for civil society (Broad 2013: 780). Garrett M. Broad adds: ‘The common depiction of Vick as a beast – the true animal among the dogs in his ring – undeniably played off of a history of the dehumanisation of black men in U.S. culture’ (2013: 780: see also Kim 2009: 17-18).

What was missing in popular media discussions of the Bandit and Michael Vick cases was an alternative politics based on intersectional antispeciesist and antiracist perspectives. An important consideration overlooked in such discussions is that racial, cultural and species differences are made, not given. Like racial
stereotypes, the 'vicious breed trope' and 'dangerous dog discourse' tend to rely on the view that cultures are fixed, homogeneous entities that map neatly onto particular groups and particular spaces. This is particularly true in the case of domesticated animals, as the history of dog breeding amply demonstrates. Harriet Ritvo persuasively demonstrates that breed standards, particularly in dogs, became for the Victorian middle classes 'an index of their paradoxical willingness aggressively to re-conceive and refashion the social order in which they coveted a stable place' (1987: 115). Prior to the founding of the Kennel Club in 1873, dogs had mainly been classed by the jobs they performed as illustrated by various taxonomies, many of which were based on sixteenth-century sources, particularly Johannes Caius's De Canibus Britannicus (1570). They tended to place the 'most generous kinds' of dogs, notably hunting hounds and bloodhounds, at the top, and the order descended through spaniels and lapdogs to farm animals, while working mongrels such as turnspits came at the bottom. In these unforgiving typologies, the value of particular breeds is derived from their original functions, which had once closely related to the social status of their respective owners.7 Behind every dog breed there is an ethnography and a social history as well as a genealogy – the story of a life in culture as well as a genetic inheritance.

Against the essentialising view of culture circulated in the Bandit and Vick cases, we might consider that species difference is not only always already in the process of being made, but that this process is not haphazard, rather it is produced as an effect of power relationships. The dualisms that form such forceful undercurrents in Western culture – master/slave, male/female, human/animal, white/nonwhite, reason/nature, culture/nature, civilised/savage, mind/body, subject/object – form an 'interlocking structure' (Plumwood, 1993: 43) that is recognised by theorists working in feminist, disability, postcolonial, queer, indigenous, and critical race studies as a violent hierarchy because one term of the binary is always suppressed in relation to the other, while the middle term is elided. The animal, therefore, is constituted not only through the human/animal dualism but also by other pairs as well (Adams 1994; Kappeler 1995; Haraway 1989). As Claire J. Kim graphically puts it: 'The beast is first made – not just as animal but as savage, nature, other, body, object, alien, and slave – and then slain, affirming power and producing order' (2009: 3).

III

With these considerations in mind I want to turn to what has become a canonical text of animal studies literature, J.M. Coetzee's Disgrace, in particular the scenes depicting David Lurie's encounter with unwanted dogs at an animal shelter. In his response to J.M. Coetzee's The Lives of Animals, published with the novel, Peter Singer not only outlines his 'like interests' standard (equal consideration of animals at a similar 'mental level' to that of 'normal' adult humans), but also stresses that, for him, animal ethics remains the purview of 'philosophy,' not of 'literature': 'I prefer to keep truth and fiction clearly separate' (1999: 86). His position suggests that while the animal studies movement may be a radical development, it continues to rely, at least in Singer's instance, on a Kantian notion of rational philosophy. Dawn McCance extends this inference to include 'his blueprint for the modern research university as a hierarchical, philosophical institution ... with the philosopher at once dispenser of “truth” and standard-exemplar of “mental capacity”' (McCance 2011: v). This essay has suggested that a serious animal studies as conceived of in the Humanities, and in literary studies in particular, necessarily entails a questioning of the anthropocentrism of 'the subject' – the author or writer constituted by philosophy and by literature. Literary texts, like animals, tend to mess with the boundaries of reason and feeling, and Disgrace, is, I would suggest, about the limits of the rational thought that human animals have used to distinguish themselves from animal life. The novel asserts the difference between 'human' and 'animal' not simply by foregrounding the technology by which animals are non-criminally put to death – but also because Coetzee's chiseled Flaubertian descriptive prose refuses secure ethical positions grounded in the consolations of accepted human belief systems, including rational truth. The ending of Disgrace can be read as a critique of human ideas of sacrifice and redemption: Coetzee takes us through the stereotypical figurations and gestures in a way that makes their insubstantiality and emptiness self-evident. Lurie remains confused until the end, unable to escape what Agamben calls the 'anthropological machine', and doomed to give up both on himself and the crippled singing dog who loves him.

David Lurie resigns uncontrite from his teaching position at Cape Technical University because of an affair with a student, and moves to live with his daughter, Lucy, on a smallholding in the Eastern Province, where she grows flowers and vegetables for the market in nearby Grahamstown and runs dog kennels. Working as a volunteer at a local animal shelter, David assists Bev Shaw in euthanising animals, mainly dogs, and in the process appears to undergo a transformation which includes an acceptance of a shared emotional life with animals. For instance, David becomes mindful of giving each dog a proper burial, ensuring their corpses 'will not be beaten into a more convenient shape for processing' (Coetzee 1999b: 143). Despite David's acceptance of his own animality and his adoption of a less anthropocentric outlook, the novel seems to make an appeal to a sacrificial logic that entails his giving up on the special singing dog of whom he has become fond as a final act of renunciation. The novel ends on one of the killing Sundays; the dog is...
carried 'like a lamb' to the slaughter. Coetzee offers no rational explanation from Lurie for his decision to sacrifice the crippled dog who he knows will die for him (215). The last line of the book is 'I am giving him up'.

It gets harder all the time, Bev Shaw once said. Harder, yet easier too. One gets used to things getting harder; one ceases to be surprised that what used to be as hard as hard can be grows harder yet. He can save the young dog, if he wishes, for another week. But a time must come, it cannot be evaded, when he will have to bring him to Bev Shaw in her operating room (perhaps he will carry him in his arms, perhaps she will do that for him) and caress him and brush back the fur so that the needle can find the vein, and whisper to him and support him in the moment when, bewilderingly, his legs buckle; and then, when the soul is out, fold him up and pack him away in his bag, and the next day wheel the bag into the flames and see that it is burnt, burnt up. He will do all that for him when his time comes. It will be little enough, less than little: nothing.

He crosses the surgery. 'Was that the last?' asks Bev Shaw.

'One more.'

He opens the cage door. 'Come,' he says, bends, opens his arms.

The dog wags its crippled rear, sniffs his face, licks his cheeks, his lips, his ears. He does nothing to stop it. 'Come.'

Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. 'I thought you would save him for another week,' says Bev Shaw.

'Are you giving him up?'

'Yes, I am giving him up.' (Coetzee 1999b: 220).

Michael O’Sullivan argues that any author who deals with animals must necessarily ‘give up control’, including the autonomy and authority that have been definitive of ‘authorship’ since the seventeenth century. The reason for this relinquishing of control, he continues, is that it allows humans ‘to revisit moments of weakness’ that animals traditionally embody, and ‘it may raise compassion for the other’ (2011: 119). For O’Sullivan, then, Lurie’s giving up of the unnamed dog, is supported by Coetzee’s disordering of narrative temporality: it gives us back what Paul Ricoeur calls the “articulated unity of coming-towards, having-been and making-present”. The potentialities of animal and human time merge in this passage (2011: 131). This reading is a variation on the argument that Coetzee is representing a merging of human and pre-linguistic animal suffering. For me, however, David’s painful imagining of how he might support singing dog in his death, compared to the stark description of what he actually does in present time, represents not unity but underlines David’s multiple failures, including his final failure to save the dog. Indeed, the ‘I’ in the last sentence – ‘I am giving him up’ – draws attention to David’s final understanding that it is humans who have control over whether certain animals live or die. The dog seems to also function as a figure for Lurie at this point: in giving up on singing dog, is he giving up on himself, on South Africa? David imagines at various points in his relationship with the dog a tentative interspecies rapprochment; but just as the history of canine domestication reveals a mix of moralities of control and care, there can be no simple relinquishing of mastery by Lurie.

The scene invokes two Victorian texts that work against critics who read in this scene ‘a posthumanist religiosity’ (Weil 2012: 127). Coetzee undercuts the ‘sacrificial structure’ that opens up a space for the ‘noncriminal putting to death’ of the animal of which Derrida speaks, allowing no space for the transcendence of the human spirit. Instead the act of sacrifice invokes other such acts of disgrace. When David allows singing dog to lick ‘his cheeks, his lips, his ears’ as he collects him for his death, who can fail to recall Darwin’s poignant words in The Descent of Man (1871):

The love of a dog for its master is notorious; in the agony of death he has been known to caress his master, and every one has heard of the dog suffering under vivisection who licked the hand of the operator; this man, unless he had a heart of stone, must have felt remorse to the last hour of his life. (1981: 40)

That David allows this characteristic canine gesture of affection from his special dog, when earlier he felt revulsion at the dogs licking him, shows he has developed a capacity for empathy with another species, and has become less selfish, perhaps. However, the shift from the personal pronoun ‘he’ to ‘it’ in the sentence indicates his emotional distance as he prepares to ‘give him up’. Deborah Bird Rose, who names the dog ‘Youngfella’, asks the entirely relevant question of the ‘structure of sacrifice’ at stake in this scene: ‘what does David save in giving up Youngfella?’:

On the face of it David is sacrificing the dog in order to save both the boundary between the human and animal and human control over that boundary. His choice furthers his infectious emptiness. This was his last fall into disgrace … (2011: 38)

When the dogs are brought to the clinic in the first place the narrator tells us it is ‘because they are unwanted: 
Diamond puts it the trauma of experiencing ‘something and pet shelters but also the unspeakability of confronting animals are treated in such practices as factory farming of unspeakability – not only the unspeakability of how ethical issue which the novel acknowledges as a kind killing. The trauma experienced by David Lurie is an narratorial description of dead animal bodies in all their know of his character, especially when contrasted to the seem self indulgently consistent with what we already (1999b: 144-45). Lurie’s prevarications and deflections bodies of the dogs in kinesthetically descriptive detail (1999b: 144-45). Lurie’s prevarications and deflections seem self indulgently consistent with what we already know of his character, especially when contrasted to the narratorial description of dead animal bodies in all their material excess.

Lurie, like Elizabeth Costello, is ‘wounded’, to use Cora Diamond’s term, by various forms of mechanised animal killing. The trauma experienced by David Lurie is an ethical issue which the novel acknowledges as a kind of unspeakability – not only the unspeakability of how animals are treated in such practices as factory farming and pet shelters but also the unspeakability of confronting the limits of one’s own thinking, in confronting (as Diamond puts it) the trauma of experiencing ‘something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it, or possibly too painful in its inexplicability’. How far the trope of unspeakability is an adequate critical response to the human iterability of animal suffering depicted in *Disgrace* is debatable because the novel in my view articulates so eloquently what Raymond Williams called a ‘structure of feeling’. *Disgrace* represents the mixed affects – care, compassion, violence, and indifference – that characterise David’s attempt to honour a human kinship between human and nonhuman species. As the Vick and Bandit cases also show, this same paradoxical mix of care, sentiment and violence typifies relationships between humans and nonhuman animals, including domestic animals, in contemporary Western societies.

If singing dog could speak, what would his story be? In an interrogative twist on Wittgenstein’s elliptical statement, Kari Weil asks: ‘If it did speak… could we understand it?’ (Weil 2012: 127).

Appendix:

**Animal rights**: A philosophical position as well as a social movement that advocates for providing nonhuman animals with moral status and, thereby, basic rights.

**Animal studies**: Generally used, at least in the natural sciences, to refer to the scientific study of, or medical use of, nonhuman animals, as in medical research. In the humanities, it is the preferred term for what social sciences call HAS.

**Anthrozoology**: The scientific study of human-animal interaction, and the human-animal bond.

**Critical animal studies (CAS)**: An academic field of study dedicated to the abolition of animal exploitation, oppression, and domination.

**Ethology**: The scientific study of animal behaviour.

**Human-animal studies**: The study of the interactions and relationships between human and nonhuman animals (DeMello 2012b: 5).

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assistance with this piece and Robert Dingley for his insights in the course of our discussions of Coetzee’s Disgrace.

End Notes
1. For simplicity’s sake, I will generally be using ‘animal’ to mean ‘nonhuman animal.’ I will also use animal studies in its broadest, contemporary sense, designating the multidisciplinary field known by some as human-animal studies (HAS) – sometimes called anthrozoology - which is not to be confused with the scientific usage which refers to laboratory studies involving animals. Sometimes the related term, critical animal studies, is used, although CAS distinguishes itself from much mainstream human-animal studies by virtue of its commitment to an advocacy agenda. For a fuller discussion of the relationship between critical animal studies and human-animal studies see Taylor (2013: 155-169). For brief definitions of terms see the Appendix at the end of this essay.
4. While Derrida’s work on what he calls ‘the question of the animal’ has been enormously important, his critique does not go far enough. I agree with Donna Haraway that Derrida fails to ‘meet’ the animal. See especially Haraway’s analysis of the scene of Derrida’s confrontation with his cat in his bathroom (2008: 19–23). For a full-blown discussion of Derrida’s failure in ‘The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow),’ to sustain a critique of sexual as well as species difference, see Cuentas (2009). For a critique of Derrida’s centrality in the critique of humanism in animal studies see Frainam (2012).
5. For a more detailed discussion of this point, and Derrida’s positions see Wolfe (2010: 62–78).
9. Raymond Williams introduced the term ‘structure of feeling’ to describe the way shared emotional dispositions have an impact on the way societies operate and how history is constructed and experienced (Williams 1977: 133). Philip Armstrong has usefully used this term to show how intimately the emergence of certain structures of feeling is tied up with human-animal relations: for example, dispositions like sympathy, sentimentalism, nostalgia for nature (Armstrong 2008).

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I would like to thank Sascha Morrell for her invaluable
Hunting Animals in JM Coetzee’s *Dusklands* and *Waiting for the Barbarians*

**Paul Williams**

J.M. Coetzee’s early novels *Dusklands* (1974) and *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980) outline the Western imperialist project to colonise and subjugate ‘other’ people, animals and the environment. The masculine colonising subject (in Cartesian terms, res inextensa) has separated itself from the world (res extensa) and seeks to conquer and subjugate in order to subsume it. *Dusklands* comprises two narratives: one, that of Jacobus Coetzee who hunts human and nonhuman animals and leaves a destructive trail behind him as he blazes a frontier in 1800s South Africa; and two, Eugene Dawn, an American mythographer, who advocates his ‘Vietnam Project’ to win the US war in Vietnam in the early 1970s by defoliating the environment and hunting the Vietcong ‘like animals’. In *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Colonel Joll deals with the Barbarian ‘threat’ to his Empire by similarly destroying the environment, hunting barbarians, and torturing women and children. Each character is locked into a Cartesian ‘self’ consciousness that cannot interact with the ‘other’ (female, nonhuman animal, ‘indigenous’) except through violence and destruction. Hunting is a manifestation of this disease and the protagonists make no distinction between human, animal or vegetable in their path of destruction in the name of colonial expansion.

We had a war once against the animals, which we called hunting, though in fact war and hunting are the same thing (Coetzee 2009: 59).

*Dusklands* comprises two seemingly unconnected novellas, one the fictional diary of an early South African colonial hunter/explorer (named Coetzee), the other the rant of a mentally disintegrating ‘mythographer’ in the USA whose job it is to win the psychological war in Vietnam through propaganda.

The first novella, ‘The Vietnam Project’, presents Eugene Dawn mentally masturbating over photographs he has collected for his ‘Vietnam Project’ to win the war of hearts and minds of the Vietcong. The first is ‘Father makes merry with children’, a photo of a US marine copulating with a Vietcong child, and by the way he smiles at the camera, it is clear that he is showing off his ‘trophy’; and if this is not enough to repulse the reader, Dawn’s feeling of ‘delicious shame’ surely does: ‘if the [photographs] arouse me like this I am a man and these images of phantoms a subject fit for men’ (1974: 16). Another image presented is a photo of two US marines posing with their hunting trophies—the severed heads of Vietcong fighters. Again, Dawn’s reaction is as repulsive as the image itself: ‘a handcart bearing a coffin or even a man-size plastic bag may have its elemental dignity; but can one say the same of a mother with her son’s head in a sack, carrying it like a small purchase from the supermarket? I giggle’ (1974: 16). Another image is a still from a movie of a series of tiger cages containing the Vietcong prisoners of war, which makes Dawn ‘shake with fresh excitement’ (1974: 17).

The second part of *Dusklands*, ‘The Narrative of Jacobus Coetzee’, is even more graphic, an inventory of cruelty, documented (and certainly voiced) in gleeful detail. For example, Jacobus Coetzee describes the punishment meted out for cattle raiding: ‘There was no more cause for softness. A bullet is too good for a Bushman. They took one alive once after a herder had been killed and tied him over a fire and roasted him’ (1974: 60); so too the apparent common practice of raping San women by colonisers:

She has seen you kill the men who represent power to her, she has seen them shot down like dogs. You have become Power itself now and she nothing, a rag you wipe yourself on and throw away. She is completely disposable. She is something for nothing, free. She can kick and scream but she knows she is lost … She is the ultimate love you have borne your own desires alienated in a foreign body and pegged out waiting for your pleasure (1974: 61).

What is most disturbing is perhaps the detachment with which this violence is described: Someone in the village was screaming loudly enough for the screams, thin, boring, one after another, to reach us across half a mile. I tried to listen to them as one listens to the belling of frogs, as pure pattern;
but the pattern here was without interest. I wished the screams would go away (1974: 110).

These graphic descriptions of violence are not limited to humans. Jacobus Coetzee, at one juncture of his narrative, dismembers a beetle for no other apparent reason than to watch it suffer: ‘You may pull his legs off one by one and he will not wince. It is only when you pull the head off the body that a tiny insect shudder runs through him’ (1974: 96).

*Dusklands* confirms Elizabeth Costello’s thesis that front this paper, namely that ‘war and hunting are the same thing’, that there is no distinction between human and nonhuman when it comes to a colonial exploitation of land, people and animals. Coetzee implies in *Dusklands* that animal rights are contiguous with human rights, not by elevating nonhuman animals to that status of subjects (‘self’), but by reducing the status of enemy combatants and indigenous people to that of ‘wild animals’, ‘beasts’; in short, objects (‘other’): ‘The Bushman’, Jacobus Coetzee philosophises, ‘is a different creature, a wild animal with an animal’s soul … They are like dogs … heartless as baboons they are, and the only way to treat them is like beasts’ (1974: 58).

Treating people like beasts is, in Kantian terms, immoral. By all means treat nonhuman animals as ‘means’, Kant maintains, as long as it does not deaden the compassion you feel for other humans: ‘[As] far as animals are concerned, we have no direct duties. Animals are not self-conscious and are there merely as the means to an end. That end is man’ (1963: 240). Coetzee, echoing his character Elizabeth Costello in *The Lives of Animals*, would beg to differ:

What a terrible crime, to treat human beings like cattle (Nazi concentration camps)! If we had only known beforehand! But our cry should more accurately have been: What a terrible crime, to treat human beings like units in an industrial process! And that cry should have had a postscript: What a terrible crime, come to think of it, to treat any living being like a unit in an industrial process! (2007: n.p.)

The images in *Dusklands* evoke disgust because they treat humans as trophies, or spoils of hunting, but by implication, the ‘terrible crime’ is extended to include the treatment of nonhuman animals as trophies and spoils of hunting.

The war against animals and those we consider animals exposes what an early critic of *Dusklands* calls the ‘metaphysics of violence’ (Knox-Shaw 1982: 26). And this ‘psychopathology of Western life’ (Knox-Shaw 1982: 3) is systemically explored using the metaphor of sexual penetration.¹ Hunting in *Dusklands* is a violent sexual act against others; in other words, rape. ‘We brought with us weapons, the gun and its metaphors, the only copulas we knew of between ourselves and our objects’ (1974: 18), Dawn asserts.

The orgy of killing administered by Jacobus Coetzee takes on sexual overtones: the rape of a Griqua child is another example of the Imperial father ‘making merry’ with its children. Jacobus Coetzee’s servant’s death is similarly described in sexual overtones, and the gun becomes orally phallic: ‘I pushed the muzzle against his lips. “Take it”, I said … His lips seeped blood, his jaw relaxed. I pushed the muzzle in till he began to gag … ’ (1974: 111). Dawn’s masturbatory pleasure in the imagery he collects reveals the pornographic nature of these narratives.²

**Cartesian Dualism**

If hunting is the impulse to possess, destroy and display what has been conquered in a way that resembles sexual conquest and rape, it is not union. Both Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee find that the ‘other’ is impenetrable. For Dawn, the image of the Vietcong prisoner in the tiger cage is all surface, ‘yielding no passage into the interior of this obscure but indubitable man’ (1974: 17). Dawn tries to reach the ‘other’ as a means of re-connecting to himself: ‘In euphoric gestures of liberation I stretch out my right hand. My fingers, expressive, full of meaning … close on [the prisoner’s] shoulders, but close empty … in the empty dreamspace of one’s head … it is never dawn’³ (1974: 36). For Jacobus Coetzee too, the other is unreachable, and the world of the Hottentot equally as ‘impenetrable’:

I am an explorer. My essence is to open what is closed, to bring to light what is dark. If the Hottentots comprise an immense world of delight, it is an impenetrable world, impenetrable to men like me who must either skirt it, which is to evade our mission, or clear it out of the way (1974: 113).⁴

Such impenetrability is explained in reference to the seventeenth-century philosopher Rene Descartes, and the disease that both Eugene Dawn and Jacobus Coetzee are infected with is Cartesian Dualism, a severing and isolation of consciousness leading to a hyper self-consciousness that cannot connect to its surroundings: ‘It is the voice of the doubting self’, laments Eugene Dawn, ‘the voice of Rene Descartes driving the wedge between the self in the world and the self that contemplates that self’ (1974: 21).

Descartes, in his *Meditationes de prima philosophia, in qua Dei existentia et animæ immortalitas demonstratur* (1641), discovers that by denying everything around him, he can prove his own existence. What he cannot doubt
is his consciousness, what he calls his mind, or self. All else – the body, the material universe – is separate from the subject that contemplates it. Descartes thus divides 'man' into two different entities, mind and body:

Although I certainly do possess a body with which I am very closely conjoined; nevertheless, because, on the one hand, I have a clear and distinct idea of myself, in as far as I am only a thinking and unextended thing, and as, on the other hand, I possess a distinct idea of body, in as far as it is only an extended and unthinking thing, it is certain that I (that is, my mind, by which I am what I am) is entirely and truly distinct from my body, and may exist without it (1949: 132).

The Cartesian split between mind and body or self and other is what has traditionally separated humans from nonhumans, how mind has distinguished itself from body, and why consciousness (res inextensa) has been viewed as a superior 'substance' to the material world (res extensa). The material world becomes an object for scientific investigation, exploitation and domination by the thinking self; 'man' (particularly the masculine subject) becomes the centre of his environment. The effect of this split provides the West with a framework by which to control, manipulate and measure its world, and in particular, its nonhuman environment.

Such an attempt to separate mind from body, to divorce our human 'soul' from its animal nature seems fallacious and futile, yet this has been a central concern of both Western and Eastern cultures for centuries. And Coetzee demonstrates that the Dualist condition is at the centre of imperialism and colonialism. Yet this condition is (no surprises here) an alienating one. The self is master, Coetzee maintains, but he is alone in his consciousness. The world is outside, different, impenetrable, and the mind, locked in itself, needs to, but is unable to, unite with this world in order to become whole. The world outside of the coloniser's consciousness is a heart of darkness – impenetrable, incomprehensible, other.

**Pain is Truth**

*Waiting for the Barbarians* is Coetzee's further investigation of colonisation as Cartesian Dualism, hunting as sexual conquest, and alienation of the colonising self. In this follow-up novel, the colonising self crosses the line, and experiences what it is like to be the ‘other’, the enemy, the nonhuman animal, the body. If *Dusklands* is the experimental laboratory where Coetzee outlines his metaphysics of violence in Cartesian terms, *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the space where he elaborates on his second Cartesian resolve: pain is truth. And this focus on sentience in this novel cuts through the (false)

distinction between human and nonhuman: in *Waiting for the Barbarians*, the main protagonist discovers that what we have in common (as imperialist, terrorist, animal) is the body. And not an abstract 'res extensa', a body separated by consciousness, but a body that is the site of engagement, a body which is the 'self'; and it is this body that we have in common with other animals: ‘How do you know when you have the truth?’ the Magistrate asks Colonel Joll when the notion of torture is raised. ‘Pain is truth,’ the torturer tells him, echoing the Cartesian dictum, and ‘all else is subject to doubt’ (1980: 5). In this ironic reversal of Descartes' privileging of the mind over the body, here it is the body that reveals the truth of our humanity:

But my torturers were not interested in degrees of pain. They were interested only in demonstrating to me what it meant to live in a body, as a body, a body which can entertain notions of justice only as long as it is whole and well, which very soon forgets them when its head is gripped and a pipe is pushed down its gullet and pints of salt water are poured into it ... They came to my cell to show me the meaning of humanity, and in the space of an hour they showed me a great deal (1980: 115).

Pain is the leveller, the ‘truth’ that humans are animals, and that human and nonhuman interests operate at this basic level, the right not to suffer as a body.⁵ Coetzee has argued elsewhere that the standard of equality is the body, and this dissolves the false distinction of 'self' and 'other', of human versus animal:

If I look back over my own fiction, I see a simple (simple-minded?) standard erected. That standard is the body. Whatever else, the body is not 'that which is not', and the proof that it is is the pain it feels. The body with its pain becomes the counter to the endless trials of doubt ... (Jolly 1992: 248).

Our sentience – and our link to the sentience of others – also dissolves the false dichotomy of human and animal, 'for it is the body to which violence is visited upon, the body which we share with other animals' (Coetzee 1999: 74).

Coetzee’s early novels have as their main protagonists hunters of animals, and these animals may be human animals: Jacobus Coetzee, for example, advises:

it is only when you hunt them [Bushmen] as jackals that you can really clear a stretch of country; [T] hey are like dogs, they can run all day without tiring, and when they migrate, they carry nothing with them; heartless as baboons they are, and the only way to treat them is like beasts; the only way of taming a Bushman is to catch him when he is

Similarly, both the protagonist and antagonist of *Waiting for the Barbarians* are hunters of both human and nonhuman animals. It is their common love of hunting that drives the conversation at the first meeting of Colonel Joll and the Magistrate: ‘[W]e talk about hunting. He tells me about the last great drive he rode in, when thousands of deer, pigs, bears were slain, so many that a mountain of carcasses had to be left to rot’ (1980: 2). The outpost which the Magistrate administers is a hunting culture, and this practice is taken for granted. It is at first limited to nonhuman animals and in the following passage, he coolly observes (as coolly, it seems, as Jacobus Coetzee’s observation of animal suffering) a returning hunting expedition: ‘By mid-morning they are back with huge catches: birds with their necks twisted, slung from poles . . . by their feet, or crammed alive into wooded cages, screaming with outrage’ (1980: 62).

Whereas Joll and Jacobus Coetzee are ‘true’ hunters, the Magistrate begins to doubt his role, and suffers a crisis of conscience and identity. On a hunting trip after he has witnessed Joll’s torture methods, he finds he has lost his hunting impulse to shoot, kill, and acquire trophies:

> With the buck before me suspended in immobility, there seems to be time for all things, time even to turn my gaze inward and see what it is that has robbed the hunt of its savour: the sense that this has become no longer a morning’s hunting but an occasion on which either the proud ram bleeds to death on the ice or the old hunter misses his aim (1980: 42).

It is a significant turning point, for it is here that the Magistrate turns away from his complicity with Empire and its predatory relationship to the world, and begins to feel empathy towards the hunted ‘other’. After Joll leaves, the Magistrate attempts to repair the damage done by the visiting representatives of Empire, primarily by taking a Barbarian ‘girl’ who has been tortured and left behind, into his quarters to rehabilitate. She is described as an animal: ‘People will say I keep two wild animals in my room, a fox and a girl,’ he jokes with her (1980: 34), and it is not difficult to draw parallels between the Bushman woman (sic) Jacobus Coetzee keeps ‘pegged out’ waiting for his pleasure (1974: 61), and this ‘girl’ (sic) around whom the Magistrate ‘prowls’ (1980:27).

Similar to the photographs that Eugene Dawn tries to connect with, she is impenetrable. The girl is a symbol he attempts to decipher, and he tries in vain to recapture a vision of her wholeness, before she was tortured, as ‘a child ... in a universe somewhere far away’. But he cannot recover the ideal image of the ‘other’, ‘strain as [he] will’ (1980: 33). In Eugene Dawn’s description of the US’s attempted penetration of Vietnam, the ‘other’ withers before the Master figure: ‘our nightmare was that since whatever we reached for slipped like smoke through our fingers ... whatever we embraced wilted ... like everything else they [the Vietnamese] withered before us’ (1974: 18). By contrast, it is now the Magistrate, the imperial figure who ‘withers: his hunting impulse to penetrate, possess, destroy has died, and he cannot penetrate her, for in the middle of the act, the erotic impulse, if that is what it has been, withers’ (1980: 37).

The Magistrate is a hunter who cannot hunt, a sexual predator who cannot penetrate, a servant of Empire who no longer believes in its thrust beyond the frontier of ‘self’, or its othering of barbarians and fisher folk and the natural environment:

> With this woman it is as if there is no interior, only a surface across which I hunt back and forth seeking entry. Is this how her torturers felt hunting their secret, whatever they thought it was? For the first time I feel a dry pity for them: how natural a mistake to believe that you can burn or tear or hack your way into the secret body of the other (1980: 43).

Severing ties with Empire means that he is treated as ‘other’ himself, as enemy, as animal, as wild beast, as Barbarian. He is tortured, dressed in women’s clothing or left to roam the courtyard naked, and thrown scraps, like an animal. He describes himself as a ‘beast’ (1980: 125), ‘a dog’, and he is made to do tricks for the amusement of the soldiers (1980: 116):

> I, the old clown who lost his last vestige of authority the day he spent hanging from a tree in a woman's underclothes shouting for help, the filthy creature who for a week licked his food off the flagstones like a dog ... I live like a starved beast at the back door, kept alive perhaps only as evidence of the animal that skulks within every barbarian-lover (1980: 136).

He is shown what it is like to be a body, to feel pain, and to understand viscerally what it means to be an animal. If pain is truth, then the Magistrate has become enlightened: ‘We are the great miracle of creation!’ he says. ‘We crush insects beneath our feet, miracles of creation too, beetles, worms, cockroaches, ants, in their various ways’ (1980: 107). Any sentient being, in other words, if it is capable of feeling pain, demands our empathy and deserves its dignity.⁶

**The Novel as Problem**
If Coetzee’s novels pose problems and offer solutions, and if *Dusklands* sets up the solution to the self-enclosed, isolated consciousness, then it is *Waiting for the Barbarians* which provides a sense of the way out of this philosophical impasse. Coetzee’s third novel takes its title from the nineteenth century Greek poet C.P. Cavafy’s poem, ‘Waiting for the Barbarians’ and it is this poem which provides the clue to what may be the ‘solution’ to male colonial self-consciousness:

> Because it is night and the barbarians have not come  
> And some men have arrived from the frontiers  
> And they say that barbarians don’t exist any longer.  
> And what will become of us without barbarians?  
> They were a kind of solution (1966: 11-12).

If ‘the barbarians are some kind of solution’, then Coetzee’s narrative project not only explores Cartesian consciousness and the inability of the ‘self’ to reach the ‘other’, but ways in which this chasm between human and nonhuman, between ‘us and them’ can be breached. And if pain is truth, then empathising with another being’s suffering is a way to break this impasse; as Josephine Donovan argues, the suffering body is an ‘epistemological touchstone’ (2004: 3), a point of authenticity that is immune in a sense to scepticism, to doubt. It is not consciousness that is ‘real’ and all else subject to doubt, but ‘the body with its pain [that] becomes a counter to the endless trials of doubt. Not grace, then, but at least the body’ (Coetzee in Attwell, 1992: 248).

Susan Onega in ‘Trauma, Shame and Ethical Responsibility for the Death of the Other’ (2011) speaks of the trajectory in Coetzee’s novel of taking moral responsibility for ‘other people’s pain’. But if the very act of narration (interrogation of the truth) is an act of violence against the ‘other’, then how can healing occur? ‘It has not escaped me,’ says the Magistrate, ‘that an interrogator can wear two masks, speak with two voices, one harsh, one seductive (7) … the distance between myself and her torturers, I realise, is negligible’ (27).

**Techne**

> When the earth conspires incestuously with her sons, should our recourse not be to the goddess of techne who springs from our brains? (Coetzee 1974: 23).

Whereas consciousness in the early hunter-protagonists is seen as ‘techne’, a self-to-self relation, cut off from its surroundings of the ‘other’ and delivers a hunting narrative that destroys, obliterates, silences the other narrative in the hands of Coetzee’s later characters (the hunted) becomes an empathetic connection to the other. If the Magistrate is unable to articulate his empathy through his self-enclosed monologue, but can by the power of imagination, through dreams, visualise a ‘whole’ barbarian ‘girl’, then Coetzee is suggesting that it is through art and narrative in particular that the issues can be resolved.

`The Lives of Animals’ which is not only an argument for empathy, or a narrative articulated in the flawed and weak voice of Elizabeth Costello, but is also an argument for fiction as an alternative discourse to rational logic, a ‘solution’ to the problem of Cartesian self-enclosed discourse. And it is this narrative that mirrors the author’s concern that narrative (fiction) is an effective tool to bridge the Cartesian divide between ‘self’ and ‘other’:

Costello’s plea for imaginative intervention is an argument for the effectiveness of fictional discourse to make another kind of critical analysis ... Pathos, sympathy and living into the consciousness of Elizabeth Costello enables us to understand her argument more fully, which is to live imaginatively into the lives of other animals. The argument made by Costello and her author then is for a fictional, imaginative approach to the world. How better to argue for the understanding of nonhuman animals’ feelings, pain and interests than narrating the intimacy of a few days of a tired old human animal herself? (Williams 2013: 3).

The disgust which the images presented in *Dusklands* of suffering, tortured human and nonhuman animals deliberately arouse in the reader are mirrored in Costello’s narrative. She expresses disgust at the hunting impulse which has turned both Jewish people into Nazi lampshades, and cattle into meat for human consumption. Her narrative strategy is to cause revulsion in her audience’s attempt to expose the vain attempt to separate ‘selves’ from ‘other’ and to see hunting as normal. The initial visceral reaction of disgust the reader feels when reading *Dusklands* at how animals (both human and nonhuman) are hunted demonstrates the effectiveness of narrative itself to elicit sympathy and create empathy. Whereas the two first-person narratives presented in *Dusklands* are the manifestation of a masculine infliction of *techne* (self-conscious monologue), and the first-person narrative in *Waiting for the Barbarians* is the Magistrate’s unsuccessful attempt to disentangle himself from his Imperial consciousness, Coetzee’s later novels, particularly *Elizabeth Costello and The Lives of Animals*, employ narrative itself as a strategy to extend people’s sympathetic imagination into the realities of ‘other’ animal lives.

**References**


Cavafy, C.P. 1966 ‘Waiting for the Barbarians’, in *Four
John Kinsella,
York, WA

Banded Plover

This is my pyrography and as much of it as I can possess.
The bands concentrating focus on focussing eyes.
An aperture of implication and exchange, skin to feather,
our reptilian origins, their imbrication. Roadside sign
to gently swerve, grasslands of paddocks opening out,
though ploughed and with a stench of superphosphate.

Plover out of my childhood, or plover indifferent to how
many lifespans memory embraces. Days later, I will
close my eyes and conjure you out of darkness, seared
onto tissue in full, startling colour, ready to dash out
into the late autumn to set a different fire, a fire
of mythology and newer patterns of surprise.

End Notes
1. Eugene Dawn insists on ‘the gun as copula’, and observes that
it is a particularly ‘Western’ disease (‘for penetration you need blue
2. Rosemary Jolly’s ‘The Gun as Copula: Colonization, Rape, and
the Question of Pornographic Violence in J.M. Coetzee’s Dusklonds’
analyses how Coetzee’s novel avoids the fantasising activity of
pornographically yoking sex and violence which ‘seduces both author
and reader’.
3. Besides the ironic pun on his name, the ‘dream-space’ through
which David tries to reach the ‘other’ is elaborated on in J.M.
Coetzee’s third novel, Waiting for the Barbarians, in which the protagonist, the
Magistrate, attempts liberation from his divided self in a sequence of
dreams.
4. Ironically the ‘immense world of delight’ referred to here is William
Blake’s Romantic notion of Nature’s inaccessibility to ‘Man’: ‘How do
you know but every bird that cuts the airy way, is an immense world
of delight, closed by your senses five?’ (1984:97) and thus makes the
connection of the Hottentot to the animal/other.
5. If a being suffers, there can be no moral justification for refusing to
take that suffering into consideration. No matter what the nature of the
being, the principle of equality requires that its suffering be counted
equally with the like suffering – in so far as rough comparisons can be
6. Hamilton’s “The Meaning of Suffering” (2005) analyses the
relationship between the body and the ‘event’ of pain that circulates
upon it, that insists on its corporeality.

7. Disgrace sets up the ‘problem of sex’ and characters in the novel
attempt to ‘solve’ this problem. Disgrace offers a continuation of this
re-education of the colonising subject, of the hunter who becomes
the hunted. Like the Magistrate, David Lurie is the hunter/ predator
of dark skinned young women. His student Melanie’s ‘capture/ rape
is described in terms of the hunt: ‘As though she had decided to go
slack, die within herself for the duration, like a rabbit when the jaws of
the fox close in on its neck’ (1999: 25). But like the Magistrate, Lurie
experiences a quick reversal of fortunes, and becomes the hunted
animal himself, the ‘other’ that does not belong in the modern world:
‘they [the press] circle around him like hunters who have cornered a
strange beast and do not know how to finish it off’ (1999: 55-56). And
like the Magistrate too, Lurie learns lessons about what is means to
be a dog, to die like a dog, and to watch his daughter attacked like an
animal. Once awakened to the reality of suffering bodies, he has an
epiphany in which he realises the importance of animal suffering and
of human communion with this pain in a community of suffering beings.

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Animals and the Question of Literature

ISOBEL KARREMMANN

This essay considers the social function of literature in the light of the current debate on animal rights. It argues that not only is this debate conducted in the realm of literary texts, it is a debate that raises important questions about the value and uses of fiction. While this question is arguably as old as literature itself, and while there can obviously be no single answer, the debates and definitions it engenders at any given moment may be taken as symptomatic of a society’s ethical and political condition. One particularly virulent issue today seems to be that of human-animal relations, at least judging by the number of novels and essayistic works published recently that deal with this topic.

What is the social function of literature? This question is arguably as old as literature itself, and different cultures and epochs have produced a plethora of responses since Aristotle’s Poetics. While there can obviously be no single answer, the debates and definitions it engenders at any given moment may be taken as symptomatic of a society’s ethical and political condition. More often than not, however, the question of literature’s role is not addressed directly but approached through other issues that are perceived as socially relevant. One particularly virulent issue today\(^1\) seems to be that of human-animal relations, at least judging by the number of novels and essayistic works published recently that deal with this topic.\(^2\) I therefore take ‘the question of the animal’ (Derrida 2008), as it is termed in the emerging field of cultural animal studies, as indicative of ‘the question of literature’ that I wish to pursue here.

In so doing I am neither interested in how literature might have been employed in the historical emergence of animal rights (cf. Perkins 2003, Simons 2002) nor in the question of how it might provide a critical comment on the discourse of animal rights itself (cf. Anker 2011), although both will be reflected on in the following. Rather, my concern is with how the question of the animal allows us to raise questions about the function and value of literature today. I will do so by looking at two texts that seem to follow a similar agenda and employ similar fictionalising strategies yet occupy very different positions within the field of animal rights literature: John Maxwell Coetzee’s The Lives of Animals (1999) and Jonathan Safran Foer’s Eating Animals (2009). Taking the cue from Marjorie Garber’s early response to what had originally been a lecture by Coetzee, I will consider two problems. The first more general one is how the form of these texts – that is, their literary quality, rhetorical devices, narrative structure – relate to their content, the treatment of animals by humans. In this regard my article is something of a companion piece to Robert McKay’s essay, which also proceeds from the recognition that while ‘human-animal relations form its thematic core’, what makes The Lives of Animals so interesting is its ‘experimental metafictional form [that] brings the full potential of literary method to meet the ethical demands that animals place upon us’ (McKay 2010: 67). While McKay reads Coetzee’s novella as ‘an exposition of that elusive question [of how] we use literature to think our ethical relation to the animal in a way that responds to the animal’s otherness’ (69), rather than, say, anthropomorphising them, my aim here is to gauge the challenge that thinking our ethical relation to animals poses for literature. In other words, I am interested in how representing the animal’s otherness pushes the limits of literary methods and how this challenge to literary representation might also question our ideas about human-animal relations. My method of comparing two thematically and formally similar texts will, I hope, clarify the productive, creative potential of that challenge.

The second, more specific problem is what Garber calls, quoting Sigmund Freud, ‘“the seduction of an analogy” [as] a matter that goes straight to the heart of the humanities and of literary and cultural studies’ (Garber 1999: 80-81). Suggesting analogies, drawing parallels, and making metaphors is one of the most basic literary operations. In particular, animal similes may have been among the first metaphors of humankind, as John Berger has argued (2009: 16). Many contemporary animal narratives, by contrast, exhibit ‘the widespread failure of metaphor to regulate aesthetic along with political forms of agency’ (McHugh 2011: 176). Especially ‘meat animals have become a locus of metaphor perceived in crisis’ (175). This failure of metaphor comes in the shape of a specific analogy, employed mainly in animal rights discourse: the analogy between the murdered Jews of...
Europe and slaughtered cattle. The Holocaust as an event that is deemed beyond analogy by many, Garber points out, nevertheless has become a staple of animal activism. This fact does not only raise ethical concerns but also questions about the very use of the literary form regarding this content that is beyond representation. If the Holocaust is the ‘ground zero’ of the fictional or the poetic, then this is precisely the point at which we can begin to ask questions about literature.

‘In these two elegant lectures we thought John Coetzee was talking about animals’, Garber muses in conclusion: ‘Could it be, however, that all along he was really asking, “What is the value of literature?”’ (1999: 84). It is in this sense that I adapt her suggestion that ‘[t]he genre of these lectures, then, is metafiction’ (79), fiction about the conditions, functions and limits of fiction. Reading Lives of Animals and Eating Animals for the comments they offer or allow us to make about literature, my article contributes to an emerging turn to aesthetics within a field that has been and still is dominated by ethics (or, in its more problematic form, by morality). I do so from the conviction that these do not pose either-or options but that only by considering literary form and theme together we can meet ‘the challenge of animal ethics’ (McKay 2010: 67).

The Lives of Animals is the published manuscript of the Tanner Lectures given by Coetzee at Princeton University in 1997-98. Coetzee’s double-lecture imagines a fictional lecture delivered by Elizabeth Costello, an Australian novelist at an American college that might well be Princeton. Her hosts at Appleton College had hoped she would speak about herself and her writing; yet to their consternation, she chooses to speak rather about the abuse of animals, which she views as ‘a crime of stupefying proportions’ (1999: 69). Her lecture, as well as the debate and seminar attached to it, is framed by an account of the opposition and criticism Costello’s opinions meet from her academic audience. This frame narrative is rendered from the point of view of Elizabeth Costello’s son John Bernard, who teaches physics at Appleton College. One of John’s first responses seems to place his mother’s lecture into reliable perspective for us:

His mother is entitled to her convictions, he believes. If she wants to spend her declining years making propaganda against cruelty to animals, that is her right. In a few days, blessedly, she will be on her way to her next destination, and he will be able to get back to his work (17).

Dismissing his mother’s talk as propaganda, however, misses the point that Costello – and through her, Coetzee – wishes to make. To be sure, her talk does have a polemic element which surfaces in particular in the analogy she draws between the mass-slaughter of animals and the genocide of Jews in the concentration camps:

‘They went like sheep to the slaughter’. ‘They died like animals.’ ‘The Nazis butchered them’. Denunciation of the camps reverberate so fully with the language of the stockyard and slaughterhouse that it is barely necessary for me to prepare the ground for the comparison I am about to make. The crime of the Third Reich, says the voice of accusation, was to treat people like animals (20).

This analogy, as familiar as it is deeply problematic, meets with harsh criticism from her listeners, especially the Jewish poet-in-residence Abraham Stern, who rejects it as ‘a trick with words I will not accept [...] The inversion insults the memory of the dead. It also trades on the horrors of the camps in a cheap way’ (49). But Costello herself is the first to admit that she engages in ‘cheap point-scoring’ (22) here, and to acknowledge its danger of antagonising people. She explicitly distances herself from the polemical stance typical of animal rights propaganda: ‘I want to find a way of speaking to fellow human beings that will be cool rather than heated, philosophical rather than polemical, that will bring enlightenment rather than seeking to divide us into the righteous and the sinners, the saved and the damned, the sheep and the goats’ (22).

Her lecture is the attempt to find a language to express her concerns – yet this attempt, as all the academic philosophers present agree, is an utter failure. ‘Not her metier, argumentation,’ John muses at the end of her lecture. ‘She should not be here’ (36). What the fictional audience misses entirely, however, is that Costello’s talk – which, by the way, is in fact ‘perfectly clear, coherent, and compelling’, as McKay notes (2010: 76) – employs philosophical language and concepts in order to mount a thorough critique of a specific brand of philosophy: the philosophical tradition that offers a very narrow, exclusive definition of humanity in terms of our capacity for reason, language, and consciousness. It is this narrow definition of humanity that has historically become the basis for the admittedly very selective granting of human rights.

In animal rights propaganda, too, it is these ultimately confining criteria which are applied to animals by way of analogy: animals, the argument goes, should be treated well because they too have a certain capacity for rational thinking, for learning language, for consciousness. While we slowly begin to see that these claims might in fact be true, what is problematic about this logic of analogy is that within this type of framework, animals are entitled to rights only to the degree that they resemble the human, reinforcing the priority of a limited collection of values’ (Anker, 2011: 170). When animal rights advocates employ the language of rights, then, they do two things that are ideologically and ethically suspect: For one,
they affirm a legal-philosophical ideal of the subject entitled to rights that is based on an exclusionary bias in terms of gender, race, class and other hierarchies – just think of the declarations of human rights made in Enlightenment Europe and Northern America: the rights granted there were restricted to a very small group of human beings, namely white, propertied, adult males, while women, children, slaves and the poor were tacitly excluded from the category of the human entitled to such privilege. Secondly, the notion of animal rights likewise seems applicable only to a small group of animals – those that share with us ‘human’ capacities. By defining them in humanist terms of reason, language and self-consciousness, the animal rights discourse tends to disregard the specificity of animals’ existence: animals are viewed in terms of how human they are. Thus the rhetoric of animal rights ‘inadvertently reinscribes the priority of the human in its very defence of the capacity of animals for humanlike interaction’ (Anker, 2011: 175).

Costello explicitly refers to both implications in her rejection of this discourse and in particular of the logic of analogy (McHugh 2011: 177). When the Appleton philosopher O’Heare points out that the animal rights movement is ‘yet another Western crusade against the practices of the rest of the world, claiming universality for what are simply its own […] very recent, very Western, and even very Anglo-Saxon’ standards, Costello agrees and adds that she ‘would first want to interrogate the whole question of rights and how we come to possess them’ (62). She challenges the faulty analogy of human and animal rights because of its exclusionary, assimilating stance: ‘The question to ask’, she says:

should not be: Do we have something in common – reason, self-consciousness, a soul – with other animals? (With the corollary that, if we do not, then we are entitled to treat them as we like, imprisoning them, killing them, dishonouring their corpses) (34).

We should not regard animals in terms of what they share with humans; we should consider rather what humans share with all living beings. And what we share is, in Costello’s view, the condition of ‘embodiedness, the sensation of being […]. of being a body with limbs that have extension in space, of being alive to the world’ (33). This is what we have in common with all living creatures, and it forms an alternative basis for our ethical, responsible treatment of animals. No ethical treatment can be founded on the kinds of abstractions that characterise both the discourse of animal rights and philosophical reasoning: ‘It is because agitation for animal rights, including the right to life, is so abstract that I find it unconvincing and, finally, idle,’ she says (65). Instead, it is the shared experience of embodiment which allows us to imaginatively identify and sympathise with other beings: ‘The heart is the seat of a faculty, sympathy, that allows us to share at times the being of another,’ Costello claims (34). This ‘sympathetic imagination’ (35) should be the basis for an ethical treatment of others, be they human or nonhumans.

This alternative way of thinking about human-animal relations calls for an alternative way of speaking, and the novelist Costello finds it, not surprisingly, in literature and poetic language: it is the proper medium of the ‘sympathetic imagination’ (35). It would seem that we have come full circle, to the Romantic period that employed the language of sympathy in its call for animal rights; but Costello’s vision of the sympathetic imagination is radically different in that it rejects the sympathetic fallacy of the Romantic debate about animal rights. There, it was a matter of speaking for the other; here, it is a matter of speaking to the other; there, identification proceeded from an anthropomorphic bias that projected human traits onto animals, rendering them humanlike; but Costello’s ‘sympathetic imagination’ aims at ‘sharing the being of another’ that is emphatically nonhuman. The kind of poetry able to achieve this is one ‘that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with him’ (51).

Costello thus moves in her talk from the polemical stance of animal rights advocates, which she rejects, to an analysis of the philosophical prejudices that underpin rights discourse, and finally, to a poetic language of sympathetic imagination that constitutes both a critique of the language of rights and offers an alternative to it. But if she finds that alternative expression in literature, why did she not stick to ‘her métier’ (36) from the start? This question applies as well to Coetzee himself and the hybrid form of his text: Why did he not stick to fiction, instead of presenting his readers with this exasperating amalgam of poetry, polemic and philosophy?

One possible answer is that if the lectures – both Costello’s and Coetzee’s – had been written in clearly identifiable literary language, an opportunity would have been lost: the opportunity to ‘negotiate the representational problems of animals’ (McHugh 2006: np). Moreover, the metafictional nature of this lecture-within-a-lecture directs our attention to its own status as a comment about the power as well as the limits of language, be it polemic, philosophical or literary. As Susan Anker observes, ‘the very ambiguity and even discomfort inspired by Costello’s intellectual meanderings, along with the text’s unnervingly disjointed form, are what render it instructive for charting the dilemmas involved in our different ways of speaking about and to animals (2011: 184). And through this highlighting of narrative form, Lives of Animals ‘brings the discussion back to the consideration of the aesthetic conditions of engagement with nonhuman life’ (McHugh 2011: 178).
The argument is not that literature is categorically better than philosophy, but that we must find better ways of addressing the question of the animal.

The Lives of Animals asserts the power of literature, which lies in sympathetic imagination and identification, that is, in being able to perceive analogies between human beings and animals; yet it also clearly identifies the dangers of this essentially literary operation, embodied in its central scandal of the Holocaust analogy. Jonathan Safran Foer’s Eating Animals is problematic, to say the least, because it is untroubled by the latter. This, too, is a text by a noted contemporary novelist who has turned to the question of animal rights and animal welfare. Foer’s book is a detailed report on the practices of factory farming and commercial fisheries, focusing on the large-scale abuse of animals as well as the deeply problematic side-effects and risks of this business for the environment and for our own health. Like Coetzee’s text, it is a mixture of fictional and non-fictional elements. It is based on facts, meticulously researched and double-checked over the course of three years (2009: 14). What the reader gets – at least that is the author’s claim – are reliable facts about factory farming and its alternatives; facts about the animals we eat as well as about their evolutionary history, their species-specific needs, their genetic makeup; facts about the negative impact of factory farming in the forms of environmental pollution, expanding global corporations, decaying rural communities, the destruction of local infrastructure, the systematic denial of workers’ rights and the impoverishment of global health. These facts are all supported by numbers and statistics and sources referenced in a quite substantial notes-section at the end.

The popular success of the book, however, is not due to its revealing such information. Most of it was officially available long before the publication of Eating Animals: there are many newspaper and magazine articles, academic studies and mass-market books on the topic of factory farming and animal abuse (e.g. Grandin 2008; Pollan 2006; Schlosser 2002; Singer and Mason 2006). What is new and different about Foer’s book is not its content but rather its form, in particular its literary aspects. Most reviews (e.g. Anderson 2009; Kakutani 2009; Rayner 2010; Reynolds 2009) indeed begin by pointing out the author’s fame as a postmodern novelist and note the elements Eating Animals shares with his novels: their typical ‘play with voice and genre, language and typography’ (Kolbert 2009: np) features in Eating Animals through variable focalisers, a glossary of terms, interviews, mock-diary entries, personal vignettes, and the pieces of graphic art introducing each chapter. Yet most reviewers quickly move on to the content of the book, its ethical imperatives and political agenda. By contrast, I suggest that we take its literary dimension seriously and consider how it relates to its content and also (as we shall see) relativises it to some extent.

One of the most notable literary aspects of Eating Animals is its emphasis on the value of stories to render facts meaningful:

Facts are important, but they don’t, on their own, provide meaning – especially when they are so bound to linguistic choices. What does a precisely measured pain response in chickens mean? Does it mean pain? What does pain mean? No matter how much we learn about the physiology of pain – how long it persists, the symptoms it produces, and so forth – none of it will tell us anything definitive. But place facts in a story, a story of compassion or domination, or maybe both – place them in a story about the world we live in and who we are and who we want to be – and you can begin to speak meaningfully about eating animals (2009: 15).

Meaning only emerges from turning facts into a story. And there are many stories in the book: stories told by people in animal agriculture, ranging from managers of factory farms and workers on the killing floor to farmers trying to establish alternative enterprises. These first-person narratives have a confessional tone as people justify their role in meat-production or tell how they became activists against it. Headlines such as ‘I am a factory farmer’ (94), ‘I am the last poultry farmer’ (110) or ‘I am a vegetarian rancher’ (205) suggest that Foer allows different positions to speak for themselves. Others, such as ‘I am a vegan who builds slaughterhouses’ (238), indicate that these positions can be quite complicated and seemingly contradictory, with vegans building slaughterhouses in the attempt to actively change the conditions under which animals are being slaughtered. This introduces an element of incongruity that somewhat alleviates the one-dimensionality of the confessional monologues.

Foer also tells stories about himself, about his family and about how he came to write this book. We learn, for example, of his long on-and-off affair with vegetarianism, which began in his childhood when their vegetarian babysitter told him and his brother Frank that the chicken fingers on their plates actually were chicken, made from a living being. The author further tells us how the birth of his son motivated him to research the topic and turn it into a book. The anticipated necessity of having to answer questions about where our meat comes from, why we eat this and not that, moved Foer to look for better answers, different stories. These stories matter, he claims, because we do not only eat to receive nourishment. Stories do something else besides:

[They] bind our family together, and bind our family to others. Stories about food are stories about us – our history and our values. Within my family’s Jewish tradition, I came to learn that food serves
two parallel purposes: it nourishes and it helps you remember. Eating and storytelling are inseparable – the saltwater is also tears; the honey not only tastes sweet but makes us think of sweetness; the matzo is the bread of our affliction (11-12).

Thus we also learn about his family history, and how it is linked with specific eating habits: Foer stems from a European Jewish family who fled the Holocaust; in particular his grandmother, with whom the book opens, has found in food a way to cope with the memories of the war and to prove to herself that she has survived:

My grandmother survived the War barefoot, scavenging other people’s inedibles: rotting potatoes, discarded scraps of meat, skins, and the bits that clung to bones and pits [...] In the forests of Europe, she ate to stay alive until the next opportunity to eat to stay alive (3).

In America, dinner becomes a way of celebrating survival and keeping the family together, although she is able to cook only one recipe, chicken and carrots. Nevertheless, Foer tells us,

Her culinary prowess was one of the family’s primal stories, like the cunning of the grandfather I never met, or the single fight of my parents’ marriage. We clung to those stories and depended on them to define us (4-5).

Perhaps the most powerful passage of the entire book is his grandmother’s story about her escape from Nazi Germany, her whole being reduced to running, snatching only short pauses for eating – if there was any food. Near to starvation after weeks on the road, a friendly farmer offers the Jewish refugee something to eat. It is a piece of pork. Despite being close to starving, she refuses to eat pork. When her grandson wonders if she would not eat something unkosher even to save her life, she answers: ‘If nothing matters, there’s nothing to save’ (17). This sentence becomes a kind of mantra for the entire book: if nothing matters any more to us, not the food choices we make, not the suffering – both human and animal – involved in producing cheap meat, if we are indifferent to the risks and costs of factory farming – then ‘there’s nothing to save’. In a surprisingly subtle way (surprising when measured against the often straightforwardly moralising rhetoric of the book8), the familiar Holocaust analogy is evoked here to make a point not specifically about animals but about the ‘ground zero’ conditions of humanity and culture.

Eating Animals thus is a strong plea against indifference and for making the right choices. Yet this is perhaps also its weak spot, at least from the perspective of the literary critic: to the extent that the book lends itself to advocacy, it ceases being literature. This is a serious allegation whose definitional crux – how do we determine when a fictional text falls short of being ‘literature’? – needs substantial reinforcement. Foer’s text provides its own criterion of what literature can and should do. From the start, Eating Animals asserts the cultural importance of eating as well as storytelling as rituals for forming collective identities, and it uses stories to challenge our unquestioned assumptions about the way we live and eat and thus define ourselves:

Almost always, when I told someone I was writing a book about ‘eating animals’, they assumed, even without knowing anything about my views, that it was a case for vegetarianism. It’s a telling assumption, one that implies not only that a thorough inquiry into animal agriculture would lead us always from eating meat, but that most people already know that to be the case. (What assumptions did you make upon seeing the title of this book?) (13).

Questioning easy assumptions is not only the aim of Foer’s book, it is also its method: challenging stereotypes, complicating situations, involving us in the process of thinking about our eating choices and the acknowledged reasons or hidden assumptions they are based on.

My point of criticism, however, would be that Foer does not apply this rule to his own text; true, he is very outspoken about his personal reasons, supported by fact or family history, for advocating vegetarianism or at least for buying meat only from local, small producers. Yet the assumptions behind this solution to the problem remain unexamined. Foer writes from a clearly middle-class, well-to-do perspective. He never once addresses the problem that some families might be too poor to buy ‘boutique meat’ (as the rather expensive meat from responsibly raised and slaughtered cattle is called) or organic vegetables, let alone subsist on a vegetarian diet, which necessitates the consumption of more volume per calorie. We can see here the legacy of the kind of middle and upper-class sentimentalism of the Romantic period, which put the suffering of animals on the agenda but turned a blind eye to the suffering of the poor or the needs of the working classes (Perkins 2003: 18).

Thus, while Foer sets out to challenge the unquestioned assumptions underlying the choices we make around food and the economic, political and moral agendas connected with them, he fails to apply the same kind of critical rigour to his own book. To do so would have compromised his aim of advocating vegetarianism and animal rights – yet not to do this compromises, in my view, his position as
a novelist because it ultimately reduces literature to an instrument of propaganda, a vehicle of animal welfare advocacy. By contrast, Coetzee’s Lives of Animals succeeds as a piece of literature precisely because it does not straightforwardly advocate animal rights but rather stages different perspectives on that debate. In so doing, it not only upstages this discourse, drawing attention to some of its problematic ideological foundations and implications, but also offers a new perspective on the old question of the ‘uses and abuses of literature in culture’ (Garber 1999: 83). Coetzee clearly counts among the abuses of literature its instrumentalisation for activism and propaganda: ‘Do you really believe, Mother, that poetry classes are going to close down the slaughterhouses?’; John asks Elizabeth Costello, and his mother responds (defeatedly or defiantly?): ‘No.’ ‘Then why do it?’ (58). His mother has no answer, and neither does Coetzee offer one. It is this persistent questioning, even if we can never arrive at a definitive answer, however, that seems to me one of the most important uses of literature: its social function is not to provide easy answers but to keep raising hard questions about us and the world we live in.

References


End Notes

1. Philip Armstrong usefully identifies the social, political, technological and ecological developments that have given rise to ‘the crises of mid- and late-twentieth century modernity’ (2008: 170-172, 187-189); his chapter on ‘Animal Refugees in the Ruins of Modernity’ explores the thematic scenarios and formal features of contemporary human-animal narratives symptomatic of a deep loss of faith in both the superiority of man and the resilience of nature.

2. A selection merely from the English-speaking world includes Ruth L. Ozeki, My Year of Meat (1998); B. Govey, The White Bone (1998); J.M. Coetzee, Disgrace (1998) and Elizabeth Costello (2003); Michel Faber, Under the Skin (2000); Robyn Williams, 2007 (2001); Margaret Atwood, Oryx and Crake (2003); John Yunker, The Tourist Trail (2010); Sara Gruen, Ape House (2010); Yann Martel, Beatrice and Virgil (2010); T.C. Boyle, When the Killing’s Done (2011).

3. McKay rightly points out that this is a ‘false binary’ (2010: 70) that merely reverses what we both criticise, namely the reduction of literature to a vehicle of animal rights discourse; neither is my focus on the literary features of the texts under discussion meant to reduce the topic of animal-human relations to an occasion for thinking about literature, but to explore this issue as a productive challenge to literature and literary criticism.

4. Other examples of this ‘aesthetic turn’ in literary animal studies include Susan McHugh’s study Animal Stories (2011), that considers twentieth-century narratives of human-animal relations, and Thomas Pughe’s article about the eco-poetics of Lives of Animals that explores how ‘aesthetic discourse can be said to do “ecological work” ‘(Pughe 2011: 379).

5. For ideas on John as an unreliable narrator, the effect this eminently literary device has on our perception of the animal rights issue at stake, as well as the deliberate blurring of the textual boundaries between Coetzee and Costello, see McKay (2010: 72-76, 77-80), who sees these techniques contributing to ‘a form of representation that might persuade us of the need for moral change without sourcing that representation in an intentional subject who does the persuading’ (79).


7. I am aware of the different aims pursued by animal welfare and animal rights activists (cf. Sunstein 2004); yet as this is a difference with regard to political content, and my argument here is one about literary form, I neglect it here.

8. Elsewhere, Foer falls prey to the ‘temptation of an analogy’ when he short-circuits recent events in American history that weigh heavily on the nation’s conscience to raise consciousness of and support against animal suffering: Kakutani criticises that Foer ‘talks about “the shame” he felt as an American tourist in Europe when “photos of Abu Ghraib proliferated” and then speaks in the very next sentence about the “shame in being human: the shame of knowing that 20 of those 35 classified species of sea horse worldwide are threatened with extinction because they are killed “unintentionally” in seafood production’ (2009: np).

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Frog Declarative

Near the northernmost tip of their ‘range’, pinpoint of habitat, yellow-flanked burrowing frogs have burst into presence on the floor of the valley where heavy runs have disturbed stale red earth and brought bloody-white flow to the channel carved through granite; the contra-indicative hoots of owls we hear most nights — no imitation with no human in their owl-talk — working forlorn lost-soul messages for we know not what. Instead, full choir — no, that reeks of the mating brawl of emergence, and the boosted buzz of the humming frog carrying uplands further than it should, and the squelch of Gunther’s toadlet dragging itself over rocks. Rather, all varieties in this vicinity cross-talking, honed as erosion, honed as the will to spawn and call out about it. Water doesn’t hold long in channel in its tilt to brook and river, but long enough in pools for follow-up rains to have a say. Frogs in decline are shouting out for the slightest depth, frogs in decline declare their willingness to co-operate.

John Kinsella,
York, WA

Bush Thanatos

Paint a colourfield of furs or pieces to shorten the life of canvas;

hangdog look
moon on tips of needles: quills

pray or curse by, rouse up old gods to find ‘file not found’;

call of the wild versus ‘call of the wild’;

kudos service apogaeum;

love urge to decorate semi-nuptial beds;

skite bounty unto vixen and kits, make heart of sleeve;

bloody bush of tail though blood runs to snout with hanging.

John Kinsella,
York, WA
True Love and the Nonhuman: Shakespeare’s dog Crab and the animal/human connection

LESLEY KORDECKI

Artistically, we have ‘invented’ animals in countless ways, mostly exploitative, but every now and then nonhumans surprise us with their lessons. Crab, the aptly named dog in Shakespeare’s play, The Two Gentlemen of Verona, is in a sense a major character, and the only animal to be so in Shakespeare’s canon. He is companion to the clown, Lance, and is the recipient/auditor of two delightfully quirky and radically enlightening monologues. Crab’s name covers a wide swath in the Chain of Being: Crab stands as the ‘sour apple’, fruit or tree, as well as the backward scuttling crustacean. Hamlet famously informs Polonius that he would be as old as he is, ‘if, like a crab, you could go backward’ (Hamlet 2.2.202), and in this earlier comedy, we have a fully reified ‘Crab’ complete with his own sense of self, leaving Lance, his master, more fitting as a ‘backward’ going crab. Finally, Crab is humanised as Lance’s ‘crabby’ companion. I examine how this friendship becomes one of the most poignant and disturbing in a work that satirises conventional human love affairs. The play deftly exposes human failure in love, even to the extent of having the traditional happy ending marred by the supposedly faithful lover, Valentine. Valentine offers Proteus, his best buddy, the woman whom Proteus minutes before attempted to rape. Two Gentlemen is notorious for this troublesome, not to say offensive, ending.

… better to be raised by wolves than to dream that people are enough. where’s the dimension of doing when a world spawning in its own dark ponds is ignored?

if animals didn’t exist, we’d have to invent them.

— Alvin Greenberg

This essay’s purpose is not to present an introduction to the abundant and radical findings of recent critical animal studies. Here, with the help of Baudrillard, Deleuze and Guattari, Derrida, Chaudhuri, Haraway, Baker, among others, I would like to demonstrate that such theories help us see our own human shortcomings when we note how an almost neglected canine character in a little known Shakespearean play can provide an insightful look at interspecies ‘love’. This reading becomes especially useful in light of the comedy’s particular configuration of that elusive and possibly undefinable emotion.

To begin, my title’s assertion about ‘true love’ proves rather cynical, especially since the etymology of ‘cynical’ invokes a dog-like, certainly crab-like origin. It implies that the bond between the human Lance and his dog Crab in all its flaws surpasses the faulty and even criminal ‘love’ of the various male humans in the play. But this nimble comparison is not entirely accurate. True, the love affairs of Proteus and Julia, Proteus and Silvia, Valentine and Silvia, and even Lance and his future bride, whom he describes perfunctorily, as we will see, all leave reason to doubt true love’s existence. The plot sacrifices ardour to the reality of human perfidy, evidenced in Proteus, as his name portends, superficiality in Valentine, as his iconic name signals, and expediency in Lance, notwithstanding his name, a shortened form of the legendary romantic lover, Lancelot. We will see that the true love of Lance is not for some cartooned milkmaid, but for his dog, Crab, a union constituting a genuine and altogether different kind of tenderness.

On the other hand, in spite of (literally) Lance’s exquisitely articulated devotion to him, unpleasant Crab remains, like most animals in our art forms, explicitly or implicitly used. He is a flagrant sign of the human instrumentality of the nonhuman, now with an actual canine straining against the artificiality of the stage, literally straining in most productions at the end of a leash to disentangle himself from the haranguing human, and hence a distinctly performative reminder of the alterity of the other. No longer serving as some abstract metaphor for the deficiency of humanity, as with most canine metaphors in Shakespeare, this dog simultaneously denotes both the beloved and the perverse. Donna Haraway, a shrewd theorist of the encounter between human and animal (2008), writes specifically of the ‘implosion of nature and culture in the relentlessly historically specific, joint lives of dogs and people, who are bonded in significant otherness’ (2003:16).
Thus, *Two Gentlemen* produces a strange interspecies resonance, infrequent but not absent in drama, a quality that converts a common animal act into something wholly altered. We know that the Crab/Lance scenes have, as Richard Beadle explains, a ‘pedigree’, perhaps stemming from the dog-clown act of early modern performer Richard Tarlton (1994:13), an act that culminates a long tradition of medieval clowns and their dogs on stage. Medieval as well as early modern texts have a complex history of imagining animals and even projecting speech onto them as recent literary criticism is affirming. Shakespeare may well have drawn from these successful conventions. Erica Fudge, bolstered by her ample and noteworthy studies of the early modern animal (2000), believes Crab represents the animal Wild (2008: 194). Jeanne Addison Roberts’ pioneer ecofeminist work on the Wild in Shakespeare traces a separation of human and animal, with the demotion of the barbarous nonhuman in both characters and events of the plays, and the metaphoric allusions throughout (1991: 77). Further, critics of *Two Gentlemen* often comment on how Crab is ‘othered’ in the play, both because of his inability or refusal to cry and later in his nonhuman and embarrassing behaviour under the Duke’s table.

But critical animal studies offer us a new and powerful vocabulary for reading Crab, despite his appearance in a Renaissance play, for theory often makes available a process of perception, no matter when the writing. I argue that we can more fully comprehend the dog if we look at Crab, an early modern animal performance, purposely and strategically as what we now call a postmodern animal, wherein we can reconfigure the duo of Lance and Crab as breaking the boundaries separating human and nonhuman. Una Chaudhuri borrows the useful term ‘postmodern animal’ (2010: 507) to interpret the strange animal references at the end of *Far Away*, a play by postmodern playwright, Caryl Churchill. Originally this creature is classified by Steve Baker as the animal appearing and deconstructing the binary of human/animal in postmodern art (2000); here we can employ it to help us see the potential of the nonhuman in theatre. Without saying a word, Crab becomes a defining character in the play, challenging the early modern and subsequent modernist (and often detrimental) hierarchy of human over animal. The scenes fuse into a ‘becoming-animal’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 240-248) moment for the human, but a vividly resistant one for the dog. Chaudhuri characterises this sort of interplay as ‘simultaneously fragmenting and conjoining, simultaneously creating and destroying unities, simultaneously producing continuity and separation’ (2010: 509). The acute sensitivities of Shakespeare reveal that the emotional interplay between human and animal that we now articulate as ‘postmodern’ can be seen to be with us all along.

Impressively, Crab’s stoical, possibly cynical presence undercuts the banal accusations of his clearly adoring master, and he operates no longer as a simple metaphor for the human, for the monologue scenes become something almost uncanny on the stage. Bruce Boehrer tells us that they ‘serve a kind of theatrical black hole: a spot in the play where all role-playing stops’ (2002: 160-161). He points out that the ‘actor’ dog employed to represent Crab ‘simply isn’t acting’ (2002: 164). The dog’s non-civilised essence, perpetually reinforced by our habits of language in which animals are negatively contrasted to humans, now appears *within* our cultural artifice, a silent dog stealing the show, usurping the highly controlled artistic fabrication in front of us. His very unconcern for Lance’s wishes ironically deconstructs the play, the cultural representation of human desire. Productions cannot control the animal like the human actors, and in this way, Shakespeare has devised a nonhuman element that humorously authenticates his verbal construct.

Something more is happening, however, that is even more radical and more sly. Marjorie Garber tells us that the relationship between Lance and Crab is one of the real attachments in the play (2004: 52-55). The text’s seemingly tame sentimentalising of the union draws out a startling truth, for Lance’s comments to his dog constitute both sincere and hilarious emotion in a play dedicated to socially acceptable and yet posturing human bonds. As opposed to introducing a meaningless farcical act of clown and dog, these scenes with Crab can be read as raising the comedic convention to one that questions the solipsism of humanity altogether.

In his first appearance, Crab, as servant, accompanies his master, Lance, himself the servant/other of Proteus, while Lance muses mournfully over his dog’s inability to partake in the human sorrow of his impending departure from Verona. With no other person on the stage, Lance says: ‘I think Crab my dog be the sourest-natured dog that lives’ (2.3.4-5). Despite the whole family’s weeping, ‘yet did not this cruel-hearted cur shed one tear. He is a stone, a very pebblestone, and has no more pity in him than a dog’ (2.3.8-10), which of course he is. As clarification for the audience or as punitive discipline for the recalcitrant canine (with ‘Nay, I’ll show you the manner of it’ (2.3.13)), Lance melodramatically casts a miniature play with family members represented by his shoes, staff, and hat, ultimately to reveal his bitter disappointment in Crab’s lacklustre response to his leaving. The weight of the scene depends upon its enactment on stage. The written dog must become incarnated in front of us, apathetic to his master. To heighten the theatricality, Shakespeare has Lance construct an extemporaneous play within this play. The makeshift little drama becomes confused, as Lance, the backward crab, says ‘This hat is Nan our maid. I am the dog. No, the dog is himself, and I am the dog. O, the dog is me, and I am myself. Ay, so, so’ (2.3.18-29).
In actual performances, the dog representing Crab naturally refuses to cry and rarely responds. For example, in the 2003 Shakespeare on the Green production (see Figure 1 photo), Marge the dog at one point actually thrusts her rump, first at Lance and then at the audience, all unrehearsed. Lance's dramatic ineptitude barely conceals the meta-theatrical issue at hand: the muddled casting ('the dog is me, and I am myself'), creates an identification of man with dog and arguably a demonstration of the man's love for him.

Although Lance berates his indifferent beloved for his lack of tears, most humans deny animals this ability. Intriguingly, some are now granting nonhuman emotion, as in When Elephants Weep: The Emotional Lives of Animals by Jeffrey Moussieff Masson and Susan McCarthy (1995: 105-110). But why should Crab cry, even if he could? Unlike Lance's family, Crab will not be separated from his master since he is to accompany him to Milan, thus providing keen evidence of Lance's devotion, in that he will not leave Crab behind. The dog therefore has no need for tears of separation. Lance's comic speech highlights the nonhuman's nonresponse, this time exhibiting what the man perceives as the canine's flaw, a deficiency not only in discourse, but also in an emotive reaction. More explicitly, it reveals Lance's emotional longing.

But the scene offers more. It serves as some kind of lover's spat, some sort of judgement upon a cherished pet. The rustic Lance is after all a superfluous clown in the play, since Speed fulfils the wise fool's role sufficiently and becomes a foil to the actions of the main plot. So with Lance the play is introducing something new. But the dog in this reading is not the unaffected Julia from the scene before as some contend (Boehrner 2002: 162), nor is he any representation of perfidious Proteus (Fudge 2008: 193; Brooks 1996: 76-77), or the general faithlessness of canines (Tutt 1964: 15-17). He is transformed by the magic of the stage into a realistically impervious beloved, a parody of the conventional Petrarchan model of the rebuffing idol. In performance, Crab is a dog at the end of the leash barely participating in Lance's over-determined passionate display.

Crab's dumbness becomes eloquent, for as we see with many nonhumans, his articulate silence speaks volumes. Chaudhuri reminds us that Jean Baudrillard's 'crucial insight is that the silence of the animals dooms them to a paradoxically vociferous fate: since they will not speak, they are ceaselessly spoken, cast into a variety of discursive registers, endlessly troped' (2010: 511). We are reminded of Jacques Derrida, in a late writing, famously brooding on the gaze of his cat, on the creature's inability to respond as we/he would like, and on the mute judgement of the nonhuman (2008: 12).

In the same text, Baudrillard also asserts that animal silence 'analyses us' (1994: 138), which is precisely what happens in that instant in Two Gentlemen. Shakespeare works this relationship into ostensibly light-hearted scenes. Remarkably, Crab, as dog on the stage, stands as primal defiance of troping and a present and awkward corrective to the derogation of the animal. He magnificently and wordlessly endures as Lance upbraid his hard-heartedness, a quality rehearsed often in the play by the faithless Proteus. The similarity between human and dog ends there, for Crab never overtly betrays Lance as Proteus does Julia. He simply is a dog, a creature adept at eliciting and exhibiting affection, but one incapable here, for whatever reason – maybe he is less taken with Lance than Lance is with him – of fulfilling Lance's expectations. As such, he demonstrates, without loss of identity, how animals are uncompliant instruments of our metaphoric ethics. Crab may indeed be a 'good' dog, even a loving one to Lance, just not willing or able to respond humanly to his master’s requirements. This results in Lance's identity crisis, his painful (although amusing) assimilation into Crab ('I am the dog'), for he becomes the 'sour' crab (apple) or backward treading crustacean, whereas his dog, with often dignified nonchalance, appears unaffected by the accusations launched at him. Lance becomes animal here, and Crab is as inscrutable as Derrida's cat.

Later, Lance has another grievance against his darling that complicates and enriches the human/animal union further. Now, although Lance feels forced to relinquish Crab as a gift to a strong-minded Silvia, fruitlessly beloved by the disloyal Proteus (one of the paradoxically titulary Gentlemen), the offer of Crab, the unsuitable dog, is refused, and as it turns out, for good reason. Lance's second lengthy monologue, a superb theatrical moment, delineates how he protects the 'ungrateful' Crab by substituting himself for the dog and his offensive...
smell. Once again Lance dramatises Crab’s offstage transgressions, this time without props and casting, but most likely in actual performance with pointedly droll gestures targeted at an unmoved and unmoveable canine. Before he relates the details, he stresses the performative aspects of his story with ‘You shall judge’ (4.4.15-16), aimed perhaps at both audience and dog, and then relates yet another small drama, this time with dialogue.

But why would Lance offer his pet to Silvia? True, the lapdog meant for her is stolen, but as we discover, Crab is a poor replacement. The substitution apparently reflects Lance’s inappropriate esteem of his uncivilised dog, since the story reveals Crab’s questionable odour and uncontrolled peeing. Lance may be acting on hurt feelings at his dog’s alleged heartlessness in Act 2. The traffic of dogs strangely foreshadows that of Silvia in Valentine’s infamous offer to Proteus at the end of the play: ‘All that was mine in Silvia I give thee’ (5.4.84), as Garber reminds us (2004: 55). Valentine proffers his beloved Silvia to Proteus just as Lance volunteers his beloved Crab to Silvia. But before we once again make the dog a simple symbol for a human, we might retain his dogginess a bit longer.

The sourness of Crab in both these scenes constitutes more than comic displays, since it conjures up a rejection familiar to all who abase themselves in the love and admiration of the nonhuman capturing their hearts. Lance begins by poignantly lamenting, ‘When a man’s servant shall play the cur with him, look you, it goes hard: one that I brought up of a puppy; one that I saved from drowning when three or four of his blind brothers and sisters went to it. I have taught him even as one would say precisely, ’Thus I would teach a dog’ (4.4.1-6). Despite his repetition of ‘dog’, he draws attention to the inadequate humanisation of Crab. He continues after explaining that Crab steals ‘a capon’s leg’ from Silvia’s plate: ‘O, ’tis a foul thing when a cur cannot keep himself in all companies! I would have, as one should say, one that takes upon himself literally in the scene with this reprimand. We see him, as do actors portraying Lance, with his leg raised against an imaginary skirt. The wording of ‘mark me’ wittily reinforces canine urination, since Lance’s monologues attempt to ‘mark’ his ownership over Crab, inadvertently using the word that denotes territorial possession.

But the real power of the speech is that Lance is ineffectively disciplining his favourite, his companion, clearly not abandoning or punishing him. And we must deduce that Crab, despite his ‘offensive behaviour’ remains unrepentant, thoroughly dog, thoroughly other, an unsettling presence in our cultural paradigm and cultural artifice of theatre, one who undermines our desires, all without a word. He remains obdurately a postmodern animal, part of us and yet not, perpetually unhousebroken.

The two monologues are embedded in a context that helps us see their offbeat influence in this story. Shortly before Lance’s second diatribe, and out of nowhere, the clown provides a long digression from the love affairs at hand (those of Valentine and Silvia, Proteus and Silvia, Proteus and Julia) with a peculiar sketch of his own future wife. It takes the form of a question and answer rapid dialogue and Julia) with a peculiar sketch of his own future wife. It takes the form of a question and answer rapid dialogue with the other clown, aptly named Speed, Valentine’s witty and perceptive servant. The conversation elucidates Lance’s perfunctory views of the woman he will marry (3.1.285-351). This exchange of course highlights and parodies the courtly love demonstrated by Valentine and perverted by Proteus. Here, the coarse language has multiple sexual connotations and presents a laughable
description of the useful, lower-class milkmaid with whom Lance is ‘in love’ (3.1.262).

The scene acquires greater import, however, when juxtaposed with Lance’s feelings toward Crab. The disparity between Lance’s relationships with woman and dog cannot be more pronounced. Before Speed arrives, Lance tells us that ‘She hath more qualities than a water-spaniel’ (3.1.267-8), perhaps a reference to Crab himself, now out of favour with Lance. Also, she is favourably compared to a horse, an animal who cannot fetch and carry as well as she can. Upon Speed’s interrogation, Lance reveals that she can be a pragmatic housewife. One of her vices, we find, is that she is ‘slow in words’ (3.1.323-4), and a sexist little repartee ensues wherein the clowns agree that women are deemed better if wordless, like animals, a clear case of ecofeminist parallels in early modern discourse. Further, when described as having no teeth, Lance retorts, ‘Well, the best is, she has no teeth to bite’ (3.1.333). With this he again contrasts her with Crab, although the latter seems singularly non-aggressive to all around him, notwithstanding his anointing of Silvia. Lance’s bride, an unnamed woman, is then forgotten, leading us to regard this scene, as some do those with Crab, as set pieces to be assessed alongside the main plot’s idealisation of love. But if Lance is in love with this milkmaid, as he says, he seems by every action to be more truly enamoured with his shaggy companion for whom he takes a whipping.

Crab is present in another scene, and although not openly addressed, his authority is pronounced either proudly and/or satirically by his master. In 2.5, after the audience realises that Proteus will now defraud both his love to Julia and his friendship to Valentine, Speed welcomes Lance to Milan. He is accompanied by Crab. As they banter about Proteus and his betrothed, Julia, Speed asks Proteus, ‘But shall she marry him?’ (2.5.13). After many puns, mostly obscene, Lance offers, ‘Ask my dog. If he say ‘Ay’, it will; if he say ‘No’, it will; if he shake his tail and say nothing, it will’ (2.5.31-2). Speed replies, ‘The conclusion is, then, that it will’ (2.5.33), since Crab does not say ‘Ay’ or ‘No.’ Lance may even be asserting that his dog will not give any response, as he did earlier when all were crying about him. The silence of the animal says everything, here as in the monologues. In performance, the dog on stage may well not ‘shake his tail,’ since a phlegmatic pooch is nearly always cast for the part to validate Lance’s lines, but this does not seem to affect the conclusion, that Julia and Proteus, after much travail, will wed. Here we see a parodied consultation with the other, entertainingly rendered by the practical demands of the stage that stress that the real dog, the clearly indifferent non-actor, can and will prophesy the accurate outcome of the story. Although the lines seem a harmless bit of comedy based on an apathetic animal, they are salient in their attention to language or the lack thereof. The silent nonhuman other rises above the romantic fray, the artifice of human affection. Lance jokingly credits his beloved Crab with the power to foresee the conclusion of the dilemma at hand. The canine stands not as a phallic and coarse joke about under ‘stand’ ing (2.5.26-29), but as an unpretentious recognition of our delusions and fantasies. And no actor does this better than a nonhuman one.

One final note: shortly following the explicit description of Crab’s inadequacies in Lance’s second monologue, Proteus discovers that Lance had exchanged Crab for the little ‘jewel’ (4.4.46) of a dog he meant for him to present to Silvia. Lance explains that after losing the smaller dog, he proudly offered her ‘mine own, who is a dog as big as ten of yours, and therefore the gift the greater’ (4.4.55-56). He wisely does not elaborate on Crab’s performance in Silvia’s presence, but this does not help his cause. Proteus’ response, ‘Go, get thee hence, and find my dog again, / Or ne’er return again into my sight’ (4.4.57-58), a retort that portends the exit of Lance not only from the scene, but also from the play. Most significant is that Lance is bragging about his dog in this last bit before the two of them depart the stage together. After all their travails, the sight of their companionship is comforting.

So where does this leave us? With its poignant love story of Lance and Crab, we have in this text a clear and mirthful discrediting of the human superiority over the animal. The Crab scenes bring to the fore the animal as beloved, like us and yet not like us. The man becomes animal and the animal resists his exploitation. Modern artists, both visual and verbal, are currently exploring the human/animal divide with vigour, but we should not assume that because we are only now exercising our critical attention on the divide or union artists from early on did not recognise this potential for understanding our world. The theatrically savvy Shakespeare would know quite well the effect of a dog on the stage. Like bringing any animal into performance, the audience is glued to the other’s reaction to the complex cultural fabrication around him or her. The animal can debunk the creative agenda with a striking and provocative assertion of presence, a presence that disturbs the placid equilibrium of linguistic equations and hierarchies, a presence that can dismay or delight us, depending upon our receptivity.

People find the act of loving animals immensely satisfying in life as well as art, but the passion can become revelatory if we stop seeing nonhumans as ourselves. We not only bring them into our lives; we insert ourselves into theirs. All do not have to love us back for the union to be profound. Shakespeare’s Lance demonstrates the true love of a common man for a dog, and no matter what our human-centred dreams and speciesist restrictions are, we still expand ourselves witnessing this union stunningly and ironically dramatised in Shakespeare’s comedy.
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Two birds I can’t identify are sorting seeds on the rough earth outside the library where books are taking root, reclaiming.
The two birds appear to be placing some seed aside, poking other seed underground with variegated beaks, then shitting on their... planting? sometimes they snack on... ‘excess’?
They are wearying with activity; rest, chirrup, puff their feathers, reconnoitre.
Then back to it. Separated seeds — those asides — are divided further into four piles. Tetractys?
From my discrete vantage-point I can see there’s a pile of wattle seed, another of wild oats; the others I can't identify. I pride myself on access to a broad set of classifications, and yet I fail to locate on so many levels. To me, it seems secrecy.
The sun is low in the sky and slices the southern shadows.
Down there is where the two birds are now transferring the seed. Lift, flitter, descend. Return. Over.
I would guess in the hollow of a great York gum. Deep in where it’s mostly dry.

JOHN KINSELLA,
YORK, WA
Social Alternatives: Serve us animals: Serve us, animals

RANDY MALAMUD

The term 'service animals' describes animals who render assistance of some sort to people with disabilities. This essay examines the boundaries of this concept of service animals, and also the blurriness around the edges; this blurriness surfaces when we consider service animals in relation to companion animals, working animals, military animals, pack animals, harness animals, prison animals, and comfort animals. In some sense, all people have disabilities: none of us is perfect. There are a range of 'animal powers' that people do not have as keenly as other animals do. This sense of the animal strengths that humans lack combined with a sense of entitlement means that in our perennial disability we are inclined to harvest, or coopt, or borrow, or steal some aspect of those abilities, that able-ness, from other creatures.

The term ‘service animals’ describes animals who render assistance of some sort to people with disabilities. I am interested in the boundaries of this concept of service animals, and also the blurriness around the edges; this blurriness surfaces when we consider service animals in relation to companion animals (the animals formerly known as ‘pets’), working animals, military animals, pack animals, harness animals, prison animals, comfort animals.

‘Comfort animals’ evokes the term ‘comfort women’, who were forced into sexual slavery, raped and horribly abused by the Japanese military during World War II. Comfort animals are in fact not at all like comfort women – they may provide comfort, as we snuggle with them, to people who are for some reason uncomfortable, somehow afflicted. But the commonality is the idea of ‘comfort’, that is, of course, our comfort – the human’s comfort in relation to comfort animals, the man’s comfort in relation to comfort women. The World War II term, with its insidiously exploitative, Orwellian connotations wrapped around the simple, pleasant word ‘comfort’, fuels my anthrozoological1 cynicism; the idea of ‘service’, too, carries a polyvalence that begs investigation.

Though my definition seems concisely focused – ‘service animals render assistance to people with disabilities’ – consider the proposition that, in some sense, all people have disabilities: none of us is perfect. Everyone could be more able, more enabled, more fully capable, of doing something. Every person lacks, for example, a dog’s keen senses of smell and hearing, or a bird’s highly-refined sensitivity to a threatening predator, or a horse’s bulk and strength, or a seal’s ability to insulate against extreme cold. There are a range of ‘animal powers’ that people do not have as keenly as other animals do: sight, smell, speed – all the senses which facilitate a better attunement to one’s environment and a better ability to prosper, safely and powerfully in that environment: flight, camouflage and disguise, hibernation, toxic defense – powers of adaptation and survival.

In taking on animal strengths, can we take without taking? ‘Taking’ the sightedness and instincts of a German Shepherd, training and transforming that animal into a guard dog, or a guide dog, is one way of appropriating animal powers. With comfort animals, people take the serenity of a cat or dog or gerbil (who seems unaware of how anxiety-filled the human world is) and harvest some of the animals’ gentleness, their sanity, their happiness, their coping-skills. Do people ‘take’ the serenity of these animals, or ‘share’ their serenity? Probably it varies according to the specific situation, the specific person, and the specific animal.

This sense of the animal strengths that humans lack (the dog’s powerful sense of smell, the horse’s strength, and so on) combined with a sense of entitlement means that in our perennial disability we are inclined to harvest, or co-opt, or borrow, or steal some aspect of those abilities, that able-ness, from other creatures. This paradigm offers an interesting way to think about our own sense of limit, our own sense of inferiority to other animals; and it may suggest dynamics by which that able-ness may be shared between two species, between a human and another animal. It may suggest ecologically interesting moments of trans-species harmony, coexistence, mutual support. Or we may see the foundation of a relationship that, while predicated upon people’s sense of inferiority to other animals’ talents and abilities, manifests itself
in a trope of jealousy, denial, and imperialism. That is, humans may decide to take, abrogate, exploit, animals’ abilities for their own benefit, in which case the ecological equanimity described above would instead manifest as usurping and controlling whatever animal strengths we desire and need for our human progress.

‘Service’ is etymologically related to ‘subservience’, calling attention to the dynamics and consequences of hierarchy. The OED defines ‘service’ as the condition of being a servant; the fact of serving a master (as a servant or as a slave) (“service” OED). There’s a religious sense of the word – one does God’s service, one serves God, by obedience, piety, and good works. The ritual of public worship itself is called a service. A devout person’s service denotes her service to God (so perhaps, by implication, an animal in service to people analogously evokes a person’s service to God, suggesting that we are to service animals as God is to us).

A soldier is ‘in the service’, as is a public employee – we speak of the diplomatic service, the civil service, Her Majesty’s secret service – so by this association, the service animal may be regarded as a participant and supporter of some larger civic mission. Other civic services are provided not just by people but also by technology: telephone service, electric service, broadcasting service, internet service.

We fill cars with gas at service stations. There is a supra-human (posthuman) sense in which anything that adds to the benefit, the infrastructure, of our society comes under the heading of service. The designation of ‘service animal’ fits into this space, this custom, this ideology, of expecting support for our systems and pleasures and needs. We are used to being serviced.

Going back further into the word’s history, ‘service’ describes feudal allegiance, fealty, homage. We see a trace of this in the deference of the polite assistant or clerk who announces that she’s ‘happy to be of service.’ The OED sends one off in myriad directions, stirring up a bundle of provocative associations, explicit and subliminal, lurking in the language. I want to unpack the word to reinforce the point of the pun, the echolalia, in my title: ‘Service animals; serve us animals; serve us, animals’.

The first iteration of ‘service animals’ is meant to be merely descriptive of this topic, this category, this class of animals, though at the same time, the category is not as simple and straightforward as it seems. We can detect and deconstruct a wealth of subtextually derogatory characterisations lurking here, and despite the seeming terminological precision, there’s some fuzzy impression – therapy animals, harness animals, et al.: where do we draw the line? The second iteration conveys the demand of the imperial consumer (in which the empire is the dominion of humanity, and the subalterns are, as described in Genesis, the other animals who exist for people to use as we see fit). Serve us animals. We want animals . . . on platters, in cages, on leashes, wherever. And finally, the third iteration is meant as a direct address, a command, a fiat, from the oppressor to the oppressed: serve us, animals. Jump. Entertain. Guide. Protect. Carry. Die. Interestingly, people do not often actually verbalise this command to other animals: we don’t have to, because it goes without saying that we expect animals’ service, and in any case, they don’t understand us: most of them don’t speak English. We don’t tell seals to serve us their pelts, or pigs to serve us their ribs, or elephants to serve us their tusks. We just take – perhaps the command would be superfluous, or perhaps the command is inherent in the taking. But we do, actually, tell dogs to serve us – Fetch! Heel! Come! Good dog! It is because dogs are so readily trainable to ‘serve us’ in these ways that they have become the prototypical service animal, which is the guide dog.

**The Animal as Guide**

Today guide dogs are often called ‘seeing eye dogs’, a phrase originating in a specific business, The Seeing Eye, the oldest extant dog training school. Located now in Morristown, NJ, it was founded in 1929 by Dorothy Harrison Eustis who had been a dog trainer in Switzerland, training police dogs, when she learned about a German school that was training dogs to help German soldiers blinded by mustard gas in the Great War. She wrote an article about it in the Saturday Evening Post, and was besieged by blind American soldiers who wanted her to create a similar facility for them (The Seeing Eye, Inc., n.d.).

Today, people who come to The Seeing Eye are assigned a dog and a trainer. Over a month-long course, they learn how to navigate the world around them with their dogs. The most common breeds are German Shepherds, Labrador Retrievers and Golden Retrievers, though other breeds include Poodles, Collies, Dobermans, Rottweilers, Boxers, and Airedale Terriers.

In the last few decades, the service animal rubric has expanded to include many other animals besides dogs for many other disabilities besides visual impairment. Miniature horses have been impounded into duty to perform services similar to guide dogs. Some people find them more trainable, more mild-mannered, and less threatening than large dogs – and they can live and serve for as long as 30 years, significantly longer than a guide dog. Monkeys are used by people who are quadriplegic or agoraphobic; goats by people with muscular dystrophy; and people with anxiety disorders.
have conscripted cats, ferrets, pigs, iguanas, and ducks as service animals. There are parrots for people with psychosis. It may seem counterintuitive to put a parrot on the shoulder of a psychotic person, but one such person profiled in the *New York Times* credited his parrot with helping him to keep from snapping, or exploding. Sadie the parrot accompanied him in a backpack-cage, and when she sensed him getting agitated, she would 'talk him down,' saying, 'It's ok, Jim. Calm down, Jim. You're all right, Jim. I'm here, Jim' (Skloot 2008 n.p.).

When animals help us by doing things we cannot do for ourselves, this probably makes people appreciate more keenly the value of other animals, the importance of animals, and maybe even, in a larger sense, the ethical desirability of a more egalitarian, even-handed, respectful relationship with other animals. It seems likely that a person using a guide dog or a service parrot develops a profound appreciation for how smart, loyal, and supportive another animal can be. Certainly, the people who use these service animals are prone to this enlightenment, and possibly even those who simply see people using service animals develop a heightened respect for the animals' powers and their value.

But what is in it for the animals? Maybe the dogs and parrots come to appreciate the intense inter-species bond that they are involved in, and value the feelings of their human companion's dependence, and appreciation. Or perhaps parrots don't like zipping around town in a psychotic person's backpack. Included in the recent trend of more variegated service animals, we see comfort animals for old and disabled people; prison animals (a variant of comfort animals) who help mitigate the violent atmosphere of incarceration.

Military animals include bomb-sniffing dogs and patrol dogs. In the past, armies have used horses and mules in a variety of ways, as well as carrier pigeons. Hannibal used elephants to cross the Alps. It is not a stretch to regard such animals as service animals. News stories describe the bonds that form between soldiers and military dogs in Afghanistan and Iraq, recounting the intensely loving devotion that soldiers express, and the intense mourning on the soldiers' part if these animals die (and also on the animals' part if the soldiers die), and the services these dogs may render for soldiers with PTSD. This seems comparable to the relationship between blind people and guide dogs.

Other service animals include helper monkeys (capuchin monkeys, which often help paralysed people and others with mobility impairments: scratching an itch, picking up dropped objects, turning on a DVD player, turning the pages of a book) and dolphins (who are supposedly therapeutic for depressed and autistic children who swim with them to learn compassion, though Lori Marino and Scott Lilienfeld have done much work to debunk the myth of the supposed benefit to autistic children from swimming with dolphins, and also to expose the trauma that the dolphins themselves experience in this enterprise (2007). Cats are sometimes considered service animals: they can supposedly be trained (though this may seem unlikely) to alert people to danger by pawing at them, to notice in advance the onset of a seizure, and even to use the phone for help if a person is unable to. More credibly, cats are excellent comfort animals: often used in animal assisted therapy to improve a person's physical, social, emotional and cognitive condition. Monkeys, parrots, lizards, and other animals are also used in this capacity.

As guide dogs are joined by parrots and horses and ducks in the service animal cohort, I wonder what this profuse proliferation means. Are we somehow reverting to the ark-story, where people gather up tokens of every animal in existence and remove them from their natural habitats – enclosing them, capturing them, 'saving' them, in a human structure? And then are these animals indebted to us because we have saved them from nature, bringing them into the promised land of human culture?

There is a sense of dominionism, manifest destiny, in our recent additions to the canon of service animals. We are expanding our service corps, expanding the range and realm of ‘services’ they can provide us. As when Europeans began to expand the range of spices, gems, silks, furs that ‘serviced’ their fashion and culinary cultures, to support the expansion of imperialist networks and markets, animals, too, figure as an unexploited resource: here are more services we can harvest from them, augmenting our own potential ‘wealth’.

This profusion perhaps pathologises our socio-ecological isolation as a species: the loneliness, the inadequacy, of the human, the merely human. It is undesirable to be locked inside a bubble, a climate-controlled, pesticide-treated, hermetically-sealed capsule designed to efface the outside world. We do need animals. We need comfort; we need to rub up against cats, and worms, and sheep. But balanced against this is the exploitative paradigm by which other animals’ existence is appraised in terms of how they may assist us.

Service animals are fetishised: they are so valuable, so ‘smart’, because they help us – because we can use them to remediate clearly-defined human deficiencies. We appreciate them. Does this make us appreciate other animals (those without training certificates) less? Are service animals the exceptions that prove the rule, that most animals do not seem to help us all that much? ‘The dogs go on with their doggy lives,’ as W. H. Auden (1989) wrote in Des ‘Musée de Beaux Arts’. Note also...
that animals do help us in all kinds of ways that may not register in our consciousness: pollinating flowers, fertilising crops, sustaining the ecosystem . . . but in any case, who said it was their job to help us? Where did they sign up for that?

Representations of Guide Dogs

Images of guide dogs date back as far as frescoes from Herculaneum 2000 years ago according to Michael Tucker (1984). Looking closely at a few visual images, out of the many dozens I have found, will elucidate some traditions of representing service animals and the people they serve.

The depiction of a person accompanied by a guide dog usually invokes the tropes of pathos, vulnerability, abjection. The blind men, though obviously disempowered, often show a strain of quiet admirable endurance: mixed with the pathos, perhaps even somewhat mitigating the pathos. This seemingly paradoxical representation of wretchedness and dignity in a single figure might be explained by the fact that we, the viewers – the sighted viewers, obviously, looking at a sightless figure – are seeing the abject and vulnerable character that the artist makes visible to us, and at the same time, the subject who cannot see himself: who is, mercifully, ‘blind’ to his own abjection, and thus, perhaps, less upset than we sighted viewers by his miserable condition. In his own blindness, he may transcend the physical vulnerabilities and disabilities that are so striking to those who see him.

There is an atmosphere of alienation, isolation from society; sometimes a kind of otherworldliness as the blind men stand in a tenuous dog-dependent limbo. Blind people, in artistic representations, are frequently portrayed as beggars. A blind beggar (often identified by the alms-cup he carries) is a common Christian allegory: we all are beggars here on earth, living on the charity of God and our fellow men; we are blind and only Faith can guide us.

Many of these dogs resemble the men they accompany, which makes sense simply because it is the same artist depicting both characters and the artists’ style and medium, accentuates this affinity. Also, it’s a truism that people tend to look like their dogs (or, perhaps, dogs look like their people), but still, this resemblance accentuates a stylistic/aesthetic sense of evenness, reciprocity, and connection, between the two creatures. In Rembrandt’s The Blind Fiddler (figure 1), consider the shaggy man and the shaggy dog: the two share a general scruffiness, and a similar style of facial hair. The blind man’s posture, his face, his beard, are all reiterated in the image of the dog.

In Jacques Callot’s L’aveugle et son chien (figure 2) note again the very similar posture, and the general demeanour of both figures: the man’s hair and the dog’s fur are texturally identical. And in Blind beggar with a Dog (figure 3, artist unknown), once more we see a clear parallel in terms of the musculature of man and dog, and
their temperament – they seem, like these other pairs, very well-suited for each other: cut from the same cloth. Such similarities suggest an exception – an exception that proves the rule, I would suggest – about the prevalence of dominionism when we consider a tableau of human beings and other animals. In many of these guide dog images, the keen sense of connectedness and reciprocity indicates that these most abject people (blind, indigent, disempowered, often shabby or dirty) have forfeited some measure of dominion over the other animals that most people possess as our birthright.

A 1797 French print (published by Chez Joubert, figure 4) depicts a blind man who seems less alienated than some of the other blind men: this character, again with begging cup, is reasonably well-dressed and in sociable contact with others, though the caption informs that he remains somewhat isolated in his blindness, unable to enjoy the full bounty of social interaction: he has accidentally stepped on a woman's dress and torn it, but 'ah, if he could only see' the nude beauty he has exposed.

Are the dogs in these images mere compositional accessories, like the blind man’s stick and alms-cup? Or are they significantly related, linked, to the human subjects? I think the answer is: some of both. Almost always the dogs are compositionally diminutive – smaller – though occasionally, as in Jules Bastien-Lepage’s The Blind Beggar (figure 5), they are equivalent to the people in size and energy. We are naturally inclined to appraise images quantitatively: whatever colours, or tropes, or figures, cover the largest percentage of the canvas are those that we notice most pointedly and that we are likely to value most heavily. Bastien-Lepage’s equivalence of dog and person is, again, an exception that proves the rule, which is that the guide dog, like any figuration of ‘the other’, tends to be a diminutive element. This results in a bit of a paradox: as I have noted above, the guide dogs are in some ways ‘like’ the people they accompany in form and demeanour, but these likenesses are also imbued

![Figure 3. Blind Beggar with a Dog, Italian, late 15th century](image3.jpg)

![Figure 4. Ah, s’il y voyoit!, 1797](image4.jpg)

![Figure 5. Jules Bastien-Lepage, The Blind Beggar, 1868](image5.jpg)

with a binary inequality: the animals are, we might say, like but lesser.

And the equivalence that Bastien-Lepage suggests is not only visually and compositionally measurable, but also experientially and dynamically significant. Thinking about an equivalence of ‘energy’ between the two figures in The
Blind Beggar, we might at first perceive an absence of energy: both boy and dog are still, resting, exhausted. But this certainly is, indeed, an equivalent energy that they convey: at the moment we see them, low energy, but we might expect, after they have recuperated, they will both rebound with a higher level of movement and dynamism. Bastien-Lepage’s suggestion in this painting is that the two creatures here live in tandem.

Few women appear in these images. Probably these artists see men as being able to make their way in the world despite their disability, while blind women are presumed to be too overwhelmed by the combination of their disability and the patriarchy – more likely to be stuck inside in a home or institution – so they remain unserviced by animals.

Looking at these images, I wonder about how the dog may be implicated in this abjection: how that animal may share, or may transcend, the humiliation of his human blind companion.

In Dance of Death, by Swiss engraver Jaques-Anthony Chovin (1744, figure 6), the human subject is on his last legs, about to die: a point clearly visible in his stooped and feeble posture, his ragged clothes, and all the more semiotically emphatic as he meets with death. Wielding scissors to cut him off from life, Death reiterates the Greek fable of Atropos cutting the thread of life, but here with the interesting variant that it is the leash, the connection between the man and the guide dog, that is about to be severed and which signifies the blind man’s death. The dog allowed him to find his way through the world. When death cuts that link, the man is figuratively dead. The dog looks up at the person, about to be separated from him, with anxiety, I think: perhaps the dog anticipates his freedom, but there is also a balance between the man and the dog that death is about to cut and that will result in imbalance for both man and dog. They seem suited to each other, connected to each other, and in the imminent loss of that connection we can see a relationship of mutual interdependence.

All these images aspire to depict a sense of harmony, mutuality, between the human blind figure and the service animal. They convey a compositional and imagistic sense of balance, cooperation, easy and fulfilling coexistence, even energy, between the blind man and the dog. The man and dog’s movement, their progress in the world, seem to reinforce each other dynamically. The two figures often seem happy, and willingly connected to each other. These images suggest the foundation for a rather rare human consideration of interspecies equity.

Conclusions

Does the person who depends on a service animal have an admirable relationship to another member of another species, or is he weakened? Is the guide dog smart, useful, valuable, valued? These dogs are, clearly, very intelligent: do we understand that intelligence, do we appreciate it, do we perhaps even take the next step, and extend that insight that this dog is intelligent to the larger implication that lots of animals have intelligence that we are not aware of?

Service animals augment our own inadequacies – as do companion animals, military animals, work animals. Guide dogs amply and gloriously fulfil a rubric of value to their human users. But what about annoying animals, scary animals, stupid animals, useless animals? (The question is sarcastic – these are not judgements that are ecologically or ethically proper for people to make, though we make them anyway.) They fare poorly in our rankings. They suffer by comparison to the exemplary animals that work so hard to help us, suggesting the negative repercussions of fetishising of service animals. The ‘good’ animals make the others look lazy, hostile, useless. They set an impossible and ridiculous standard for animals: helping us. What have you done for me lately?! Are service animals the ‘Uncle Toms’ of the animal kingdom? Unthreatening, servile, seemingly happy with their lot; they do not make trouble; they live to serve.

Human expectations of animals’ services – our sense of entitlement to these services – exemplifies what Peter Singer (1975: 8-9) calls ‘speciesism’, thus violating Jeremy Bentham’s moral principle of equal consideration of interests: ‘each to count for one, and none for more than one’. Just as racism and sexism violate the principles of equality, Singer writes, so too speciesism ‘allows the interests of [our] own species to override the greater interests of members of other species. The pattern is identical in each case.’ The discourse of anthrozoology invites the interrogation and deconstruction of even such
an intimate human-animal interaction as service animals: one might even say, ‘... especially such an intimate human-animal interaction ...’

As numerous artistic representations suggest, there is at least a subliminal tendency to conflate ‘intimacy’ and ‘equality’ when looking at the relationship between a person and a service animal. But this supposition sidesteps a vast tradition of speciesist exploitation in which we are prone to conflate an animal’s intrinsic value with his or her usefulness to humans. It is tempting, and flattering, for people to imagine that other animals are eager to help us in our times of greatest need, and that they are gratified by our symbiotic or dependent relation with them.

In closing, there is an alternative perspective, an idealistic ecofantasy, suggesting one way we might problematise, unpack, and co-opt the idea of service animals. On the one hand, envision every animal you see as a service animal – and think about the services they’re providing. The bright red cardinal bird is wearing a brilliant new outfit to remind you that it’s March, and you should move out of your hibernating winter phase and step into your spring regeneration phase, along with the rest of the natural world. Time for you to put on a bright new outfit, too, and get with the game; be in the season. The elephants you see in a nature documentary service you by spreading seeds in their faeces to replenish the savannahs, by revitalising African grasslands. They dig water holes that assist the survival of other species, thus sustaining biodiversity in their habitats, thus preventing the ecosystemic degradations that lead to global warming, thus keeping our coastal cities from being flooded (for at least a few more years): a pretty vital service rendered.

And on the other hand, besides seeing every animal as a service animal, we may also learn to think of ourselves as service animals: turnabout is fair play. What kinds of services do we provide? What kind of services should we provide? Ecologically, it’s symbiotic. Ethically, it’s altruistic – but it can also be seen as self-interest (which is often an easier sell than altruism): Do unto others as you would have others do unto you. Think about the ecosocial onus of playing our part as good citizens and rendering services where we can, if only for the selfish reason that this would allow the other animals to continue more easily and more prosperously to render their services back to us.

Earlier I invoked a religious service, the civil service, telephone service: connoting service as a metaphysical calling, a civic mission, a foundation for a more desirable and more functional and durable community. Thinking about how much aid and ability a blind man gets from his guide dog, imagine how amazing it would be if people could render a comparable level of service, a comparable value of service, to some of the other animals who share our world.

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End Notes
1. Anthrozoology refers to the study of interaction between human beings and other animals.
2. See, for example Tintoretto’s The Blind Leading the Blind, 16th C.; Isaac van Ostade’s A Blind Man and his Dog, c. 1640; Pietro Faccini’s The Blind Beggar with Sitting Dog, c. 1590; Marie-Alexandre Alophé’s La fin d’une triste journée, 1838; Otto Dix’s The Match Seller, 1920; Elizabeth Frinck’s Blind Beggar and Dog, 1957; Clive Hicks-Jenkins’s The Blind Boy and his Beast, 2007.

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Towards a More ‘Bottom Up’ System: The Social Welfare policies of the Australian Greens

PHILIP MENDES

In recent years, the Australian Greens have emerged as the foremost Parliamentary supporters of the welfare state. They have vigorously defended existing income security entitlements, and aligned themselves with the social justice campaigns of welfare policy advocates. This article examines the Greens social welfare policies and ideas with reference to broader environmental analysis of welfare states. Some conclusions are presented regarding the potential development of a more ‘bottom up’ welfare system.

Green Parties globally appear to be among the foremost defenders of social justice as reflected in generous welfare rights and services (European Green Party 2012; Green Party UK 2012; Green Party of the United States 2012). Not surprisingly, the Australian Greens are also strong supporters of the welfare state, and the rights of income security recipients to a fair and adequate income.

To date, however, there has been little if any academic analysis of the social welfare policies of Greens Parties. In this paper, we examine the social welfare perspectives of the Australian Greens. We also introduce some broader environmental analysis of welfare states, and consider the potential implications for Greens policy including the proposed development of a more ‘bottom up’ welfare system.

The Australian Greens on Social Welfare

The last two decades have seen an increasing erosion of the Australian welfare state. Both Coalition and Labor governments have tended to emphasise individualistic and behavioural explanations of poverty and unemployment rather than addressing the broader structural causes of inequity. Their approach assumes that people are poor or unemployed due to incompetence or immorality, and is heavily influenced by American neoliberal ideas and policies. Disadvantaged groups such as the unemployed and single parents have had their payment rates reduced, and some income security recipients have had their payments quarantined via income management. Many have been forced to turn to families, local communities and non-government welfare services for support (Mendes 2008a).

In contrast, the Australian Greens have long been defenders of the Australian welfare state at the Commonwealth, State and Territory level. For example, Green MPs in Victoria and NSW have been particularly active in demanding enhanced support for young people currently transitioning from the out-of-home care system, and also in supporting a compensation scheme for those adults known as the “Forgotten Australians” who were abused or neglected in the care system in earlier decades (Barham 2012; Hartland, 2011). The Greens advocacy on behalf of care leavers seems to reflect a social investment perspective which aims at promoting the social inclusion of disadvantaged groups in mainstream social and economic life (Mendes, Johnson and Moslehuddin 2011).

This article will, however, principally examine national Greens perspectives concerning income security policy. As early as 1996, Greens leader Bob Brown argued the case for a Guaranteed Adequate Income Scheme that would provide a basic income for all Australians. This scheme would also have assisted those unable to access paid employment to participate in socially useful activities such as volunteer work with the sick or elderly, or repairing the environment (Brown and Singer 1996).

A further statement issued in 2002 similarly emphasised that the Greens believed in full employment, but also valued the societal contribution made by those who were not in paid work. The Greens argued in favour of a Guaranteed Adequate Income Scheme that would align the level of all benefit and pension payments, and ensure that all citizens received a reasonable income irrespective of their capacity to access or maintain paid employment (Australian Greens 2002). A later policy statement issued in March 2007 (and still listed as current policy on the Greens website) endorses the establishment of a universal minimum income and the funding of high quality welfare services in order to eliminate poverty and promote social equity and justice (Australian Greens 2007).
Parliamentary representatives of the Greens including most notably the Senator for Western Australia, Rachel Siewert, have been consistently active in opposing Coalition and subsequent Labor Government policies that they regard as unfair to poor and disadvantaged Australians. In short, they support an approach that recognises the structural and systemic causes of disadvantage, and reject policies which narrowly target the allegedly bad behaviour of individual income security recipients.

For example, the Greens were highly critical of the Welfare to Work Bill introduced in the 2005 Budget which imposed tighter eligibility rules for the Disability Support Pension and the Parenting Payment. They argued that these policies were punitive and uncaring, would significantly reduce the incomes of new applicants for these payments, and would not address structural barriers such as disability, recent experience of family violence, lack of accessible child care, and limited education that prevented these groups from entering the workforce. They also expressed concern about the level of surveillance and control exercised over the lives of low-income Australians. The Greens supported the campaign by the Australian Council of Social Service (ACOSS) and other welfare advocacy groups for a Parliamentary Inquiry into the Welfare to Work legislation (Siewert 2005a; 2005b).

The Greens also opposed the Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER), and particularly the associated compulsory income management (CIM) scheme, the quarantining of a set percentage of income security payments – usually somewhere between 50 and 70 per cent – into a special account for the exclusive purchase of essential household items such as food, rent, clothing and energy bills (Mendes 2012).

Senator Rachel Siewert expressed concern that CIM was coercive and paternalistic, indiscriminately targeted all Indigenous people in a specific community irrespective of individual capacity, was not based on empirical evidence, and highly costly. She urged instead that funding be directed to badly needed family support and child protection, housing and health services that would address the underlying causes of disadvantage. Citing ACOSS, she also critiqued the top-down approach imposed by the government, and recommended an alternative community development model of service provision involving collaborative partnerships with local communities (Sealey and McQuire 2010; Siewert 2007; 2008a; 2008b; 2009; 2011a).

Senator Siewert was Deputy Chair of the 2010 Senate Inquiry that examined the extension of income management beyond the prescribed communities in the Northern Territory. Citing ACOSS and other welfare advocacy groups plus the ACTU, she argued that CIM involves a fundamental shift in the philosophical agenda of the Australian income security system from that of poverty reduction to social control. Concerns were expressed about the lack of evidence that CIM has resulted in better nutrition or improved financial management, and that it has resulted in a reduction in investment in intensive case management and other holistic supports and services that actually produce improved outcomes (Siewert 2010).

The Greens also critiqued plans to penalise Indigenous parents in the Northern Territory whose children failed to attend school. They argued instead in favour of better access to alcohol rehabilitation programs and culturally relevant educational supports (Franklin and Elks 2011; SBS World News Australia 2011). Furthermore, they strongly opposed the Stronger Futures legislation which extended the NTER for a further 10 years, and tabled the anti-NTER Stand for Freedom petition in the Federal Parliament which had attracted over 30,000 signatures (Bagnall 2012).

Additionally, the Greens attacked the government plan to toughen financial penalties for unemployed persons who failed to comply with their mutual obligation requirements. They argued that a punitive approach would not assist highly disadvantaged persons such as the homeless and those with poor literacy or education to engage with the system, and would only lead to greater financial hardship for young people and Indigenous Australians who are over-represented in the non-compliance statistics. Instead, they suggested the government listen to those welfare groups working at the coalface, and address the systemic barriers to seeking employment (Bandt 2011).

The Greens also strongly opposed the government plan to move most recipients of Parenting Payment onto Newstart Allowance when their youngest child turned eight. Citing arguments from welfare advocacy groups such as ACOSS and the National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children, they argued that this cut would push single parents further into poverty, undermine their housing stability and health, and reduce their capacity to develop their skills or find employment (Karvelas 2012; Siewert 2012a).

Instead, they have consistently argued for a $50 per week increase in the rate of Newstart allowance paid to the unemployed. This is currently only $35 a day or $246 a week which is $140 a week below the age pension rate. They argue that the low level of payment is entrenching poverty and disadvantage including homelessness, and is disproportionately affecting the long-term unemployed who face serious barriers to accessing employment (Siewert 2011b; 2012c).

In April 2012, Senator Rachel Siewert spent a week living on the NewStart Allowance to expose the challenges involved with coping on such a low income. Senator Siewert reported that once she had paid her rent and
utilities bills and public transport costs, she was left with only $10 a day to cover food, toiletries and cosmetics. This left no money for emergencies such as ill-health or a car breakdown, clothing or any form of social or sporting activity (Siewert 2012b; 2012c). Siewert’s action was praised by ACOSS which applauded her willingness to ‘try and get a feel for the true plight of people living in poverty’ (ACOSS 2012).

The Greens subsequently played a key role in initiating the inquiry by the Senate Committee on Education, Employment and Workplace Relations into the adequacy of Newstart and other income security payments (Seiwert 2012d). That inquiry endorsed the Greens view that the base rate of the Newstart allowance should be increased. The inquiry report included an additional section from the Greens outlining the key arguments in favour of a payment increase (Siewert 2013). The most recent policy statement by the Greens, timed to coincide with the 2013 federal election, similarly argues in favour of “an adequate income safety net for all Australians”, and again reiterates the case for increases to payments for the unemployed and single parents (Australian Greens 2013: 33).

Towards a Greening of Social Welfare Policy

The Australian Greens perspective suggests a strong defence of existing welfare rights with some potential for introducing more bottom-up community development approaches into the income security system. A range of academic commentators influenced by environmental concerns have engaged in a broader debate as to whether the welfare state is effective in promoting greater equity and social cohesion, and is ecologically sustainable. One view holds that the welfare state should be replaced by an entirely new structure (Ife and Tesoriero 2006: 2-3; 10-12), whereas an alternate view suggests that what is required is not a withdrawal of state funding of services, but rather a de-centralisation of provision (Dominelli 2012: 32-39, 53-55; Kenny 2011: 167; Taylor 2007: 142).

The most advanced argument for a reformed welfare state based on environmental principles seems to be provided by the British academic Tony Fitzpatrick. His perspective includes three key components.

Firstly, he argues that existing welfare policies may be ecologically unsustainable given their link with assumed ongoing levels of high economic growth which are damaging to the environment. Additionally, they often deal only with the individual symptoms rather than the structural causes of disadvantage. In contrast, he argues that growth is finite, and that social problems such as physical and mental ill-health are the inevitable result of free market policies and associated environmental degradation. Basic income and quality welfare services are necessary to facilitate social equity and justice, but need to be incorporated into an ecological perspective based on notions of conservation, reduced consumption and constraints on technological development (Fitzpatrick 2003:120-121; Fitzpatrick 2011: 62-63; Fitzpatrick and Cahill 2002: 5-7).

Secondly, he suggests that welfare policies are too closely connected to the traditional work ethic, and the assumption that paid work will provide the basis of not only economic security, but also personal identity and self esteem and social and community networks. Instead, he recommends a redefinition of work that would enable societal income and status to be linked to a broader range of participation and socially valuable activities including care work, local exchange and trading schemes, and even forms of social protest (Fitzpatrick and Caldwell 2001: 63; Fitzpatrick and Cahill 2002: 7-10).

His third concern targets the paternalistic, bureaucratic and impersonal nature of welfare state provision. Service users are frequently patronised and demeaned, and denied a voice. Welfare state structures are too top-down, appear to focus on social control rather than choice, and often disempower those whom they claim to assist. His recommended alternative is to establish decentralised and bottom-up services in partnership with local communities that prioritise the empowerment of welfare users (Fitzpatrick 2003:122).

In addition, he highlights the specific link between climate change and social injustice, noting that climate change is likely to have a disproportionate impact on low income groups who may live in vulnerable locations, have less resources than others to move or adapt, and who already suffer from poor health. This raises the broader question of whether there is a potential contradiction between social and environmental goals given that key policies to reduce carbon emissions may have a regressive impact on the poor (Fitzpatrick 2011: 66-68).

Implications for the Australian Greens

To date, the Greens have been vocal in exposing the more repressive aspects of the Australian welfare state. They have rejected arguments presented by both Labor and Coalition Governments that target the individual behaviour and choices of income security recipients, and instead urged greater investment in holistic supports and services for disadvantaged Australians. However, the Greens have neglected to present a detailed plan for an alternative progressive income security system that would integrate environmental and social equity concerns, recognise the value of social as well as economic participation, enhance the individual choice and agency of service users, and facilitate effective local responses to the social costs of issues such as climate change.
Such a system could arguably take the form of democratic partnerships between community providers and consumer groups at the local level based on consumer rather than provider needs and control. This would mean recognising the diverse individual experiences and capacities of the unemployed, and accepting that a certain proportion of the working age population would remain outside the paid workforce. All people reliant on income security could then be offered a participation income which incorporated a range of social, cultural, educational, environmental, community and caring activities and expectations. These could include conventional activities such as caring for young children, the disabled, and people who are frail, aged or chronically ill, to staffing the kiosk or clothes shop at school and/or coordinating the local sports team. There could also be less conventional activities such as, for example, participating in local exchange and trading schemes.

In addition, the bureaucratic uniformity of the income security system could be addressed by transferring control to local communities with extensive consumer participation. The focus of services would then be on meeting the aspirations of participants, rather than those of government or providers. Community control of welfare programs would also ensure that the specific needs of those groups adversely affected by issues such as climate change in each locality were reflected in service planning and delivery (Mendes 2008b).

A progressive strategy for developing local community control called ‘associationalism’ is suggested by the British academic Paul Hirst. Hirst proposes the establishment of voluntary self-governing organisations based on partnerships between service users and providers. These organisations would prioritise the empowerment of citizens through maximising consumer choice and control, and preferably operate in tandem with a guaranteed minimum income scheme. The state would continue to provide most of the funding for welfare services, but civil society would take much greater responsibility for the design and delivery of services (Hirst 1994; 1997).

Hirst’s proposal is appealing in that it offers the potential for an egalitarian welfare system (Fitzpatrick 2003) based on welfare consumers playing a key role in the service delivery and policy development process. It also suggests the possibility of challenging the structure of the existing government-controlled tendering process, and transforming that model into a progressive form of service delivery. That would mean government granting genuine independence to community forces so that they can both develop policies and deliver services based on the stated needs of consumers.

For example, the major ideological deficit of the current Job Network system is that it is bound by rigid contractual arrangements based on mutual obligation. At best, existing tenderers struggle to protect participants from the claws of the associated breaching system. At worst, some tenderers may enthusiastically comply with these sanctions. However, associationalism suggests an entirely different potential outcome: an employment and training scheme run by a local cooperative (potentially involving trade unions and progressive local councils and business people) to meet the aspirations of participants, rather than those of government or providers (Mendes 2008a).

**Conclusion**

The Australian Greens have been very vocal in critiquing government processes and structures such as compulsory income management that undermine the individual choice and agency of income security recipients. But they have arguably been less effective in identifying the details of a progressive income security system. This article has suggested the introduction of a more ‘bottom up’ decentralised system that would also recognize the value of unpaid social participation. This system would arguably complement the Greens commitment to social equity and justice and environmental sustainability.

**Glossary**

Australian Council of Social Service: ACOSS
Australian Council of Trade Unions: ACTU
Compulsory Income Management: CIM
Northern Territory Emergency Response: NTER

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**Scherzo for the maker of spectacles**

Garden rooms in autumn have entrances
To play a part. A rakish wind
Gives night the slip, straightens the dark attire
Of olive trees, turns on a golden heel
And smooths a quince gown.
Let winter winds act serious
And unmask impressions of fright.
Along the wall amble gourded vines
And trusses stain a mist that soon lets fall
The restrained and beautiful light.

**DUGALD WILLIAMSON,**  
**ARMIDALE, NSW**
Ruminant: a doxology from Geraldton to England to Crete

Sheba, milk-making, led the younger goats rampant amongst acacias, pulling tethers and pegs and herders through the vacant bush-block. Climbing high to taste the heavenly shoots, the celestial manna, the host, the face of the future, cloven hoofs marking their spot, making hay in sunshine.

Goats in the bush hear the hunters higher in helicopters, shooting fool's gold in gold country, seeing devils in reflections of their telescopic sights, their greedy selves in cut of goat's eye, horny in the sky with guns and bullets.

My brother cared for Sheba, a favourite, a leader of goats where the billy goat with curled horns lurked but was never more than visitor, beast bound with bigotry and ambition. Sheba reminded us not to patronise her lover with our bleatings: bearded lecher! My loins know it, as do those of my sisters and daughters. So?

Goats cut up the thin dirt, the dust places swept away when big winds rush in from the east, thinning the bush to prospect, a refuge in folktales from mountains on distant continents, acclimatising and changing, adapting all of us to their myths of toughness. It's all relative, people say, goat carcasses piled high for dog meat, their spirits clinging on within earshot, superstitious as pastoral.

Sheba comes to mind in the British Museum, Sheba the Australianised goat, a female goat in a male world — the Ur Death Pit sculpture with its fleece of lapis lazuli and shell, golden balls, copper ears, its Discoverer entwining cornucopia Judeo-Christian narrative verification, a whimsical wish-fulfilment: Abraham looking around to find the ram in the thicket, when goat is reaching up to take the newest, highest, tastiest leaves, to stimulate the tree of life, lift the flattening darkness.

In the round, parameter of reign, the zoo goat climbing concrete and stone to stand aloof, looking down upon emotional confusion, processing the motives for staring up, she-goats layered down to level with human worship, prostrations of tantruming kids, hatred of adults under their coaxings, their smiles, their prayers. Procreate, it says.

Sheba's name is passed on through the decades. Two other smaller fawn-coloured goats with nubs of horn are her bridesmaids, not yet in milk, the billy goat's nose as yet unaroused. What were their names?

Visited the Fitzwilliam Museum and in an exhibition of John Craxton's paintings found his goats living despite his love of painting dead animals. His goats, too, like his young men, were rampant. He-goats and she-goats. Young fellas in virility, goats in fertility and fecundity, the light of Crete, urgency of rocks and sea, raising the senses of goats. Us.

Sheba, milk-making, led the younger goats rampant amongst acacias, pulling tethers and pegs and herders through the vacant bush-block. Climbing high to taste the heavenly shoots, the celestial manna, the host, the face of the future, cloven hoofs marking their spot, making hay in sunshine.

John Kinsella, York, WA
There were fossils on that land, secret in the red earth.

Sitting on the back of his father’s tractor as the old man ploughed, the boy saw the blade turn up the shattered rock. When they stopped to eat, he bent to see what the plough had uncovered but could make no sense of it: that calligraphy of fern and moss and root; those messages from life forms past, buried there, in that red earth, remained indecipherable to him.

The farm was seven miles from the town, five from the railhead, down a lantana track. Not many took that way, except a bloke with a Bible (once), and hawkers who never returned. The old man saw to that.

The father took the boy to town sometimes, to market a pig, or buy seed or tea or sugar or tobacco. (The old man didn’t drink.) As the ute rattled down the track, the boy held his hand out catching lantana blooms between his fingers. He liked that, trapping the fiery flowers then spilling them on his lap. There was not much to amuse him, except his jobs about the farm. He never went to school.

He had a mother (once) who taught him to read—kind of—so he knew enough letters to make sense of the Massey Ferguson tractor manual (or put words to the pictures, at least), but he sometimes wondered at the language of those fossils, those signs and symbols pressed deep into the rocks the plough turned up. Hard as they were to decipher (the bits he collected, and kept in an apple box under his bed), he never gave up trying. He was lonely that way, being left with the old man, after his mother went.

‘Where?’ the boy asked. ‘Tell me.’

‘To a better place,’ the old man grunted.

‘Like that heaven the Bible bloke showed me. That picture?’

‘There ain’t no heaven. She just up and left.’

The boy thought about that. He remembered the day. He saw her yellow hair pass his window, and later, when he went out to check, her shoes were gone. The ones she wore to town. And her basket. Her town basket. He imagined her walking down that track, stripping the lantana between her fingers (like he did), and wondered where that ‘better place’ was. Maybe those Blue Hills he heard about on that wireless serial, if he was allowed.

Sometimes, when he could get away, he found himself looking for her. There were no photos, never had been: not of her alone, nor of his father and her courting, nor a wedding (if there was one); and the lowboy she kept her stuff in (her clothes, her coats—her underwear, he guessed) was now in the shed, crammed with tools.

If the old man was down the pump house, by the mud flats near the creek, and left the boy alone, he sometimes took the chance and wandered round the places that she liked—or he thought she liked—because he was only a kid when she went ...

So he loitered in the old orchard—run down as it was, what with rotten fruit, the leaves mildew, the branches down in the storms—because she liked that place, going out in her apron (if he remembered right), to pick fruit for jam (did she?), or preserves (maybe?), other times coming back with flowers (he was certain), apple blossoms to put in the house, though they didn’t last long, falling as they did all over the table, or the mantle, or into his hands (if he cupped them under). ‘Chuck ‘em out,’ the old man growled, ‘Pile a sticks they are. Lame, ‘eh, lame …’

‘Don’t!’ the boy demanded. ‘She put them there. She likes them. I like them.’

But they went, all the same.

So the boy looked for signs of her, in the orchard. Something personal, some presence, some proof that he remembered right, that she had lived; that she had been.

He had been so young.

Nor could he find her in the cow bales though she was there every morning. In the dark. Or the rain. Or the frost. The cold, for sure. But how could he find her foggy breath, or her shivers, or her raw, cracked hands other
than by looking at his own, which was not the same, since he was a man (nearly) and born for such work. Or so the old man said, ‘When I’m gone, this place is yours, seein’ there’s none else….’

Which set the boy wondering. Not so much about where she had gone, his mother (or when?), but how come there was ‘none else’?

Hadn’t there been?

A baby?

A brother?

(Once?)

So the boy sat on the back of the tractor behind the old man, and stared down, wondering as the rocks turned up in the red earth, split by the plough to reveal those signs, those messages from times past that he could not read. But I will, he determined. Mother or no mother; school or no school, I will learn. I will know …

At night, alone in his room, he dragged out that apple box from beneath his bed and sat by the window (where the moonlight beamed) to begin his lessons.

He took out the fossils, one by one.

At first he could make out nothing, only strokes, scratches, marks—like the chooks made around the house, or the ibis down on the mud flat, down by the creek—like the words he couldn’t read when he first looked at that Massey Ferguson manual. He could have cried—and did (once)—but struck himself across his face and leaned forward. I am not stupid, he muttered. I can; I will, and he sought for an image—some object that the signs suggested—as he had done when he broke that other code; when his mother taught him to read and he saw the drawing of the tractor axle and those signs (alphabet letters, were they?) beneath. It was not a big word and any idiot (any boy?) would know what an axle was.

So the two went together—shapes and letters—and began to make sense.

Later he saw the letters ‘a p p l e’ beneath a picture of an apple on a box, and knew that he was right: that the signs were a code that he had broken and if that Bible man came back he could read ‘In the beginning’ all by himself, not with that long white finger pointing, so slow, like the boy was stupid (which he wasn’t, except for staying with his father, after she left).

It took three or four nights for him to recognise a sign like a circle (a ball, was it? or the top of a chamber pot?), then a straight line, hooked up at one end (a bed was it? or a cot?) and later as hepeered, a sign like a baby (a circle with four sticks poking out—arms and legs, surely?). He did not know that he was reading the language of fern (lost for millennia), nor the calligraphy of root (ever an entanglement), nor that the red soil had smeared and smudged its own disclaimers. Its own illiteracies. Those sticks and strokes and balls and triangles spelt out to him what mattered (nappies, were they, those triangles? He remembered them. Stinking …). And little by little, by that moonlight, in that patch (long lost) in the corner of his room, came the meaning, barely remembered: a bed had stood there (once): a crib, a cot; and a woman, bending, a mother, crooning, soothing, changing those nappies, those triangles, and the stink, those smudges of red earth (were they?).

So he stood, hardly believing, and in the morning when the cows came in, he said to the old man, ‘I had a mother once, and a brother. I remember, I know.’

But the old man laughed. ‘Prove it,’ he sneered. ‘You found a likeness? A photo, ‘eh?’

‘I read it. I read it in those broken rocks. Dug up by the plough. Them fossils.’

The old man blanched. ‘You? Read? We ain’t talkin’ no pictures in some tractor book. Unless that Bible man was a slick fast teacher, eh? You can’t read. And you got no picture. And you got no mother, nor brother neither. Get on with the milkin’. Get on with it or you got nothin’. No bed, no house, no farm, no nothin’, and he clipped the boy about the ear, sending him reeling.

‘Lame,’ the boy muttered. ‘Like those apple blossoms, that weren’t … Like them sticks she liked, them sticks he didn’t,’ and an image came (a photo, was they?) beneath. It was not a big word and any idiot (any boy?) would know what an axle was.

So when the tractor rolled and the old man died...
cemetery, near the railhead), the boy, now a man, took to the tractor himself. Since he could read (the Massey Ferguson manual, at least), he repaired the thing (the steering linkage was all that broke), crushed on them rocks it rolled on (fossils, were they? the man wondered, but didn't check), and set to ploughing that land down where the mud flat was (once), ages ago, when he was a boy. Dried up now (like his wonder, his memories, his dreams, like that lost mother, that better place, that Bible land. Ah ...) and them ibis, and them sticky marks they made, those signs of them passing, But the soil down here is rich, he reckoned, This mud never turned, this sod ...

So he lowered the plough to till, and did a bit, a row or two, thinking, This is all right. This is rich land. A man might bring a woman here, a wife, if he wanted. If he dreamed of a future. A better place. No fossils. No memories. Nothing to read but dirt, was there?

Good red dirt.

As he dreamed the plough struck, the tractor shuddering, and looking back he saw a box (an apple box, was it?), soil smeared and smirched. Leaping down, he bent to see a tiny crate, all lined in faded blue (velvet, was it?), and inside, part spilled onto the earth, a skull, and limbs (two arms, two legs), a child surely, long dead, and sticks (crutches, were they?), belonging to his brother. Long buried there, in velvet blue. And clamping his hand to his mouth, he felt the tears spring, man's tears, surely, since here he read the language of the ages: that this body had been placed gently, that this child, so long denied, had—after all—been loved.

**Author**

Dr Gary Crew is Associate Professor, Creative Writing at the University of the Sunshine Coast, Maroochydore, Queensland. First published internationally in 1985, Gary has continued to write over a broad range of genre from illustrated books to creative non-fiction, addressing audiences from primary to adult. His multi-award winning work is published throughout the world. Gary lives in Maleny, a village in the Blackall Ranges, part of the Sunshine Coast Hinterland. He admits to an obsession with dogs of all species (except maybe fluffy white ones that yap).

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**Graphology Heuristics 77**

So the intense airborne whistling, then grinding rasp on perching:

*a family of black-shouldered kites:*

parents and three juveniles; the mouse ‘plague’ falls into their trap, their prospering.

We watch from a distance, except when they come close.

**Graphology Heuristics 80: open door policy**

The young ram trapped in the red shed more than tapped at the door: through a crack its eyes shone violently green, and it readied itself for the charge into light: head down, hoofs set in their mark.

**Graphology Heuristics 83: death by identification**

Night parrots worked hard not to be found by the invasive, the protective and the exploitative. ‘Found’, they know for certain they are extinct.
Pier Pug

The pier pug skitters along
icy grey concrete, sniffing
plastic hawsers, crab fragments.
He gives strangers a wide berth,

though, having already clocked you,
rushes up for a quick whiff
and a glance over the edge.
His futurist leg movements
take him far, fast, though gulls know
and fall upwards so gently.
Irish speaks over Spanish
and the pug translates. All are
accounted for! The harbour
builds light against a dark sky.
He is hardly a young dog.
He favours the old with love.

John Kinsella,
York, WA

Haiku

Ledges dry, far rain
The one pool and the many
The gorge in a drop

The dark rests of night
Light grey notes of breaking dawn
Mapgies’ morning tree

Dugald Williamson,
Armidale, NSW

ONCE UPON A FARM
-for my Son

He stared into the eyes of stuffed black bears,
fell asleep to the sounds of cattle in the yard
and wrote about it all in his Tennessee Moon.
He gathered barn kittens, chased Corrientes
into livestock trailers, worked a remote to the
head gate for the cowboys, got bucked off a
wild and crazy Pistol, came up covered in gravel,
black and blue, embarrassed, shed some tears.

Burned his fingers making ‘smores on a bonfire,
strummed his guitar on the porch as we sat in
rocking chairs behind him with big proud grins.
We all watched hours of classic western films.
Said good morning and good night to Buckskin,
rode the pastures on a four wheeler, drove a Gator
through the rows of a tomato field and parked on
a hillside to gaze at the smoke on the mountains.

When the horses gathered around, it felt like
he had a special power to talk with the animals,
but then he noticed the feed bucket on the tailgate.
He listened to his grandfather’s stories, hugged him
one last time and heard his promise of next year,
putting the shiny new bass boat into the water.
Reading this he’ll laugh a little and smile a bit.
In the end he’ll know that it’s all over now

Larry W. Lawrence,
Old Bridge, New Jersey, USA

There are at least a thousand books about Gandhi and his ideas. The advantages of this book are twofold: it presents a smorgasbord of varied choices (it is based on a selection of papers from the International Peace Research Association Conference held in Sydney in 2010) and it firmly strives for relevance to the world of the 2010s. That said, as with almost all collections, it is a mixed bag with some chapters much more rewarding than others, with the reward level often linked to the readers’ prior knowledge of Gandhi’s writings. Some papers are addressed to Gandhi experts; others assume almost no knowledge of Gandhi’s core values. However, the brevity of the chapters, which total seventeen in less than 300 pages, enables the reader to treat the book as a sample box from which to examine a wide range of perspectives on contemporary non-violence from the feminist to the environmentalist. Although many of the chapter authors are academics, scholars turned activists; the style is mostly pitched at the general reader with an interest in new ideas who will find themselves panning for golden nuggets amongst a fair amount of dross.

Sampling the text is the best way to convey its flavour. In the final chapter: ‘Nishikant Kolge and N Sreekumar try to draw a parallel line between the Gandhian and the ecological critiques of the modern European understanding which are responsible for the creation of the modern structures of exploitation and tyranny’. How you react to this typical sentence will probably determine how you react to this book as a whole. Essentially the book presents a wonderful range of stimulating and fascinating ideas, often in a very abstract way. Frequently one cannot help but think that Gandhi himself expressed his views with greater clarity and elegance. The use of many more examples from contemporary life would also have made the case that non-violence is an effective strategy for the twenty-first century much more convincing. Understandably many of the authors are from India or Sri Lanka and combine a deep knowledge of the Gandhi cannon with a distinctively sub-Continental writing style. The editor Vidya Jain is the Director of the Centre for Gandhian Studies at the University of Rajasthan and has preserved many examples of Indian English which regrettably can make the text less accessible than it should be to an international audience. In her own chapter Vidya Jain typically argues that ‘the liberalisation of trade has led to the enslavement of people’ and then quotes Robert Bellah (no date provided) ‘This world is a world without families. It is also a world without neighbourhoods, ethic (sic) communities, churches, cities and towns, even nations (as opposed to states)’.

The book is divided into three sections: (1) Revisiting non-violence: Gandhian Way; (2) Reinterpreting Non-Violence: Asia-Pacific Context and (3) Reasserting Non-Violence: Social Context. As these themes suggest there is a degree of preaching to the converted, often with the assumption that the reader is low on cynicism and very high on inner ecological awareness. The chapters on the Asia-Pacific context cover India, Japan, the use of New Media by the Tamil diaspora and new forms of violence in Sri Lanka. A T Ariyaratne, now in his eighties, was a major founding figure in the establishment of the Sarvodaya Shramadana Movement which spreads Buddha’s teachings on sustainable development and peace, SSM now is active in a third of Sri Lanka’s villages and regularly holds multi-faith and cross-ethnic peace meetings involving tens of thousands. His chapter examining the Sri Lankan government’s persecution of NGOs based on his own experience understandably has its own biases but is still markedly enlightening.

Bernadette Muthien is a South African poet who co-founded Engender, an NGO which deals with issues of gender and human rights. Her chapter on rethinking activism and engaged security provides an entertaining romp through ‘phallogocentrism’ but, like many other chapters quotes some amazing generalisations such as ‘there are no lines in nature’ without backing them up.

John Synott objects to the commodification of Gandhi by the Indian and Australian Governments (witness the statue at UNSW erected to reassure Indian students). He bravely asks: ‘are teachers and students of peace studies paying too much attention to Gandhi and not enough to themselves? Knowing about Gandhi – his life, philosophy, writings and cultural leadership – is objectively interesting but can knowledge be sufficient in strengthening and growing the transformative power to actually change society – which is what Gandhi was on about?’

If you are interested in Gandhi, contemporary non-violence or a non-Western perspective on the modern world, I would recommend that you sample this book at your leisure. You will almost certainly find some treasures, some statements which infuriate you, scores of errors of English expression, some surprises, many contradictions and at least some enlightenment.

Professor Helen Ware, International Agency Leadership, University of New England

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Book Review


‘From the point of view of da Cockroach, all languages are da languages of the Oppressor’ (pg.6)

Cokcraco: A novel in ten cockroaches by Paul Williams is a clever and playful novel that resurrects Kafka's motif of the cockroach. Whereas Kafka uses the cockroach to evoke notions of isolation and disconnection, Williams’ cockroaches challenge socially constructed ideological perspectives. Having worked with this soft-spoken author at the University of the Sunshine Coast, I was pleasantly surprised by Williams’ evocation of such a satirical voice that is at once scathing and spirited. The voice of the cockroach, evoked through the fictional author Sizwe Bantu, repositions the notion of ‘pest’ onto the destructive human: ‘COCKROACH: Once they [humans] colonise a territory, it can be a real challenge to eliminate them…. Their love of turning pristine wildernesses into sterile concrete nests and burrows is well documented’ (pg. 21). The cockroach is used to expose the gap between seemingly antithetical standpoints; creator and critic, colonised and coloniser, perception and reality. The innovation of this work resides not only in the multiplicity of the voices presented, but also the structure of the novel.

Timothy Turner, an Australian academic, travels to South Africa to assume a teaching position at the University of eSikamanga as a replacement for the disgraced professor, Mxolisi Makaya. Unwittingly, Timothy finds himself in the middle of a fierce conflict between the creative writing minded educators–Makaya and his protégé Ngwenya–and the literary critics, represented by Zimmerlie and Mpofu. Timothy’s motivation for taking up the position is to discover the true identity of the reclusive African writer, Sizwe Bantu, who was the focus of his doctoral dissertation. In fact, Timothy’s obsession with Sizwe Bantu manifests into a type of idol worship, complete with a cockroach shrine. Timothy’s single-focused fixation on Bantu and his inability to comprehend the South African landscape produce humorous, and sometimes awkward, events. Timothy is swept up by the events around him and his lack of agency–even when he thinks he is taking a stand–renders him helpless as the plot unfolds. In fact, this could be one critique of the work. The use of the second person point of view, while appropriate to control the pace of the revelation of Bantu’s identity, does create moments of frustration and annoyance with the main character. His naivety is somewhat contradictory to his obsession with the South African, Sizwe Bantu, as his research required investigation into the cultural and social aspects that informed Bantu’s writing. Then again, this incongruence also serves to depict the gap between lived experience and artistic representation.

Williams’ novel is at once a second person narrative, an epistolary fiction, a literary dissertation (complete with footnotes and a list of references) and a postmodern treatise exposing false binaries. Each chapter begins with an encyclopaedic entry chronicling a specific type of cockroach, revealing their characteristics and pervasiveness. These entries serve as a frame for the chapter, mirroring the difficulty of reversing preconceived perspectives and stereotypes. The satirical use of the travel guide aptly entitled Crowded Planet positions Timothy as the ‘foreign other’ attempting to navigate the South African space. Timothy’s reliance on this information creates comical scenes of misinterpretation; while simultaneously revealing how social media continue to perpetuate stereotypical perspectives. At times the novel overtly draws attention to the cleverness of its meta-fictional elements, creating disjointed moments, which can temporarily pull the reader out of the story. While the mystery of Sizwe Bantu’s identity is the main storyline of the book, the multi-layered approach introduces key sub-plots that are also intriguing. I was particularly enthralled with Timothy’s past relationship with ‘M’, evoked through a smattering of unsent letters. These angst-filled letters present the construct of identity on a more personal level, adding another layer to this multi-dimensional novel.

These elements, coupled with the inter-textual allusions to various African writers and Williams’ stylistic decisions, serve to make the novel enjoyable to read. As a multi-vocal epistolary novel, this story will appeal to a wide readership: those interested in a particularly well-crafted post-modern story of discovery as well as those ‘kritiks’ who enjoy unpacking the significance in the portrayal of the constructed self.

Ginna Brock,
University of the Sunshine Coast

Graphology Heuristics 69

The rasp and whistle of the black-shouldered kite on top of the utility pole is not a poem but as close to a poem as we can embrace.

John Kinsella,
York, WA
This gallery showcase presents a selection of process images developed when I was working through ideas for this issue cover theme. I made and photographed finger, cardboard shadow puppets, and hand shadows, in a practice known as shadowography. ‘Shadowography’ or ombromanie is the art of performing a story or show using images made by shadows. It can be called ‘cinema in silhouette’. Performers of the art are often called a ‘shadowgraphist’ or ‘shadowgrapher’ (Wikipedia 2013).

It is very possible that hand-shadow puppetry has been practised since the appearance of early human kind. Imagine early human beings inside their cave where, for example, the experience of the chase of a wild animal is being excitedly re-enacted to the clan around the fire. The light from the flames reflects moving hands on the cave wall that tell the hunter’s story with animated shadows and sounds.

Made popular as entertainment first in India and China, and then migrating to the Far East and South East Asia, shadowgraphers re-enacted ancient stories and myths about social and political injustices. ‘The basic elements of shadow puppetry have been the same for about 2,000 years: a light, a screen, and something to put between them to cast a shadow’ (Wisniewski & Wisniewski 1997). Prior to electrical sources of light, shadowgraphers used flaming torches or candles to cast shadows onto cotton or muslin cloths where ‘...the puppets were very elaborate figures of carved leather operated with long rod of animal horn’ (Wisniewski & Wisniewski 1997).

Shadowography has declined since the late 19th century advent of electricity and the 20th century emergence of electronic entertainment such as the television and more recently social media. So I was very surprised to learn that artists as recent as early 20th century were well known for this craft – such as the Israeli artist, Albert Almoznino, who became famous for his performances of shadowography. He appeared on the Ed Sullivan Television Show in 1958 also toured the US and Europe. Although, shadowography continues to be practised today. See an amazing contemporary performance of this theatre by viewing the video rollcalroll, Calcutta Festival, 2012, at http://rollcalroll.com.

References

About the photographer
Dr Debra Livingston lectures in graphic design and photography at the University of the Sunshine Coast. Debra has had many exhibitions of her photomedia as well as winning a number of awards.
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