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Being Imaginary: Responsibility and the Literary Animal

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy
in Comparative Literature

by

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December 2017

The dissertation of Sharalyn L. Sanders is approved.

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Being Imaginary: Responsibility and the Literary Animal

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by

Sharalyn L. Sanders

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With thanks, for extraordinary generosity, to my committee.

For

Peter Goodcat

Bluecat

&

Bucky I Love You, Therapy Dog in Training
gentle spirit, silly happy Pitbull heart

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ABSTRACT

Being Imaginary: The Responsibility of the Literary Animal

by

Sharalyn L. Sanders

In systems of structural violence, the question of imagination is often elided from pragmatic considerations that determine responses: individual, collective, institutional, and state. At stake in these calculations is an unacknowledged deployment of imagination: “rational” thinking is a mode of imagining a way forward that can be achieved within existing constraints, as we understand them. This work examines the potential of a critical imagination to transform constraints into opportunities, to redefine what we understand as reason, to enhance our imaginary skills so that the worlds we imagine-into-being are livable.

Gathering fictional and nonfictional works, in order to shape the contradictions between these categories as resonances rather than oppositions, *Being Imaginary: Responsibility and the Literary Animal* closely examines the resonances between Western conceptualizations of “man” and “animal.” Engaging literary with philosophical explorations of human and animal subjectivities, *Being Imaginary* opens perceptions of Western epistemology, ontology, hierarchy and teleology – through Madeleine L’Engle’s science fictional tesseract – in order to offer a transformative engagement, via witnessing, with wounded, and so wounding, (white, heteropatriarchal) Western subjectivity.

At the center of this work, as at the center of the Western imaginary, is the dynamic relation between hu(man) / animal. Engaging our relations with / as literary animals, this work argues for (re)situating Western philosophy within a framework that does not attempt to orient its priorities according to choices between reason and imagination, justice and care; the world we imagine is the world we enact, and so we must recognize: a just act *is* a kin(d) act. Interdisciplinary, as befits the scope of the question, this work engages perspectives – including animal studies, science and speculative fiction, science fiction studies, continental and woman of color philosophies, trauma studies, feminist studies, and genocide studies – in order to ask the no longer elided question: what are the responsibilities of being imaginary?

Introduction

Being Imaginary: Responsibility and the Literary Animal

It's turtles all the way down.

Stephen Hawking recounts a version of this mini-fable, in his book *A Brief History of Time*. There are countless variations; they seem to come from a point of origin that recedes before it can be cited, scribed, grasped. The turtles are elusive, but embedded in tensions – what Sigmund Freud terms “wounds” – affecting the human psyche:

A well-known scientist (some say it was Bertrand Russell) once gave a public lecture on astronomy. He described how the earth orbits around the sun and how the sun, in turn, orbits around the center of a vast collection of stars called our galaxy. At the end of the lecture, a little old lady at the back of the room got up and said: “What you have told us is rubbish. The world is really a flat plate supported on the back of a giant tortoise.” The scientist gave a superior smile before replying, “What is the tortoise standing on?” “You're very clever, young man, very clever,” said the old lady. “But it's turtles all the way down!” (2)

Situated in a Eurocentric, patriarchal cultural tradition, Sigmund Freud identifies three wounds to human narcissism: Copernicus's discovery that the Earth revolves around the sun; Darwin's theory that humans evolved from animals; and Freud's own intuitions regarding the unconscious mind. Copernicus displaces humankind from the center of the cosmos; Darwin replaces an omniscient figure, God, with animals; and Freud unravels unity of purpose and action – the Freudian slip occurs when an unknown motivation compromises an individualized sense of agency, and will.

Wounds mark sites of pain; traumatic wounds mark sites of overwhelming experience. It appears that, for reasons beyond my present scope, Western traditions reflect contingency as an overwhelming experience. Elusive truths that displace certainties – a

common thread among all of Freud's wounds – pose a painful challenge.¹ In Hawking's narrative of galactic turtles, masculinized science is pitted against feminized mythos. The "young man" scientist and the "old lady" contend: she calls his science rubbish, and his superior smile condescends to her turtle-based belief structure. The young man wears his science, and his pose of arrogance, like a shield against the old woman's assertion that the world is a place of precarious balance, a flat plate atop the curved shell of a tortoise.

While the fable seems to uphold a conflict between rational and magical thinking, it is more precise to consider that the brief story reflects anxiety, and pain and anger, that one mode of knowing must supersede another. On the surface, the narrative seems to ask us to choose – science or myth, proof or belief, young or old, right or wrong, male or female. As though there were no way for the two opposed views to be coextensive, to cover similar grounds, to grapple with similar wounds – or to express similar fears. Emphasizing difference, it is harder to see that both the young man and the old lady reach for a similar hope: in this case, the hope that the cosmos has a comprehensible, discernable order. I would argue that anxiety stems from rending these coextensive oppositions apart, creating a metaphysics that disavows one knowledge in favor of another, and then attempting to inhabit psychic and cultural spaces with a truncated sense of self. As though it were somehow necessary to choose between modes of experience: as though we cannot tolerate certain uncertainty. Galaxy ordering turtles. Facts and knowing. Science and fiction.

¹ Perhaps this suggests an opportunity to (re)configure privilege, conceptually: "privilege" is never being tested to the point of overcoming an overwhelming challenge. It is being left in fear, before a challenge that would occur without the protections of a rarified cultural milieu. Without romanticizing trauma, or violence, we might consider: what are the costs of such privilege? Not only to the "privileged," but, always and of course, to those who suffer strife and violence.

This is my point of departure, and my point of return, encapsulated – evoked – by this gyrating animation of the tesseract: [/](#).² A square in five dimensions, the figure of the tesseract pulls itself through its own center, in a motion whose direction cannot be determined. At times, there seems an outward movement that pulls the center to the outer rims of the figure; at times, there seems an inward movement that pulls the edges back through the center. From a static, one-dimensional square composed of line segments, the motion of the tesseract encompasses five dimensions – and creates a wrinkle in time – that composes these segments into a living set of relations. Like a square, Western metaphysics grasps the poles and segments that seem apparent in the construction of the (white, male, heteropatriarchal, rational) Western subject. While reaching for the evolution of our shape, however, Western metaphysics has often elided the involution. The movement outward must have a reverse motion inward, for so binary oppositions go.

While it is possible to tease a linear thread from the following explorations, the motion I have embraced follows the figure of the tesseract. Simultaneously reaching inward and outward, each chapter is placed into relation with the others. Each chapter focuses on one aspect of Western metaphysics: epistemology, ontology, hierarchy, teleology, and the individualized, singular (white, male) Western subject. Adopting an interdisciplinary approach, my unifying imperative to look, to listen, to intervene, comes from a linkage between genocide and animal studies.

As the chapters move inward, from outsides constructed of feminine and masculine subjectivities, they encounter animalized and dehumanized subjectivities; as these excluded subjectivities (which, through their exclusion, hold the center for those included in the

² Embedded gif animation can be found at: *Wikimedia.org*.
<https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/5/55/Tesseract.gif>

conception of the “universal” Western subject) engage with Western metaphysics, the center moves back through the outer limits. In other words, my chapter layout and construction reflects the movement I observe within the literary texts I examine in order to recuperate what has been stricken from rational, Western subjectivity: awareness of the imaginary dimensions of human being.

The world we imagine is the world we enact. Recovering our imaginary being offers to restore our sense of connection, intuitive logics, and the recognition that humanity depends upon an inherent positionality located in becoming. It is an always already positionality that is, nevertheless, never achieved: we cannot reach “the human,” because if we do, we have undone what it is to be human. My work explores the ways in which humanity is vulnerable to the violences exacted upon it, at the level of the imaginary. My aim is to explore imagination, as a companion to reason, in order to witness the wounds present within Western subjectivity. Taking responsibility for our imaginaries, and for the ways we nourish and deploy our imaginations, is the crucial task of the literary animal – both for those animals written into literature and for those animals that, as readers, we must therefore be.

I have catalogued my reading according to this respons-ability: I have aimed to keep the reading accessible, so that no specialization is required for participation. To what degree I have specialized, my responses at times delve into the more arcane areas of literary theory, and so I have placed these as optional, footnoted engagements. Such a format constructs, among the chapters, a chord: for those who wish hear the resonances of the works as I do, I offer invitation and welcome.

At the level of linear argument, my work follows a general logic, though I wish to avoid (re)creating a trajectory. My basic perspective – derived from time spent with these

few literary texts – is that epistemologies based in binary oppositions are static; science and speculative fiction, as part of their generic composition, continually order and reorder binaries, and so I have turned toward science fiction and science fiction studies to see what can happen when we construct Western epistemology beyond the square. Using Madeleine L'Engle's tesseract to open epistemology, the how we know is put in motion; this requires ontology's grasp on what we are to shift. In George Orwell's fable, *Animal Farm*'s animals follow an ontology of wonder and affirmation, rather than a system of classification, that enables them to maintain their Animalism in spite of constant alterations to the Commandments, which outline what it means to be an animal on Animal Farm. Working with the animals' positions in the symbolic economy, animal studies suggests a shift from economy to ecology – at the level of the symbolic – as a way to rehabilitate humans' imaginings of “the animal.” Situated in epistemological flux and wondering ontology, Western teleology cannot serve; a drive to reach or achieve an end necessarily stifles, or excises according to hierarchical priorities, that which does not “lead” to a determinable endpoint.

At this turning point, Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy offers a parallel Genesis narrative: insisting, with women of color literary theorists, upon the excised narrative of African and Black origin stories, Butler directly interrogates the relation between teleology and hierarchy. Where the two converge, genocide and racial oppression are the seemingly unavoidable outcomes. Within the frame of witnessing, a perspective borrowed from trauma studies, I suggest that Butler's work identifies the deeply fraught possibilities of kinship, through an irresistible erotics of witnessing. Bereft of static, linear epistemological, ontological, and hierarchical/teleological foundations, the final chapter engages the Western subject set adrift. Examining the possibilities of identity, moving from a Freudian

perspective into a perspective based in empathy, Ursula Le Guin's protagonist exemplifies a white, masculine, rational Western subject with the courage to turn "OFF" the machine of the Western civilizing engine.

Throughout, I engage Jacques Derrida's exceptional inquiry into the question of the animal, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*; following, as Derrida, the path of his cat, I conclude with a brief study of Tuxedo Stan, the cat who ran for Mayor, who is positioned as an ambassador of companion imaginaries.

"We wrinkle": Madeleine L'Engle's Tesseract & Resonant Epistemology in Speculative Non / Fiction

Jacques Derrida dedicates the greater portion of his deconstructive work to tracing resonances among words and concepts, by means of bringing forward the erasure of the connections between binarily opposed terms. In his travels through literary and philosophical texts, his most significant interlocutor is his cat (more to follow). Under her impenetrable, and unpenetrated, gaze, Derrida arrives at a consideration of the plight of all animals, as it is instantiated in Western philosophical conceptions of "the animal," which are imbricated with Western philosophical constructions of "the human."

Key among the distinctions used to privilege "Man" over animal, human linguistics – phallogocentrism – is the province of Man alone. Speaking back to Lacan, who uses the absence of human linguistic traditions to uphold human over animal supremacy, Derrida identifies the issue of response as the sticking point to accepting animals' subjectivities. Lacan's contention, that animals are incapable of response (a capacity he accepts as a human propensity):

[R]elates the fixity of animal determinism within the context of information and communication to a type of originary perfection of that animal. Conversely, if 'human knowledge has greater autonomy than animal knowledge in relation to the

field of force of desire,' and if 'the human order is distinguished from nature,' it is, paradoxically, because of an imperfection, because of an originary lack or defect in man, who has, in sum, received speech and technics only inasmuch as he lacks something. Here I am speaking of what Lacan situates at the center of his "mirror stage," namely the fact of real specific prematurity of birth in man...

What I have just referred to, rather quickly, here on the threshold of "The Subversion of the Subject," as a limited but incontestable advance has to be registered with the greatest caution. For not only is the animal held within the imaginary and unable to accede to the symbolic, to the unconscious and to language...but the description of its semiotic power remains determined, in the *Discours de Rome* ("The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis"), in the most dogmatically traditional manner, fixed with Cartesian fixity, within the presupposition of a code that permits only *reactions* to stimuli and not *responses* to questions. I say "semiotic system" and not "language," for Lacan also refuses the animal language, recognizing in its case only what he calls a "code," the "fixity of coding," or a "system of signaling." (Derrida 122)

While Derrida goes on to outline the limitations, of linking language with response with human subjectivity, Sheryl Vint's *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of The Animal* makes obvious the failure in Lacan's anthropocentric conception of language.

Reading Ursula Le Guin's "The Author of the Acacia Seeds," Vint argues that "the story foregrounds relationships among embodiment, social structure and the emergence of a semiotic system that highlights those things of significance to a particular language user...if we are to communicate with other species, we must expand our definition of what constitutes a language" (73). Semiotic systems, which do not privilege verbal over embodied expressions, communicate without the need for mediation by language or technics. The lack in the human is the loss of communication by scent, by posture, by touch. As Vint notes in Le Guin's text, "The Ant language as written in exudation; Penguin is written 'almost entirely in wings, neck, and air'" (73). Speaking against the Lacanian position Derrida identifies, Vint argues that "Le Guin's story works against typical representations of animals in human scientific and philosophical history which has reduced them to creatures of instinct alone" (74).

Traveling by tesseract, Madeleine L'Engle's protagonist, Meg Murray finds healing in the resonant embrace of alien Aunt Beast, a furred eyeless creature who communicates primarily via emotion. Lacking sight, Aunt Beast struggles to comprehend Meg's human communications, which are tied – as Meg learns – to surface perceptions at the expense of deeper knowledge of the connections among all things. Through learning to communicate with Aunt Beast, whose communication proceeds from care, Meg opens her mind to possibilities closed to her: she is able to connect the rational with the empathic sides of herself. Meg's journey demonstrates what Derrida's and Vint's arguments maintain: so long as humanity proceeds from a stunted epistemology, it is not the animal's ability to respond that is in question, but the human's.

Literary Animals: (Ir) Rational Humanism on *Animots Farm*

In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault excavates the carceral, embedded in the will to make die and the power to make live. Subject to discipline, and punishment, is the imagination: the moral “orthopedics” of the schoolroom / barracks / hospital ensure imagination does not grow too wild (130). In her *Borderlands*, carceral-adjacent but writing from no-man's land, Gloria Anzaldúa wrestles with a tongue refusing braces; Anzaldúa refuses refusal – her wild tongue speaks with too many voices to ever be tame.

Wild, tame. It does not take long to enter the territory of “the animal.” As Derrida shows, it is not a matter of finding the humanist connection with the animal; it is a matter of uncovering our erasure of the animal, without which man as such does not exist. Placing his

little cat in conversation³ with Emmanuel Lévinas's faceless (but not nameless) dog, Derrida chooses anthropocentric phallogocentrism as a starting place – but not a beginning – for tracking animal presences within the “becoming subject” of Western man. Derrida finds “in every discourse concerning the animal, and notably in Western philosophical discourse, the same dominant, the same recurrence of a schema that is in truth invariable. What is that? The following: what is proper to man, his subjugating superiority over the animal, his very becoming-subject, his historicity, his emergence out of nature, his sociality, his access to knowledge and technics, all that, everything...that is proper to man would derive from this originary fault, indeed from this default in propriety, what is proper to man as default in propriety—and from the imperative necessity that finds in it its development and resilience” (45). Derrida finds that the presence of “the animal” is tied to human shame; overwhelmingly wounded, impotent before the elusive, shame propels man's development.⁴

Proper to man, as imagined in the face of Derrida's cat, Derrida locates a repudiation of the Cartesian *cogito ergo sum*; for Derrida, it is not thinking that makes being, or which distinguishes human from animal being – man differs from animal in his imagination of shame. Necessarily so, as man's becoming-subject emerges from an imperative rooted in resilience for emerging from shame, replacing shame with mastery and effacing traces of shame altogether.

Animals, and *animots*, become lines of demarcation: man is a rational being, animal is irrational; man has dominion over animals; man has language, animals instinct. In

³ “There is, to my knowledge, no attention ever seriously given to the animal gaze, no more than to the difference among animals, as though I could no more be looked at by a cat, dog, monkey, or horse, than by a snake or some blind protozoon” (*The Animal* 107).

⁴ Though shame, from inside the concentration camp, informs Levinas's encounter with Bobby, and shame informs Derrida's encounter with his cat, the difference in context permits Derrida to engage with his cat in play.

Derrida's text, the work of exclusion is clear, philosophical; the work of inclusion, the work of imagination, remains somewhat implicit, though Derrida's analysis registers the presence of this work in linguistic and literary presences. Derrida distinguishes between animals and *animots* by emphasizing the fact of his cat: "I must immediately make it clear, the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat. It isn't the figure of a cat. It doesn't silently enter the bedroom as an allegory for all the cats on the earth" (6). A real cat, she is also an *animot*; her material entry into Derrida's room, where he stands naked, branches to resonate in philosophical and literary domains, as well.

Derrida notes the comingling of humanism with sexism in Montaigne's writing. Montaigne, with vulgarity, muses, "When I play with my cat [*ma chatte*], who knows if I am not a pastime to her more than she is to me" (7). Derrida, calling attention to Montaigne's use of *ma chatte*, follows Montaigne through his phallogocentric thinking, and he returns vulgarity with perversity: "'My pussycat' (but a pussycat never belongs) is not even the one *who speaks* in *Alice in Wonderland*. Of course, if you insist at all costs on suspecting me of perversity—always a possibility—you are free to understand or receive my emphasis on 'really a little cat' as a quote from chapter 11 of *Through the Looking Glass*" (7). Teasing the relation between the vulgar rational/masculine and the perverse (resistant) nonsensical/feminine, Derrida draws forth the dual objective/metaphorical construction of the cats he follows.

While Derrida upholds his cat's materiality, and shows that man's rationality is closer to rationalizing, he explores his imaginary position without naming his work; as he works, Derrida (re)constructs his imagination via deconstructing his imaginary. Derrida argues that in the Western philosophical and literary tradition: "The animal is not a rational being, since it is deprived of the 'I think' that is the condition for understanding and reason"

(99). Rejecting rationalist humanism, which “is in a hurry to enclose and circumscribe the concept of the human as much as that of reason,” (105) Derrida instead positions shame as the defining characteristic of mankind: “what in the last instance distinguishes [animals] from man...is their being naked without knowing it. Not being naked therefore, not having knowledge of their nudity, in short, without consciousness of good and evil” (5). Between knowledge and consciousness lies Derrida’s nakedness, in front of his cat and in front of his self-conception: “Man would be the only one to have invented a garment to cover his sex. He would be a man only to the extent that he was able to be naked, that is to say, to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed, to know himself to be ashamed because he is no longer naked. And knowing himself would mean knowing himself to be ashamed” (5). Derrida knows himself, as he finds himself ashamed; implicitly, man has been self-deceiving since Socrates, Aristotle, and the *Phaedra*.

Notably, the cats, as animals and *animots*, proceed in tandem throughout Derrida’s work. Animals remain material *and* maintain objective and metaphorical dimensions. Though the Western philosophical imagination has attempted to collapse their material with their metaphorical existences, in order to make animals the objects of man’s dominion, Derrida’s analysis demonstrates not only that Western philosophy operates in imaginary dimensions – but that its operations depend upon pretending this is not so. Man creates himself in imagination by insisting that he isn’t imagining things, at all. Following psychoanalytic formulations regarding the imaginary, which for Jacques Lacan is the site of ego formation, Derrida exposes the psychic stakes for man’s pretense: “There is, according to Lacan, a clear distinction between what the animal is quite capable of, namely, strategic pretense...and what it is incapable of and incapable of witnessing to, namely, the deception of speech...within the order of the signifier and of Truth. The deception of speech of course

means, as we shall see, lying” (127-8). Lacan argues that animals are distinct from man because they do not possess the capacity to pretend to pretend; following Derrida’s logics, perhaps the underlying argument here is that, within rational humanism, men must pretend to pretend in order to avoid diminished control over their ego and identity formation and in order to manage the shame of man’s becoming-subject. Animals and *animots* serve as surrogates to this end. However, in their omnivalent presences, they challenge their positionality; what threat such challenges pose mankind are perhaps best represented in man’s suppression of animal lives and subjectivities.

The Animal That Therefore I Am is the facing of shame; it is Derrida’s refusal to remain resiliently unashamed before the gaze of “his” cat. In tracing the erasure of animals and *animots* from rationalist humanism, Derrida reveals the movement of erasure that preserves our pretense of a pretenses at humanity. His work serves as “a sort of self-accusation...The moment of self-denigration, insult of the self by the self” that restores man’s responsibility before animals / *animots* (103). It is the responsibility to let be: to let what is be, even if there is shame, and to let animals be – to simply refuse to sacrifice animals and *animots* to feed a wounded being imaginary.

Thinking with Derrida, Carey Wolfe’s *Animal Rites* examines the linkages between rights and rites (with Derrida’s signifying *write* imbricated in the mix). Traveling the distance between rights discourse and the sacrificial economy Derrida outlines, in which metaphysical sacrifice corresponds to material sacrifice, Wolfe shows how, if we imagine lives in terms of rights, we then make possible rites of pain, and killing. In Wolfe’s formulation, “the humanist concept of subjectivity is inseparable from the discourse and *institution* of speciesism, which relies on the tacit acceptance...that the full transcendence of the ‘human’ requires the sacrifice of the ‘animal’ and the animalistic, which in turn makes

possible a symbolic economy in which we can engage in a ‘noncriminal putting to death’ (as Derrida puts it) not only of animals, but other *humans* as well by marking *them* as animal” (Wolfe 43). Invoking a Marxist perspective, Wolfe gestures toward a form of material imagination: money, for example, is a material representation of the imagination of value. In Wolfe’s capitalist and (and Derrida’s carnophallogocentric) symbolic economy, money is exchanged for meat: we imagine that animals’ lives are without value and instead apply a monetary, as well as psychosocial, value to their deaths.⁵

In echoing Derrida’s call to cease the animal holocaust, Wolfe insists upon the stakes of the human / animal symbolic economy, as based in capitalist rational humanism; it is the mechanism by which man achieves the right / rite to accomplish (non-criminal) mass killings, across species division. Though deliberately provocative, Derrida’s evocation of the Holocaust is necessary to restore an absented dimension of genocide, which is the ultimate outcome of the (human) symbolic economy Wolfe examines.

Raphael Lemkin, who gives us the term genocide with his 1944 work *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, also gives us the means to engage the forms of violence genocide enacts: “[G]enocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves” (79). Culture, the sole dimension stripped from Lemkin’s formulation in the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, is an essential foundation for the life of a group; activities including forbidding teaching a national language and learning a

⁵ Achilles Mbembé’s “Necropolitics” provides a relevant “analysis on state power based in *the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations*” (14).

national history are included. Additionally, Lemkin notes, “Polish youths were excluded from the benefit of liberal arts studies...The occupant apparently believes that the study of the liberal arts may develop independent national Polish thinking...In order to prevent the expression of the national spirit through artistic media, a rigid control of all cultural activities has been introduced. All persons engaged in painting, drawing, sculpture, music, literature, and the theater are required to obtain a license for the continuation of their activities” (84). As are physical, economic, and social violences, reducing a nation’s capacity to engage and (re)produce its own imaginary is a means of annihilating a people. The privileging of a symbolic economy that *depends* upon a sacrificial (il)logic, which operates by erasing the acts of imagination it must accomplish in order to achieve such an (il)logic, has no more rational endpoint than genocide.⁶

The linkage between sacrifice and symbol exceeds dehumanization; it is more than the reduction of a subject to the position of the animal. As Elizabeth Anker argues, “the belief that animal life is pure carnal being without self-consciousness, reason, or a soul has allowed animals’ instrumental use and dietary consumption. Indeed, it has been well documented how people overcome their aversion to cruelty through psychological mechanisms of dehumanization, or the imaginative reduction of human lives to mere embodiment or animality” (22). The erasure of the imagination becomes a misappropriation; in predicating aversion to cruelty as originary, rather than placing cruelty as the default, Anker’s point suggests that the pretense at pretense is necessary to overcome reservations against doing harm. Reducing the human to the status reserved for the animal requires us to close our imaginary eyes, in order that we may fail to see: we know how to address pain,

⁶ To extend Derrida’s and Wolfe’s perspective, it should be unnecessary to state that animals have an equivalent of culture, or perhaps meaningful behaviors that correspond to held values; all that is needed is to

suffering, and shame. We know how to express dissent, fear, and rage. How is it that we do not?

Where Derrida stands in shame, in order to witness and grieve the wounding of man that results in the death of animals, Wolfe aims to undermine the exclusions used to justify human supremacy over animals. For Wolfe, an obvious failing of humanist logic is its attempt to “maintain that species difference coincides with ethical difference, whereas animal rights philosophy attempts to confront the fact that differences in degree between the human and the animal with regard to the freedom/necessity doublet...cannot be coherently maintained as differences in kind” (10). Wolfe suggests, like Derrida, that no category – including language – provides sufficient difference to uphold the difference in kind argument that deems some animals more worthy of rights than others. In other words, what is in need of attention is more than the opposition between human / animal, we must attend to the mechanism of opposition itself. In framing rationalist humanism as a wound, there becomes space to consider Wolfe’s call to action: “to examine the theoretical conditions of possibility under which [animals’] claims might matter, might *have a claim* on us” (10). Wounds need healing. Derrida begins this process, though next steps remain to be made. As Wolfe concludes, “Derrida’s deconstruction of the ability to ‘erase’ one’s traces ‘might appear subtle and fragile but its fragility renders fragile all the solid oppositions that we are in the process of tracking down, beginning with that between symbolic and imaginary which underwrites finally this whole anthropocentric reinstitution of the superiority of the human order over the animal order” (80).

“Moving Beyond Shame”: Becoming Kin, Becoming Kind

look at the means we undertake to control their social engagements, or to prevent their successful protest against the harms done to them.

Shame is the genesis of hierarchy, paired as it is with teleological determinism. As Derrida circles around the story of Genesis, his movement resembles the rambling path a cat might take, and this Derrida follows. The effect of his circling, or spiraling, motion is to defeat hierarchy. The animal – in all its varieties – forms the center and heart of his lecture. Beyond that, his lines of inquiry avoid creating the linear order that subtly underlies the notions of evolution or design Derrida traces most clearly in the origin story of Man: Genesis.

Derrida continues with his intertextual tracking – which is not a tracking of the animal but of the human – beginning with the snake in the Garden of Eden. In Paul Valéry's "Silhouette of a Serpent," Derrida locates the notion of "disguise":

An "I" speaks...and presents itself as the "(stupid) beast [that] I am." Yet it speaks in order to denounce itself. It confesses. But it confesses also by presenting itself as "the most cunning of animals." This cunning master of nakedness dissimulated at the origin of desire begins by avowing: I am lying, I am an other, and here are the animal disguises by means of which I disguise myself in "animal simplicity," showing and hiding at the same time what is in truth neither so much animal nor simple, nor, in any case, the identity of a single and simple animal. (65)

Truth given by the lie, this snake is a master of paradox, "showing and hiding at the same time" what it is to inhabit dual experiences – the knowledge of simplicity presupposes the knowledge of complexity. Clothing itself in one means revealing itself as the other. Derrida terms this revelation "confession." The serpent confesses by denouncing and avowing itself as a liar, by disguising and showing its disguising in order to represent itself as it is.

As the serpent's voice speaks, Derrida shows himself able to hear its story of purposefully engaged slippages: "The blue sky in its splendor sharpens / This wyvern who disguises me / In animal simplicity" (65). The wyvern, as Derrida reminds us, "is a fantastic animal (and every animal, as distinct from *l'animot*, is essentially fantastic, phantasmatic, fabulous, of a fable that speaks to us and speaks to us of ourselves... The wyvern, like the

chimera, is an animal in three: there are still here, if it can be said, in the same piece, in the same body: body of a serpent, of course, but with piglet's feet and bat's wings" (66).

Monstrous, chimaeric, the serpent speaks to us, Man, of ourselves: it presents, in disguise, our reflection. Like the direct glance at the Medusa that turns men to stone, the glance at Man must be mediated by metaphor.

Shoshanna Felman and Dori Laub's "Bearing Witness or the Vicissitudes of Listening" explores "testimony," the putting into narrative an event beyond knowledge, in the context of testimony given by Holocaust survivors. Felman and Laub suggest,

The listener to the narrative of extreme human pain, of massive psychic trauma, faces a unique situation...Massive trauma precludes its registration...The victim's narrative – the very process of bearing witness to massive trauma – does indeed begin with someone who testifies to an absence, to an event that has not yet come into existence, in spite of the overwhelming and compelling nature of the reality of its occurrence...The emergence of the narrative which is being listened to – and heard – is, therefore, the process and the place wherein the cognizance, the "knowing" of the event is given birth to. The listener, therefore, is a party to the creation of knowledge *de novo*. The testimony to the trauma thus includes its hearer who is, so to speak, the blank screen on which the event comes to be inscribed for the first time. (57)

Jacques Derrida offers himself as one who can hear. In his play with the existential being of his little cat, Derrida wanders into the stakes of animals' play with Man: being itself. Derrida encounters, in the story of Genesis and the voice of the serpent, an account of extreme human pain that signals a massive psychic trauma. Genesis is the story of the fall from grace: humans, who wish to believe themselves created in the image of God, disguise their monstrousness, which both shows and hides their vulnerability. Derrida's reading suggests that the cloak of animal "simplicity" – beguiling for its innocence – is drawn across Man's pain at his essential monstrousness. The serpent "dissimulating at the origin of desire" locates the pain at desire, as desire. Desire, as it seems, to be godlike and intentional and beautiful; the desire to be desirable and to be desired. The covering of the sex, which occurs

after the fall, suggests that the fall is not to do with knowledge or obedience, or even good and evil; it is about covering vulnerability and then covering the cover.

In registering the event, Derrida offers himself as Felman and Laub's "blank screen," though he shows that the screen is not blank; more, it is responsive. Listening to the voice of the serpent, Derrida wanders through the resonances that are called into wakefulness. His writing through this process is an act of translation: he hears the serpent within attentively enough to manifest a legible presence. "The listener," as Felman and Laub continue, "is also a separate human being and will experience hazards and struggles of his own... While overlapping, to a degree, with the experience of the victim, he nonetheless does not become the victim – he preserves his own separate place, position, and perspective; a battleground for forces raging in himself, to which he has to pay attention and respect if he is to properly carry out his task" (58). As Derrida inhabits his own shame, he disentangles his experience from his cat's, and from the experience of Man. He performs the task of the witness, and he maps for us the terrain of the battleground.

Reading from Derrida's map, it is possible to see the areas not yet shaded. Hearing through Derrida's experience, it is possible to listen for that which goes unheard. There is another story of Genesis; it is the story of Adam's first wife, Lilith, discarded for refusing Adam's sexual – and patriarchal – dominion. Lilith makes no appearance, says no word, in Derrida's story. Refused, shamed, Adam – who, unlike Derrida's cat, enters Genesis burdened with representing all men everywhere – casts her away to give birth to monstrous offspring, and Adam enters into patriarchy with Eve.

Lilith uncovers the hidden vulnerability – a desire to be desired – that Adam cannot inhabit without her. Lilith holds the power to recuperate the fear and pain Derrida witnesses; she holds it in the form of the power to play along with Adam's illusion of dominion. Her

refusal to affirm his disguise, which is also her refusal to accept his confession, instead affirms his fear that he should feel shame for his contingent, multiple, paradoxical being.

Shame, perversely, is a quality of privilege. Aspiring to be more, finding less, is a luxury reserved for those whose lives are not consumed with physical and psychic survival. In bell hooks's *Salvation*, "Moving Beyond Shame," hooks positions self-love as the counterpoint to shame and pairs it with decolonization: "Decolonization is the necessary groundwork for the development of self-love... Learning to be positive, to affirm ourselves, is a way to cultivate self-love, to intervene on shaming that is racialized" (73-74). At the intersections of shame, teleology and race, hooks moves to dismantle what Derrida deconstructs, and hooks offers insight that builds upon Derrida's perspective. Like Derrida, hooks argues that, "Within a culture of domination, shaming others is one way to assert coercive power and dominance" (82). While both hooks and Derrida do work of witnessing, hooks writes from the perspective of survival rather than (reluctant) mastery. Excluded from the "universal" neoliberal subjectivity Derrida examines, hooks – inhabiting positionalities that are Black, queer, and feminine – has no investment in the disguise or the dissimulation that enables Man to posit supremacy over animals and other humans. For hooks, there is no originary shame that requires her to turn away from self-knowledge; rather, hooks identifies an inverse process:

Masking has been so central to black folks' survival within white supremacist culture that we have not always recognized the ways it harms self-esteem. Basically, masking invites us to create a false self, to misrepresent and dissimulate... While masking was sometimes crucial to survival during the period of racial apartheid, those strategies destroy our capacity to be truth tellers when we adopt them in contemporary life. This cannot be stated often enough. Since patriarchal masculinity also encourages men to mask what they feel as a way of manipulating others, black males are especially at risk for being estranged from their feelings. (87)

Black lives are required to adopt the trappings of deception – the lie in order to tell the truth, the confession – that seem to be a requirement for entry into Western civilization. The dissimulations are directed differently; in hooks’s formulation, masking is mobilized to survive an external oppressor, while for Derrida there seems to be no oppressor (because the oppression is privilege). The consequences of adopting false identities, once disimbricated from attempts to exert control, are clearer: the destruction of the capacity for truth telling and the corollary lessening of self-esteem. Derrida’s inscription of shame, upon his textual body, opens an opportunity to reclaim both, though the means are problematic: Derrida’s witnessing will need to be witnessed.

“Setting Witnessing In Motion: The Password” is Felman and Laub’s formulation of the need for an exchange, of sorts, to occur in witnessing. It is not an even exchange; the giver of testimony takes recognition, while the listener must both give recognition and bear with making of herself the battleground. Laub discusses a kind of understanding, or “illumination,” that occurs during psychoanalytic sessions:

It is as though two simultaneous dialogues proceed...Occasionally, I am aware of both...A cue is dropped, barely heard...At...times, I seize upon it and echo it in my response. I simply indicate that I know it, and thus *make myself known as one who knows*...there are times in which it is as though a cord [*sic*] is struck and an internal chorus, a thousand voices are set free. The other melody, that subtler music, then emerges, suddenly resounding loud and clear. It has always been there...waiting to be liberated from its captivity of silence. It is as though a password has been uttered, in the expectation that it be passed over once again; a word by which the patient names himself and asks against all odds for a reciprocal identification. (63)

Derrida’s position would seem to suggest that his cat is the witness who must, in accepting Derrida’s naming of himself, tie herself with his cord. Derrida refuses the asymmetry of such an act, in a tacit expectation that his position of privilege relative to her would ask of her an unaskable burden. There is a respect, here, that – predictably, by now – is also a devaluing of the cat’s agency and ability to choose her own role.

hooks links love with self-worth, both for self-love and loving others. Loving is an exercise of self-value, and it is resistance to oppression steeped in self-hatred: “Living in a culture that constantly devalues us, black women must work doubly hard to be loving” (99). I do not, of course, suggest that hooks’s position is interchangeable with Derrida’s cat’s. But the mechanism is similar, and the dehumanization of Black women relies upon the conceptual ground created by animality, as less than humanity. The difficulty of the exchange is clear: what Derrida’s testimony needs is hooks’s listening. It is an unaskable task, given the history of atrocity and the ongoing suffering that separates white experience from Black. It is a gift that must, if it is to be given, be offered; it cannot be compelled, forced, or tricked. Adam must face Lilith in his vulnerability and ask for her to lie with him; he must be able to move beyond shame, whether she refuses or not.

Love is the healing of the pain Derrida encounters; in a way, the pain of the oppressor can only be mended by the oppressed. Chela Sandoval’s *Methodology of the Oppressed* offers a revolutionary formulation of love as an emancipatory social movement that aims at decolonizing the social imaginary. Sandoval’s methodology addresses the “social imagination” under which oppression flourishes and lives do not:

But the new countrypeople who fight for egalitarian social relations under neocolonial postmodernism welcome citizenry to a new polity, a new homeland. The means for entry is the ‘methodology of the oppressed,’ a set of technologies for decolonizing the social imagination. These technologies – semiotic perception, the deconstruction of supremacy, the meta-ideologizing of signification, the differential perception and deployment of consciousness, are all processes that are guided by democracies, the practitioners’ commitment to the equal distribution of power. All these technologies together, when also joined to those of differential social movement and to those of differential consciousnesses, operate as a single apparatus that I call the physics of love. Love as social movement is enacted by revolutionary, mobile, and global coalitions of citizen-activists who are allied through the apparatus of emancipation. (184)

Sandoval's work leaves space for identities constructed in revolutionary, coalitional, and emancipatory frames: "By focusing on prospects for psychic emancipation, Sandoval summons a new subject capable of love, hope, and transformative resistance" (xiii). While Derrida offers himself as one who knows the need for such a subjectivity, he remains apart from those whose witness might complete the testimony he gives.

What Derrida reaches for, caught in the dissimulating that is at the origin of desire, Sandoval defines succinctly as "our 'erotics' (the sensuous apprehension and expression of love as affinity)" (173). Lyndon Gill addresses Audre Lorde's thinking of the erotic and argues that, according to Lorde, "erotic knowledge becomes 'a lens through which we scrutinize all aspects of our existence, forcing us to evaluate those parts honestly in terms of their relative meaning within our lives.'" Gill cites "Black queer Caribbeanist literary theorist Omise'eke Tinsley" whose

close readings of people, places, and texts in her *Thieving Sugar: Eroticism Between Women in Caribbean Literature* reaches toward Lorde's erotic...as a "wellspring of resistance to colonial symbolic and economic orders." For Tinsley—following her interpretation of Lorde's essay—eroticism is best understood "as a sharing of deep, possibly but not necessarily sexual feeling that emerges as a resource with the power to motivate individual and collective change." Tinsley's text extends from women of color's "mutual sharing of eroticism," which she interprets principally as women feeling for each other in contexts that were supposed to preclude feeling (or an empathetic compassion), to their "mutual sharing of sexuality" or their feeling upon "each other's breasts, thighs and waists" as a kind of sensuously shared self-possession. This emphasis on a broad landscape of (anticolonial and antiimperialist) sensuality as an interpretive map to eros is certainly informed by Lorde and does the important work of pulling the erotic beyond a mere euphemism for sex acts (where the erotic so often remains bound in the popular imagination and a large portion of scholarly literature). (178)

Among the bridges Gill and Tinsley find, out of the isolation of the heteropatriarchal Western rational subject, are resistance to colonial symbolic and economic orders (the desire toward collective sharing), empathetic compassion (in the foreclosure of sensuously shared "self-possession," or connection to another through connection to the self through crossing

boundaries of physical and affective distance), and the restoration of sensibility to an instrumental view of sex acts (which reduces participants to materiality, in which perversely desiring is locked out of the experience). Another way to read Lilith's refusal of Adam is to see that she insists upon her pleasure, her desiring, her self-possession, and that Adam's disconnection from these dimensions of his subjectivity is his wound and the source of the violence that tears Lilith's chapter, unwritten, from the book of Genesis.

Gill makes explicit the ties between the sensual and the political, while exploring the need in the "popular imagination" for bridges that link the longing for deep connections with the desiring toward difference:

If the sensual ("those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love in its deepest meanings") provides a bridge between the political and the spiritual, then "the erotic" constitutes the entire structure and ought not to be reduced to an easy symmetry with any of its composite elements even if the popular imagination still gets lost wading the rapids beneath Lorde's bridge. Following Lorde, I propose that the erotic must be reconceptualized as a perspectival trinity that holds together the political-sensual-spiritual at their most abstract; in other words, "the erotic" describes various formal and informal power hierarchies (the political), sexual as well as nonsexual intimacy (the sensual), and sacred metaphysics (the spiritual) simultaneously. Attentive to the interconnected elements that give substance to a Lordean erotic, it becomes easier to recognize how a fundamental impulse to connect areas of experience that may seem disparate also lends itself to the linking work that Lorde reveres in eros. (188)

For Gill, the insistence on the structural "abstract" definition situates Lorde amongst the existential philosophers in Derrida's line. Without confining Lorde to such a lineage, this positionality offers to highlight what – along with animal and animalized lives and subjectivities – is sacrificed within a hierarchical, teleological notion of the human. Without erotics, there is only technics: the machinic, the instrumental, the killing without murder of difference that is longed for – and so, ultimately, disavowed and disappeared.

Gill concludes with a call to imagine erotics as performative of a desire for connection to self through “loving” others, rather than as solely behaviors reserved for connections that have already been made:

Although we have likely never met, what might it mean for me to declare a love for you? This love is rooted in the recognition that we share something as divine as breath between us. How might this love help us to see that we are not nearly as distinct as we seem? This is not always a comfortable recognition, but this vision for us across our dividing differences is certainly part of our Lordean inheritance. What if we embrace Lorde’s invitation into the truth that when we are at our best, we are reaching for each other with love? Shamelessly then, offering this love and anticipating yours in return, I reach toward you assured, before an audience of witnesses—in spirit and in flesh—that there is infinite potential in our embrace. (189)

Gill extends erotics into an embrace that does not rely on personal connection to enliven our engagements with ourselves and each other. Loving others is not a selfless act, but a self-affirming act. Shameless, reassured by an audience of witnesses willing to serve as battlegrounds, in our reaching toward another who we hope – and believe – is reaching for us, we create a genesis for humankind based in kinship, belonging, and mutual healing.

When Is a Turtle Just a Turtle? When A Cigar Is Just A Cigar

“I don’t know why we are doing this...or where you are getting your stamina from [laughter]...to be able to continue to listen to me?” (141). Derrida concludes his lecture with humor, even as he tacitly acknowledges the ground his exploration has brought him to. Deconstructing the myths that uphold Western subjectivity – myths disguised as rationality – Derrida has left Man to face himself, with the categories that secure his identity destabilized.

Rather than answer his own question, and thereby reimpose the hierarchies he has taken such careful pains to unravel, Derrida returns to the beginning of his lecture. Pursuing his reflections on Heidegger, Derrida suggests that Heidegger’s homesickness, which is a homesickness for nostalgia, is “the fundamental attunement of philosophizing, and the

question concerning the world, finitude, individuation. (Is *esseulement* the best translation for *Vereinziehung*? Singularization? Singleness [*esseulement*]? Solitude? It's very complicated.) Once more, it is clearly a matter of replying to the question 'What is a man?'" (145). Man is a being with no home; individual, he is lonely and rigidly contained in what Derrida refers to as a "dogmatic" ontological formulation, which stems from Descartes's failure "to pose the question of what being meant in the *ergo sum*" (147). From here, Derrida "jumps ahead" to "where Heidegger raises the question of the 'awakening' of consciousness":

For Heidegger...it will involve a more radical reach: "Awakening [Weckung]: not ascertaining something at hand...but letting what is asleep become wakeful. The question of awakening includes the question of sleep, which cannot be separated from that of the animal. Awakening is thus "letting what is asleep become wakeful," and Heidegger naturally takes to task those who would reduce the distinction between consciousness and unconsciousness. What he calls waking is not consciousness; what he calls sleeping is not the unconscious." Here is the passage: whenever we awaken an attunement... this entails that it was already there, and yet not there. On the negative side, we have seen that the distinction between being there and not being there is not equivalent to that between consciousness and unconsciousness. From this, however, we may conclude something further: If attunement is something that belongs to man, is "in him," as we say, or if man has an attunement, and if this cannot be clarified with the aid of consciousness and unconsciousness, then we will not come close to this matter at all so long as we take man as something distinguished from material things by the fact that he has consciousness, that he is an animal endowed with reason, a rational animal, or an ego with pure life-experiences that has been tacked on to a body. (146)

Derrida, through Heidegger, links awakening with attunement. In the opposition between conscious and unconscious, Heidegger opens another way, which he finds is a thing that "belongs" to man and is "in him." It is a thing that exceeds rational consciousness, or experiences that are "tacked" onto a body. Derrida notes that Heidegger pursues this line of connection, through the question of whether the animal has "world" as, for Heidegger, Man does, only to reach a dizzying lack of conclusion.

Derrida says, “I would have liked to insist on the moments of vertigo and circularity in this text. That’s what would take time: taking an interest in the difficult moments, admitted to and made explicit by Heidegger, regarding what he calls the circularity of his manner of proceeding, the vertigo...turning round and round...This vertigo is that of an interrogation into the animal, and, finally, it’s the concept of world itself that becomes problematic and fragile” (155). Following Derrida’s thinking, the question of the animal leads simultaneously inward, seeking an intangible, (human) sense of attunement, and outward, to a world that becomes problematic and fragile. The animal, represented as instinctive but not reasoning, is constructed as a placeholder: conscious / (attunement) / unconscious interlocks with rational human / (animal) / imaginary human. Folded in these pairings, seemingly collapsed by their division / , the relations we are consciously / unconsciously traveling – as we engage the human / animal – unfold. Derrida’s intensive work, across the body of his thought, might be represented as such: finding the term human, he recovers the excised animal: human becomes human / animal. Or, finding the term animal, he recovers the excised hu(man). Involution and evolution. What Derrida uncovers, implicitly, is the positionality from which he has been working: rational human / imaginary human with the ubiquitous, elastic figure of the animal providing the material(ity) for our constant movement / .

The fragility of the world, the vertigo of our engagement, must be encountered by what we understand to be the human psyche. Moving through Lacan, to Freud, Derrida arrives at “our problem”: “What am I?”

“I” am in the place from which a voice is heard clamouring “the universe is a defect in the purity of Non-Being.”

And not without reason, for by protecting itself this place makes Being itself languish. This place is called *Jouissance*, and it is the absence of this that makes the universe vain.

Am I responsible for it, then? Yes, probably. Is this *jouissance*, the *lack* of which makes the Other insubstantial, mine, then? Experience proves that it is usually forbidden me, not only, as certain fools believe, because of a bad arrangement of society, but rather because of the *fault* [*faute*] of the Other if he existed: and since the Other does not exist, all that remains to me is to assume the fault upon “I,” that is to say, to believe in that to which experience leads us all, Freud in the vanguard, namely to *original sin*. For even if we did not have Freud’s express, and sorrowful avowal, the fact would remain that the myth Freud gave us—the latest born myth in history—is no more use than that of the forbidden apple, except for the fact, that, though more succinct, it is distinctly less stultifying.

But what is not a myth, and which Freud nevertheless formulated soon after the Oedipus complex, is the castration complex. (140)

Derrida’s pleasure in his encounter with his little cat, which brings forth his inexplicable shame at his nakedness before her, leads him to debunk original sin and the Oedipus complex. On the way, he recognizes that the absence of *jouissance* – to which we are each responsible – that makes “the Other” insubstantial. Derrida’s cat becomes his ambassador, and guide, to a *jouissance* whose absence leaves “us” (civilizing humanity) to the rending and divisive myth of Adam, Eve. And, evoked by the castration complex – via her refusal to follow Adam’s imposition of mastery to cover his lack of *jouissance* – to Lilith.

In the place of clamouring voices, one of which claims the universe as a defect in the purity of non-being, Derrida finds the human. The human / animal. The rational human – whose defensive philosophy proves insubstantial. And, at last, the imaginary human: the imaginary being whose presence in the void is generative. Generative of *jouissance*, but also generative of myth. The responsibility of imagination is too much to carry. The universe of non-being must have a universe of being: non-being / being stretches and pulls at the “premature” psyche of man. As Derrida closes, with the material he would have opened with, had there been world enough and time, he “begins” where he “ends”: “I don’t know why we are doing this” (141). Except that he has been impelled by the face of his cat, wondering, and been willing to be guided by her into awakening.

Imaginary Creatures: Speculations On The Responsibility of Imagination

Troubling the epistemological, ontological, rational, and teleological underpinnings of the Western “human,” the works collected here destabilize the symbolic boundaries that uphold life as we allow ourselves to know it. The resulting cognitive estrangement invites a refiguring of “the human;” or, it allows us to inhabit – and examine – a crucial dimension of humans’ life-worlds that has been all but stripped from our humanities. Humans are creatures of imagination. Our words link objects with sounds. Our stories link experiences with frameworks; we become subjective amidst transformative explorations of human experience: As with me (?), so with you (?). Differently focused, our sciences’ explorations link stories with objects of study: if apple, then gravity.

Our bodies link our imaginations with our materiality: we build the imaginaries we inhabit, and we build the imaginaries we allow others to inhabit. As beings of imagination, like the hypothetical “if” that may not reach “then,” there are portions of our selves that exist only in imagination, until or unless sufficient conditions of materiality intervene. Every if / then is a world in process, as every fiction is a world of is / is not. Until materiality makes its presence felt – we are always material, electrochemical receivers and transmitters – we inhabit possibility. We are beings who imagine our way(s) into ordered materiality.

Being imaginary. Bound only by recognition – by what we recognize and by what recognizes us. Navigation in the imagination has no tangible points of orientation – no direct objects to hold up as evidence that imagination is present, driving, and real. If some capacities are included, in what we recognize, then some are not: exclusion provides one line of orientation. But some capacities have been realized, while others have been realized otherwise: inclusion provides an intersecting line. Among these inclusive / exclusive engagements, we find the imaginary where the appetites and aptitudes that are recognized

(by what authorities, we should ask), we nourish. We can also locate those appetites and aptitudes that trouble our recognitions, as these, we punish – unless we can discipline our imaginations enough to prevent rupturing performances from occurring. Or so it goes, until the tortoise wakes.

Encountering the sundered capacity of Western metaphysics, to engage being imaginary, I have gathered the following works according to a simple logic of affinity. Each of these works calls upon me, again and again, to follow; each strikes in me a resonant c(h)ord of response. That I am able to respond means that I must: this is the imbrication evoked by *responsability*.

I have ordered my chapters according to two modes of travel: / and \/. Binarily constructed, linear conceptions of epistemology, ontology, and teleology – including its intersection with hierarchy – are set adrift on the currents of a certain uncertainty that is ameliorated, at every point, by an engagement with animals. At the same time, animals and women of color are positioned at (as) the center, with white femininity and white masculinity as the outer oppositions. Travel by \ pulls the edges through the center, and the center through the edges, following the problematic and fragile world through its motion of vertigo. As witnesses to, and travelers through, what may become our companion imaginaries, we may perhaps find within ourselves a better will to create a better way.

Chapter One, “Speculative Non \ Fiction: Human Responsibility & the Feminist *Bildungsroman*” examines the *bildungsroman*, expanding on work by Eve Bannatt and Joseph Slaughter, as a genre that has historically contributed to writing our social texts. Intervening at the point of the gendered language, which informs each writer’s work, Brian Luke contributes an exploration of frameworks of justice and care, whose alignment with masculine versus feminine voices suggest transgressive, and so transformative, possibilities

for our engagements with animals. Chapter One foregrounds the tesseract epistemology of science / fiction, as imagined by Madeleine L'Engle's feminist bildungsroman *A Wrinkle In Time*, in which the distance between science and fiction, as traveled by an Aunt, is resonance.

Chapter Two, "Animots Farm: Animals Within the Symbolic Ecology," recuperates George Orwell's *Animal Farm: A Fairy Story*, as a novella whose wondering ontology is un beholden to the anthropocentric carnophallogocentrism that determines the life-chances of Manor Farm's animals. Engaging with the Marxist critique of the text, but bypassing overdetermined readings of the Cold War, Eric Otto's *Green Speculations* offers a means to shift the animals' farm from the symbolic economy to a symbolic ecology, where sociologist Elizabeth Cherry and visual artist Miru Kim engage a species *différance* that "blurs the boundaries" between human and animal "putting the two on the same physical, visual, and moral plane" (Cherry 77).

Chapter Three, "Becoming Kin(d): Octavia Butler's Irresistible Erotics of Witnessing" creates a parallel Genesis story, in Octavia Butler's *Xenogenesis* trilogy. Unwilling witness to the Oankali's deepest wants, hopes, and insecurities, Lilith Iyapo's survival depends upon her ability to perceive her captors – and her own species – with compassion enough to heal the fatal flaw in both species: a disavowal of shame that results in genocidal atrocity. Now out of print, *Xenogenesis* appears under the title *Lilith's Brood*. Organized by collective of activist educators, *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* engages Butler's trilogy in order to apply the lessons of Butler's "visionary fiction" to the work of social justice movements, whose aim is to align frameworks of justice with frameworks of care in order to imagine-into-being collectively organized lifeworlds based in witnessing the self with love, rather than shame.

Chapter Four, “Iahklu’: The Awakening of Consciousness,” grasps the teleological roots of Western metaphysics and, following (anti)protagonist George Orr through Ursula Le Guin’s *The Lathe of Heaven*, transplants our arboreal philosophies in the oceanic vicissitudes of collective agency, whose currents are experienced, psychosomatically, as traumatic violences against a Western, white, heteropatriarchal sense of identity conceived as individual, self-directed, and self-determining. For the now unmoored dreamers of effective dreams, Le Guin’s text offers a guide for proceeding through a metaphysical landscape set adrift: *er’perrehnne*.

Concluding, in “Companion Species, Companion Imaginaries,” Donna Haraway’s advocacy for an ethics of companion species meets Jacques Derrida’s opening of ethics to the possibility of companion imaginaries. Awake to the joy of animal companionship, science / fiction, or what Haraway terms *sf* worlding at the intersection of speculative fiction and speculative fact, enables us to embrace a lifeworld that holds in the left hand the galaxy, as we hold in our right the turtles and tortoises upon whose backs we rest. Placing Haraway’s advocacy for play alongside Derrida’s literary play with his little cat, we arrive at Tuxedo Stan’s Campaign for a Humane World. Tuxedo Stan, a cat who ran for Mayor, offers an ethics of play that reclaims agency for non / human animals, and casts the performance of care for others as *a priori* an attribute of a moral, playful (and cute) being imaginary.

“Oh, we don’t travel at the speed of *anything*,” Mrs. Whasit explained earnestly.

“We tesser. Or you might say, we *wrinkle*” (58).

Chapter One

Speculative Non / Fiction: Human Responsibility & the Feminist *Bildungsroman*

What is the distance between science and fiction? Between hu(man) / animal?

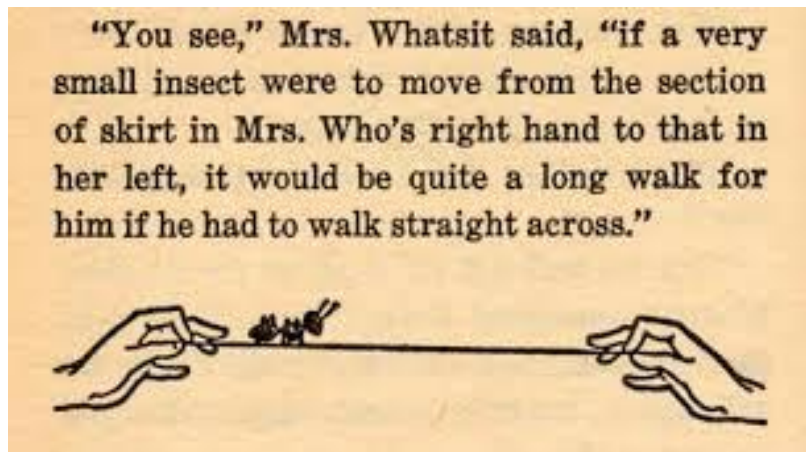
Guided by stars who are not stars, healed by a Beast who is not a beast, misfit heroine Meg Murray travels the distance of the universe and returns home as herself. Meg, we are told by her precocious baby brother Charles Wallace, has it rough: “She’s not really one thing or another” (32). Smart but stubborn, caring but guarded, Meg sees herself through lenses of others’ construction and finds herself flawed, monstrous, and hateful.

Meg journeys by means of the tesseract. Among her hu(man) companions, Charles Wallace, Calvin, and her Father, Meg has the most difficulty tolerating the travel. She experiences it as a breaking, as isolation, as agony – until the tesser home, which she experiences as a sense of safety and belonging. As in a traditional *bildungsroman*,⁷ Meg comes of age and returns home, finding her identity through the course of her journey.

⁷ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meister's Apprenticeship* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther* are generally considered the exemplary and foundational *bildungsromane*. They recount the coming of age of a young, male protagonist who leaves home, dissatisfied with its narrow confines, travels through a series of challenges, only to mature enough to return to society now more accepting of his role. Eve Tabor Barratt notes, “Lukács and Bakhtin have both argued that the male Bildungsroman also works extensively with the contrast between real and ideal or idyllic elements, but they emphasize the element of critique rather than that of social reeducation and reconstruction. Both argue that the ideal, the ‘love idyll,’ or the ‘family idyll’ serve primarily as a critique of the social world, whose evils are shown up by ‘the deep humanity of idyllic man,’ by ‘the humanity of his human relationships’ and by the wholeness of idyllic life.’ Lukács locates the ideal in the hero of the Bildungsroman conceived as a single, problematical individual with a ‘beautiful soul’ who can find no adequate place for himself in the world, while Bakhtin locates it in ‘the small but secure and stable little world of the family’ which the hero acquires after his wanderings through an alien and depersonalized world...Bakhtin allows the possibility of a critique of the idyll within the Bildungsroman when he argues, for instance, that in Goethe’s *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre* the family idyll is shown to be too narrow and limited to establish society on a new basis and to ‘humanize it.’ This is why, he says, Goethe makes his hero ‘expatriate himself’ and ‘sever all previous ties to the ‘idyllic’ before learning to function in the social world by ‘mak[ing] it his own, domesticat[ing] it’” (199-200).

Unlike literature's heroes, Meg journeys by tesseract; finding her way by affinity, keeping what affirms her sense of self and resisting the rest, Meg travels the unexplored distances between her affective and analytical intelligences in a journey that helps her fit the pieces of herself into a cohesive whole.

Among her nonhuman companions, Mrs. Whatsit – the madwoman powerfully and gleefully out of the attic⁸ – introduce Meg to the tesseract in simple terms. “She,” though Mrs. Whatsit’s “true” form is genderless, asks Meg to imagine a “small insect” traversing a length of fabric; Mrs. Who holds between her hands a segment of the skirt she has donned. As the text illustrates, a tesseract is like a fold, or a wrinkle, that seems to collapse the distance between points and allow the traveler to “suddenly be there”:



⁸ *The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth-Century Literary Imagination*, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar,

Swiftly Mrs. Who brought her hands, still holding the skirt, together.

“Now, you see,” Mrs. Whatsit said, “he would *be* there, without that long trip. That is how we travel.”



Like the ant in Mrs. Whatsit’s demonstration, Charles Wallace, Calvin and Meg’s Father experience no ill effects from the travel.⁹ Meg, carried in her Father’s inexperienced grasp, nearly dies. Returned to herself by the aid of a beast, Meg gains strength enough to break the hold of IT – a pulsating mind that uses pain to exercise absolute control – over both herself and her more vulnerable little brother.

Meg’s perceptions open Madeleine L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle In Time* as a wrinkle in epistemology. Traveling from here to there by means of intuitive understanding, Meg comes of age in a feminist *bildungsroman* where the distance between science and fiction – the distance between rational and affective self – as traveled by an Aunt is resonance.¹⁰

⁹ Interestingly, the text describes “a very small insect;” the illustration depicts an ant. There is no discussion, within the novel or without, regarding the selection of the ant as archetypical of the journeying insect. The selection suggests, perhaps, an unnoticed cultural acknowledgement of the ant as a more noble character than, say, a flea. Ants are collective, industrious workers; children have seen them, with their waving antennae, seeking paths and sending the information back to their collectives. Familiar, accessible, valiant, the ant provides a bridge into the unfamiliar landscape the story is poised to enter.

¹⁰ Jacques Derrida’s *Différance* opens a pause between language and meaning, which, for subjectivities constructed in language, opens a space between the subject and its formation. “Differance is what makes the movement of signification possible only if each so-called ‘present’ element, each element appearing on the scene of presence is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of a past element, and already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not, to what it absolutely is not: that is, not even to a past or a future as a modified present. An interval must separate the present from what it is not, in order for the present to be itself, but this interval that constitutes it as present must, by the same token, divide the present in and of

Yyou Hhave Ssomethinnngg Thatt ITT Hhass Nnott

Meg is smart at math and too stubborn to be good at memorization; she is good at things that interest her, and she fails at things she cannot muster excitement for. Her facility with logic, as evinced by her skill with numbers, is matched by her emotional capacity. For Meg, trained by her physicist Father, mathematics draws upon reason and intuition; emotion, which she largely experiences through the pain of her Father's absence, draws upon intuition and something like faith – knowing the truth of an experience by how it feels.

Were Mrs. Whatsit to hold reason in her left hand and emotion in her right, intuition would be the fabric of the relation between. Unlike the novel's other characters, Meg's capacities are too balanced in strength for her comfort. She cannot hold to one strength, as Charles Wallace holds to emotion or her Father holds with mathematics. She cannot anchor herself; instead, she attunes. As she moves, and is moved through, the tesseract, Meg is vulnerable to becoming the things through which she journeys. Given gifts, given shelter, and given opportunity, Meg's struggle culminates in her understanding that she must choose to be who she is. That she is worthy, as she is. Finding herself, Meg accepts empowerment and embraces its responsibilities: she gives up waiting for a patriarchal figure – Father,

itself, thereby also dividing, along with the present, everything that is thought on the basis of the present, that is, in our metaphysical language, every being, and in particular the substance or subject" (Royle 13).

Derrida's play on homophones, which he combines into the neologism *différance*, to locate the way in which movement is inherent in signification. Travel must occur, for a hearer to distinguish between *difference* and *differance*, and to infer the meaning offered by the speaker. Like Mrs. Whatsit's ant, the listener must have knowledge of both terms, move from one to the next, and wind up at a meaningful destination. Derrida's insistence upon the "is" and the "absolutely is not" refers to the binarily constructed pairing of terms, from which we derive meaning. Hot is not cold, but it is in relation to cold as its opposite. L'Engle adds her wrinkle to Derrida's premise, by making simultaneously material and metaphorical – imaginary – the connective material that links "here" to "there": *t/here*. The wrinkle does not remove, or elide, the material between oppositions; it folds, by means of the tesseract, that which is traveled by means other than linear (logical) progression. As a physicist, and as a masculinized subject, Mr. Murray has retained his aptitude to tesser, but his practice at traveling by means of resonance – recognizing by non-logical means the point of relevance – is truncated. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Who (all plays – Mrs. Which, for example, finds it difficult to translate from her language to Meg's and so quotes famous thinkers: she does not speak well herself, but she is adept at finding which words are needed) demonstrate the capacity needed to so travel: the tesseract operates

lover, brother – to save her. She embraces her responsibility to offer aid, as aid has been offered to her, and it is her ability to hold out her arms, in love that respects the right to refuse, that salves the novel’s conflict.

It is not an easy journey.

At school, Meg is a discipline problem. She fights, she argues; these are her means of protecting things she cares about. Meg holds to a mental discipline based in refusal – refusal to accept manipulation, resistance to the normative. In trouble for disrupting class, Meg is sent to the school principal’s office. Pinpointing the cause of Meg’s deep distress, her missing father, Mr. Jenkins offers clumsy help; he first offers her an opportunity to share her feelings, and, when she bristles and refuses, he steps into offering advice that touches upon Meg’s deepest fear: “Meg, don’t you think you’d make a better adjustment to life if you faced facts?” (25). Meg fears that her Father, missing for years, is dead and will never return to make her life whole; this is the fact she refuses to accept, in fear that her acceptance will make it true. In response to what Meg experiences as Mr. Jenkins’s prying, Meg shouts at the principal:

“You leave my father out of it!”

“Stop bellowing,” Mr. Jenkins said sharply. “Do you want the entire school to hear you?”

“So what?” Meg demanded. “I’m not ashamed of anything I’m saying. Are you?” (25)

Meg refuses Mr. Jenkins move to insert “fact” where there is rightfully an uncomfortable unknown; she then correctly assesses and rejects Mr. Jenkins’s follow-up attempt to shame her into compliance.

via the skilled and intuitive flight readers make through literature, moving from point to point through resonances sustained in the text.

Meg accurately, instantly, grasps Mr. Jenkins's intervention as a twofold act of hostility. First, she upholds her Father's right to consent even in absentia; she shouts at Mr. Jenkins to leave her father out of the exchange. Second, she recognizes that Mr. Jenkins's reaction is based in a sense of shame: it is a sense he tries to instill in her, as it has been instilled in him.

Consistently, Meg's character demands integrity: from herself and others, and for others. By throwing Mr. Jenkins's shame back at him, she creates a moment when he can choose to face his shame, and she shows him by example how it may be refused: by accepting what is and holding to her own standards. Mr. Jenkins does not accept, but sighs, and Meg continues on her way.¹¹

¹¹ In a later volume, Mr. Jenkins accepts the journey Meg first throws at him here. In *A Wind in the Door*, Mr. Jenkin has, we learn, given poverty-stricken Calvin a pair of shoes; in a sign of clumsy understanding, he has attempted to make the shoes look worn in order to spare Calvin the embarrassment of receiving charity. And it will be Mr. Jenkins, in *A Wind in the Door*, who holds steady under an onslaught of unmaking that threatens to kill an inexplicably ill Charles Wallace. As Mr. Jenkins, Meg, and Calvin revisit the tesseract, their journey is not into the outer cosmos, but the inner. Traveling within Charles Wallace's ailing mitochondria, the novel positions *echthroi* – the agents of unmaking in the universe – as the chief threat to life, as they seek to convince larval farandola to continue their individual lives. Farandolae are made to “deepen,” to plant themselves like trees within the mitochondria; as trees, they forfeit their singular, responsibility-free lives in trade for communion with all other mitochondria in the being who comprises their universe.

Laurel Bollinger identifies the source of this idea, for L'Engle: “Among the most significant recent shifts in evolutionary thinking has been endosymbiotic theory, particularly as laid out by biologist Lynn Margulis. Traditional Darwinian and neo-Darwinian models of evolution focus on competition, on ‘survival of the fittest’ in reproductive terms, as the primary source of species' mutability. Margulis proposes instead that cellular evolution occurs through symbiotic incorporation of bacterial communities, suggesting that cooperation, not competition, provides the fundamental engine of biological change. Perhaps the best-known instance of Margulis' s theory concerns mitochondria, sometimes called the powerplants of cells, which she describes as symbionts whose absorption into other cells created the first eukaryotes, or nucleated cells capable of becoming multicellular organisms. To characterize the new life forms made possible by such incorporation, Margulis uses the term *symbiogenesis*, insisting that speciation itself emerges out of symbiotic absorption of microbes. She goes so far as to suggest that gaps in the fossil record may signal moments of such transformational incorporations: ‘to me symbiosis as a source of evolutionary novelty helps explain the observation of ‘punctuated equilibrium,’ of discontinuities in the fossil record’ (8). While of course entities created through such incorporation must then compete both with their predecessors and with other similarly incorporative beings, Margulis's concept suggests that the most successful cooperators will ultimately out-compete organisms focused solely on competition. Cooperation thus becomes the deep structure of life, preceding the competitive model Dawkins famously characterizes as the ‘selfish gene.’ The sequel to *A Wrinkle In Time* (1962), *A Wind in the Door* (1973), responds directly to Margulis' s theory, if not to Margulis herself; L'Engle describes the concept for the novel emerging from ‘two articles from the New England Medical Journal [sic], by Lewis Thomas, on mitochondria’ just as she was struggling with the plot (Walking on Water 173). Those articles, later reprinted in Thomas's *The Lives of a Cell* (1974), credit Margulis as the source of endosymbiotic theory, describing mitochondria as ‘little separate creatures’ inhabiting our cells (32), a description of Margulis's ideas that continues to be expressed in other texts. Octavia Butler used just that concept as the center point of *Clay's Ark* (1984), and a decade later as a driving mechanism for her

In shouting at her principal, Meg undermines his authority, which rests on his ability to appear in *effortless* control of his school and his pupils. She also correctly gathers the stakes of Mr. Jenkins's immediate attempt to hush her: he has attempted to shame her into the kind of silence he maintains in order to maintain his position. Logically and emotionally astute and sensitive, Meg evacuates the power from Mr. Jenkins's position by tearing away the veil of normalcy and revealing the lie of normativity, as she does when she confronts IT's much more developed form on Camazotz.¹²

Camazotz is a planet that has given in to all the things Meg never has, and never will. It is a "dark" planet, encompassed by a cold, Dark Thing that keeps the light from the stars from penetrating the planet's atmosphere: it silences the song of the stars; IT severs the resonance between opposite things by casting them as opposed things. This is IT's means of creating IT's prison of conformity, in which even accidental acts of nonconformity are viewed as breaks in the illusion of normalcy and met, with punishing pain, as the revolutionary interventions they are.

Meg's guides, Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who, and Mrs. Which, are stars who have given the brilliance of their songs in order to issue a call strong enough for other singers to respond to. This is their means of battling the Dark Thing's silence, and it is a battle to which all three stars have given their lives, or perhaps their incarnations. Mrs. Whatsit is the most recent of the stars to have burned herself, in her incandescent exultation, from the heavens;

Xenogenesis series" (34). It is Mr. Jenkins who successfully shows farandola Sporos the emotional satisfactions of "deepening," suggesting that Mr. Jenkins is not emotionless but deeply emotional and deeply reluctant to access this part of his being.

¹² Camazotz is laid out in the form of militarized / institutionalized blocks under surveillance, as those spaces that Michel Foucault examines in the context of containing the contagion of the plague. As in Foucault's analysis, Camazotz's spatial arrangement is the extended embodiment of IT's ability to make its citizens live; through mechanisms of panoptic self-surveillance, combined with discipline enforced by punishment, IT exemplifies the rational mind of biopower.

with Mrs. Which and Mrs. Who, Mrs. Whatsit now travels as a being of shifting form, appearing in whatever shape and in whatever (non)gendered form seems appropriate to the tasks waiting to be taken up.

Gendered, but not constrained by gender, Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit navigate their positions as guides with care. As they leave Meg, with Charles Wallace and Calvin, on Camazotz – the planet upon which Meg’s and Charles Wallace’s Father has been trapped by IT – Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit give the children gifts. When Meg returns, alone, to try and bring Charles Wallace out of ITs grasp – the giving of gifts is repeated. Each gift offered is a tool, with advice about how it might be used to advantage. But it is left to Meg to discover and to choose; her path to self-discovery is, at all turns, offered as an opportunity for her to accept her own courage, grace, and worth.¹³

On Camazotz, there is only obedience, masked by smiling compliance. As Meg, with Charles Wallace and Calvin, walk through the outskirts of a suburban scene, they see clearly the workings of IT:

The houses, all identical, continued as far as the eye could reach...In front of one of the houses stood a little boy with a ball, and he was bouncing it. But he bounced it rather badly and with no particular rhythm...The door of his house opened and out ran one of the mother figures. She looked wildly up and down the street, saw the children and put her hand to her mouth as though to stifle a scream, grabbed the little boy and rushed indoors with him. (100)

ITs grasp is shown, in the simple act of a child’s awkwardly bounced ball, to be feared; ITs power is shown to be dependent upon the fear of punishment. As Meg enters further into the

¹³ Carol Gilligan’s *In A Different Voice* compares male and female rationales for decision making and identifies the privileging of logic and law as central to masculinized subjects’ responses, while feminized subjects’ responses revolve around questions of relation and care. Meg’s challenge is to unite both sets of concerns, as she is sensitive both to the logic of order, in which she feels her Father should rescue Charles Wallace because it was her Father’s act that brought them all to the conflict, and to the logic of responsibility, in which Meg recognizes that her emotional bond with Charles Wallace is his best hope of letting go of IT. For Meg, Charles Wallace’s plight calls upon her to uphold her responsibility; further, since she is best suited for the task, Meg releases her anger at her Father (who is, in spite of his inexperience, prepared to try in her stead)

city, Meg sees the little boy in a glassed-in room, where he is conditioned to bounce his ball rhythmically. For each missed beat, Meg can see the little boy scream in pain. The reason for his mother's terror is clear; the mechanism of her pretense of normalcy, which extends to each of the "mother figures" on the street, is revealed to be fear for the pain of her child's suffering. In an inverted echo of Mr. Jenkins's shame and fear, the boy's mother will shame the boy into compliance in order to avert his future punishment; such is the cycle of normativity, which depends not only upon the threat to the self but the threat to those to whom we extend our care. Just as Mr. Jenkins attempts to control Meg's behavior by leveraging her care for her father, IT leverages her care for Charles Wallace in order to keep her from preventing Charles Wallace from giving IT what IT wants – access to a gifted boy's consciousness, in order to compel it into subservience of IT's system of control.

Meg is intent upon rescuing her Father, as Charles Wallace is intent upon understanding IT. Charles Wallace ends by going into IT and, as IT has promised, finds he does not want to come out. Meg, now trying to keep herself apart from IT as well as rescue her Father and Charles Wallace, has a moment of inspiration, though it fades, as she starts to reach the limit of her skill. Speaking through Charles Wallace, ventriloquizing, IT tries to convince Meg that IT is the end of all struggles and that the end of struggle is the same as happiness. Camazotz, IT explains, has achieved complete equality: "Everybody exactly alike" (154). Like a star burning with the song of its life, Meg fights IT's attempt to confuse her: "Then came a moment of blazing truth. 'No!' she cried triumphantly. '*Like* and *equal* are not the same thing at all!'" (154). For a moment, Meg has united her reason with her feeling;

and undertakes in courage a journey that nearly killed her the first time she attempted it. The difference, or *différence*, in outcomes is the healing Meg undergoes with Aunt Beast.

she blazes with the resonance of the intuition that bridges the distance between, and she knows. IT loses its grasp; IT quickly reasserts.

Meg is still not able to marshal her left- and right-handed abilities with intention. She has accepted Mrs. Whatsit's gift, "Meg, I give you your faults," but her anger, her confusion, her ferocious protectiveness, are not enough on their own. Nor is her Father's gift; as she attempts to recite the periodic table, and to rack her own brains and not let IT rack them for her, the pattern of her thought is too rhythmic. Too close to IT's repeating order. Whichever hand she uses, Meg is beginning to fall. It is Calvin, whose skills at communication place him in the position of choosing when and when not to intervene, who shouts to Mr. Murray to tesser Meg away from IT; he is aware that Charles Wallace is beyond reach, that Meg, himself, and Mr. Murray are all succumbing, as well.

Torn away by Mr. Murray, frozen and paralyzed by her passage through the Dark Thing, Meg's heartbeat resumes on a grey planet, populated by furred, tentacled beasts, with indentations where human facial features would be. After a brief, but crucial interval, Mrs. Which returns Meg to Camazotz with her final gift.

Mrs. Who provides Meg with affirmation. Meg, Mrs. Who says, has something that IT has not (195). Meg completes her journey when she learns to use reason to understand her emotion and to give herself permission to release her emotion. Conducting a rapid-fire inventory of her attributes, while IT beats at her confidence and clarity and heart – with Charles Wallace possessed by IT and crouching just out of her reach – Meg breaks through her block. Meg reasons that if "she could give love to IT, perhaps it would shrivel up and die, for she was sure that IT could not withstand love...Perhaps it was not too much to ask of her, but she could not do it. But she could love Charles Wallace" (200).

Love, the novel says, is what Meg has that IT has not: “With the last vestige of consciousness she jerked her mind and body. Hate was nothing IT didn’t have. IT knew all about hate...[S]uddenly, she knew. She knew! Love. That was what she had that IT did not have” (199). But she has more than that. She has the capacity to claim, for herself, the traits that others find ill-fitting in her. Her intellect, like her fierce emotions, are masculinized; she feels lacking in her feminized qualities, like her mother’s physical beauty, and so she intentionally emphasizes her physical awkwardness. At the novel’s climax, Meg grasps her strengths with her flaws; things designated by herself as such. In her reasoned and intensely emotional appeal to Charles Wallace, Meg releases the pseudo-comfort of normativity and embraces herself as a whole person, a person with more than normativity can contain. In so doing, she enables her Father, Calvin, and Charles Wallace to accept healthy relationships with her. Her father, who tries to rescue her, is convinced to let her accept her task; there are no saviors and there is no self-sacrifice. Calvin gives Meg her first kiss and turns away before he sees the delight he brings to her; he has given his love to her without his fear – he has given her his belief in her abilities. Charles Wallace is given a call to love that is greater than the call to his arrogance, to which he (as a boy child) is hypervulnerable; he is given the choice which call to heed, and when he chooses to run to Meg, his eyes are clear of IT’s influence.

First, Try Not To Say Any Words For Just A Moment¹⁴

The crucial interval that mediates Meg’s experience, during her second battle on Camazotz, is her encounter with Aunt Beast. As her Father tesser her away from IT, he moves them through the Dark Thing. Unconscious and unwilling, Meg has no protections

for herself. She absorbs the essence of IT, arrives on the beasts' planet with neither breath nor pulse, and, as she again starts breathing, she finds herself unable to move.

While Calvin correctly notes that she is paralyzed, he guesses that it is her physical cold that prevents her from rising. Her emotional cold is what besets her; as she moves from silencing, control, and icy rationality, the emotional corollaries she experiences are hatred, anger and mistrust. These are not Meg's characteristic rational / emotional ranges; she is filled with IT's imperatives, and she does not know how to counter them.

Meg's emotional skills have remained unexamined, and unrefined, as they have been devalued.¹⁵ Beings of emotion, the beasts provide the opposing pole for IT. Where IT is control, the beasts are movement. Where IT is cold, they are warm. Rigid/soft, compelling/inviting, thinking/feeling. In the grasp of IT, Meg's response to the beasts is filled with unworthy responses, which are not her own:

One of the [beasts] came up to Meg and squatted down on haunches beside her, and she felt utter loathing and revulsion as it reached out a tentacle to touch her face. But with the tentacle came the same delicate fragrance that moved across her with the breeze, and she felt a soft, tingling warmth go all through her that momentarily assuaged her pain. (168)

¹⁴ In animal rights discourse, the lack of (perceived) human linguistic capabilities is contested as a decisive division between human and animal worthiness to bear rights. Such views, of course, ignore animals' more robust communication along the lines of scent, hearing, and vision, including body languages.

¹⁵ Carol Gilligan finds, "The sequence of women's moral judgment proceeds from an initial concern with survival to a focus on goodness and finally to a reflective understanding of care as the most adequate guide to the resolution of conflicts in human relationships" (105). Comparing the anxieties that influence boys' and girls' reticence, and offers, "if the secrets of male adolescence revolve around the harboring of continuing attachments that cannot be represented in the logic of fairness, the secrets of the female adolescent pertain to the silencing of her own voice, a silencing enforced by the wish not to hurt others but also by the fear that, in speaking, her voice will not be heard" (52). Eclipsed by her mother's traditional feminine beauty, perceiving herself less intelligence than Charles Wallace, and injured by the ongoing pain of her Father's absence, Meg has held herself from reaching for the self she could be. Finding herself safe, within Aunt Beast's unconditional love, Meg relaxes enough to heal her internal divide and to claim her agency.

From the beasts, Meg learns how to feel and to process what she feels without the imposition of language. She learns to be present, without forcing herself to be present in a way she can rationally encompass. As the beasts discern the damage she has taken from the Black Thing, they do not ask her what has occurred: “The three beasts stood around Meg, and it seemed that they were feeling into her with their softly waving tentacles. The movements of the tentacles were as rhythmic and flowing as the dance of an undersea plant, and lying there, Meg, despite herself, felt a sense of security that was deeper than anything she had known since the days when she lay in her mother’s arms in the old rocking chair and was sung to sleep” (172). Meg attaches images and memories to the sensations she experiences; she does not attach expectations or analyses. She begins to move through metaphor, softly. Meg does not collapse the difference between like and as, or disappear the distinction between like and equal. Instead, she begins using language as a gesture, rather than a definition. She uses emotional tone to convey the sense of what she experiences and to navigate between alien and deeply familiar sensations, and thoughtways.

Amidst her healing, Meg learns. Aunt Beast assists by asking Meg to describe her needs, her questions, by feeling them. Words, for concepts the beasts do not have, are useless; there is no way for Meg to explain light or dark to creatures with no senses to perceive them. But she can convey how it feels to be in the light, and the dark. And she can identify the feelings given her by the beasts: warmth, security, and deep are feelings that recur. Refining her emotional awareness, Meg finds her way toward differentiating the beasts’ emotional sharing from ITs emotional manipulation. She learns to distinguish truth from lie: “As the tall figure cradled her she could feel the frigid stiffness of her body relaxing against it. This bliss could not come from a thing like IT. IT could only give pain, never relieve it” (172). For Meg, it is a return to her characteristic integrity. What gives

relaxation and bliss, joy and healing, is good; what delivers pain is evil. Using her rational skills to evaluate her emotional knowledge allows Meg to unify her perceptions, to stop being in conflict with herself, and to know which external influences to take in and which to refuse.

Nearly ready to resume her journey, Mrs. Who leaves Meg with Aunt Beast long enough for Meg to learn to tesser: to travel without traveling by means of the song in which all life takes part. Aunt Beast travels as the ant travels across Mrs. Whatsit's skirt:

If it was impossible to describe sight to Aunt Beast, it would be even more impossible to describe the singing of Aunt Beast to a human being. It was a music even more glorious than the music of the singing creatures on Uriel. It was music more tangible than form or sight. It had essence and structure. It supported Meg more firmly than the arms of Aunt Beast. It seemed to travel with her, to sweep her aloft in the power of song, so that she was moving in glory among the stars, and for a moment, she, too, felt that the words darkness and light had no meaning and only this melody was real. (177-8)

Meg experiences the intangible tangible, the free flowing structure, the wordless meaning, and the travel among the stars that she accomplishes without moving her body. The song does not take her; Meg gives herself to it. And then she releases herself from it and resumes her own balance. She knows light and dark; she also knows that their melodies are more real than their names. It is Aunt Beast's ability to travel, via feeling the music of the universe, that teaches Meg how to engage with her own emotional intelligence. To embrace her own ability to journey. To know. To find the folds between her reason and her emotions; to inhabit that space linked for Meg by intuitive leaps; to travel like an ant, and like an Aunt, by means of holding opposed points and riding the resonance between them without being torn away from herself by their tensions or contradictions. When Mrs. Who arrives, Meg finds herself ready. When she faces IT, whole, she triumphs. When Mrs. Which returns her home,

she experiences no ill effects. And she can feel Mrs. Who, Mrs. Which, and Mrs. Whatsit by the sensation of joy that eclipses even the long-awaited reuniting of her family.

“Misbehaving Fictions”: Righting the Social Text¹⁶

Madeleine L'Engle's *A Wrinkle In Time* hurls heroine Meg Murray through a feminist *bildungsroman*, in which she finds herself, and then rescues both her father and brother from an evil characterized as singlemindedness. The battle within the novel is for Meg's multiplicity, rather than her Father's or Charles Wallace's development; it is for recuperation of lost or discarded valuing. The novel's climax is an argument and an example for the way in which knowledges complement and fulfill one another.

Linking the *bildungsroman* to the development of human rights, the feminist *bildungsroman* foregrounds an ethic of care – like that manifested by Aunt Beast for Meg – that suggests a responsibility-based model as a more appropriate framework for imagining the wellbeing of humans and animals.¹⁷ Eve Tavor Bannatt's “Rewriting the Social Text:

¹⁶ Ellen McWilliams examines “the transnational applications of the *Bildungsroman* as a literary category, perhaps most unexpectedly in relation to women's writing and the feminist reclamation of female literary history.” Via Tzvetan Toderov's “The Origin of Genres,” McWilliams argues, “The fact that a work disobeys its genre does not mean that the genre does not exist. It is tempting to say ‘quite the contrary,’ for two reasons. First because, in order to exist as such, the transgression requires a law – precisely the one that is to be violated. We might go even further and observe that the norm becomes visible – comes into existence -owing only to its transgressions” (196). McWilliams offers the term “misbehaving fictions” to characterize Atwood's novels and identifies Atwood's speculative *bildungsromane* as engaging with the “the possibility for subversive strategies in writing a life” (196).

¹⁷ Sheryl Vint argues for a human-as-animal *bildungsroman*, which disrupts the positionalities of animals as pets, which is not so dissimilar from a female *bildungsroman* that challenges women's positions as docile creatures to possess. Vint presents Carol Emshwiller's *The Mount*, in which more advanced aliens adopt humans as pets. Against a “stunted ‘pet’ subjectivity,” Emshwiller's novel shows how “the fragmentation of intraspecies social bonds...disrupts Charley's family [and] parallels the way domesticated animals are isolated from their own species and trapped within a cultivated dependency on humans for their physical and social needs” (Vint 178). Vint continues, “The novel is structured as a *bildungsroman* in which Charley matures into an adult perspective and comes to have a more critical view of human-Hoot relations. The typical pattern of the *bildungsroman* novel emphasizes a conflict between the protagonist's values and those of society, usually prompting some kind of journey in which the protagonist is jarred from his/her familiar home. While on the journey, the protagonist struggles with the gap between his/her needs and desires and the values of the dominant social order, with the resolution finding some way to reconcile the protagonist to his or her place within the social order – now seen in a new light” (178).

The Female Bildungsroman in Eighteenth Century England” traces the changing relations between “lady-novelists” and their texts’ engagement with their social environments.¹⁸

Situating fiction as transformative in nonfictional arenas, Bannatt begins by noting,

The eighteenth century was no stranger to modern, poststructuralist assumptions that “our life comes from books” and that “to change the book is to change life itself”. Eighteenth-century lady-novelists, literary theorists, reviewers, essayists, moralists, and educationists well understood the power that fictions exercise over life. It was because they held that fictional narratives have the power to “excite the actions they describe” that lady-novelists and male reviewers paid so much attention to the principles and morals governing fictional actions and to the potentially beneficial or harmful effects of the novels they discussed. It was because they believed that books have the power to fashion the manners, the sentiments, and the characters of their readers that eighteenth-century clergymen, moralists, and educationists either proscribed novel reading altogether or insisted that parents carefully select the novels their daughters read. And, as Clara Reeve and Maria Edgeworth tell us, it was because they considered that women readers were already modelling their lives, their behavior, their expectations, and their values on the shoddy and fantastic novels and romances they borrowed from the circulating libraries that lady-novelists from mid-century on set out to change the book that women were imitating in order to change their very lives. The eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman was not always designed to give a minute account of the Bildung of its heroine; but it was designed to effect the Bildung of its readers and thus to effect changes in the manners and morals of the times. (195)

Bannatt argues that exchanges occurred dialogically and that central to debates were questions about “whether women were to be ruled by their hearts or by their heads, about

Luke finds the denial of animal subjectivity, under the guise of “pet” inclusivity, a tactic in line with strategies for making animals killable. As does Derrida, Luke notes that in “the second Genesis creation story, God created the animals as helpers for the lone first man, then brought them to the man, ‘to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name’. Today some people call other living creatures ‘livestock,’ ‘game,’ ‘pets,’ ‘laboratory animals,’ ‘meat,’ and so forth...Projecting human uses for these animals into their definitional essences forestalls sympathy by blocking our awareness that other animals have interests of their own that are systematically overridden by the animal exploitation industries” (144). Challenging epistemology itself to recall that every definition includes its exclusions opens space for animals to be all that they are named to be: a pet is a beloved leashed creature, livestock is alive for now, game is a play that ends in death or murder. Drawing attention to the world building capacity of words similarly returns the namer to the frame; conversely, this also may forestall sympathy as our unblocked awareness simultaneously becomes our complicity in horrific suffering.

¹⁸ Similar to Lynn Hunt’s work with epistolary novels, in which fictional works helped to generate and grow readers’ empathy with subjectivities outside their own class and gendered experiences, Bannatt argues that the female bildungsroman altered the social imaginary in which women’s roles were implicated. By authoring the social text, Bannatt’s lady-novelists invented means by which to envision, and enact, agency.

whether it was really to their advantage to be fashioned as gentle and sentimental creatures, about how women's minds should be educated and used, and indeed about whether women could not and should not be able to lead happy single lives” (196).

In addition to shifting portrayals of women, concerns with “desirability” give way to concerns about marriages that ran the risk of being no better than a “return to subjection,” Bannatt’s lady-novelists created text that were “revolutionary in the sense that they were constructed in binary opposition to extant norms and practices and designed to displace the latter. And they were revolutionary in the sense that they involved a clearly defined strategy for bringing about social change not social action as in the nineteenth century, but social reeducation” (198-99). An intentional intervention, Bannatt notes that 18th century female novelists were, “in their own words,”

“making entertaining stories the vehicle to convey to the young and flexible heart wholesome truths that it refused to receive under the form of moral precept and instructions”; they were “temper[ing] the utile with the dulce, and under the guise of Novels, giv[ing] examples of virtue rewarded and vice punished;” they were awakening in the woman reader “a sense of finer feelings than the commerce of ordinary life inspires,” giving her “ideas of delicacy and refinement which were not, perhaps, to be gained by any society she had access to,” and inculcating sentiments which “served to counteract the spirit of the world, where selfish considerations have always more than their due weight.” Similar claims were made for both factual and fictional histories in the eighteenth century. No one pretended that morality was practiced as it was portrayed in exemplar narratives or that narratives which showed virtue rewarded and vice punished reflected life. They said instead that such narratives “supply the defects of experience” or “supply the want of experience.” (202)

Gradually, these portrayals gained in sophistication. The “mixed character” possessed “both exemplary virtues and the more familiar and probable vices of selfishness, meanness, falsehood, or depravity” (204). Notably, characters were not subjected to normative, corrective reversals or punishments based on faults. Instead, the more the novels’ heroines were “victimized by unjust or avaricious guardians, by false or disloyal friends, by devious

or violent libertines, and by selfish and indelicate persons of all sorts, the more society is shown not to be made to their measure and the more forcible the critique. The repeated victimization of the exemplary heroine in the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman served both to bring out her virtues and to make the reader ‘feel’ the evil of a wide variety of social norms and practices.” (205)

Bannatt concludes by arguing that concerns, with whether the female bildungsroman presented life in too positive a tone (and did not, as Mary Wollstonecraft considers, prepare “the benevolent heart is bound to meet with ‘ingratitude and selfishness’ and to be disappointed in human nature; that early marriages, embarked upon before a woman has time to think, will be regretted later; and that death must not be ‘treated in too slight a manner and sought, when disappointments occur, with a degree of impatience, which proves that the main end of life has not been considered’”), which led to a “gradual but permanent transformation” of the structure of the female Bildungsroman in England:

It led to a rethinking of the instructional mileage to be got from the portrayal of “mixed characters,” to a displacement of the faultless, idealized heroine who was “out of nature” by a heroine “in nature,” who had faults that she had to learn to correct, and to a revision of the Bildungsroman's formula. It led, by the same token, to the gradual obliteration of the distance preserved in the exemplary eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman between ideal alternatives and familiar norms and practices, to the increased confusion of these opposites, and I would argue to a gradual strengthening of the novel's power of social criticism at the expense of its revolutionary power to imagine and elaborate alternatives to the status quo. (219, 224)¹⁹

Joseph Slaughter’s *Human Rights, Inc.* extends Bannatt’s work; Slaughter follows the United Nations in placing the bildungsroman at the center of human rights discourse. Linking Goethe’s bildungsroman with rights discourse, Slaughter notes, “While much theory

¹⁹ Bannatt writes, “The weakened capacity of the female bildungsroman leaves “no third term, no potential imagined solution to this impasse, is offered” (226). Contemporary young adult fiction, along the lines of *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent*, offer more revolutionary alternatives; dystopic, science fiction novels, crossing

of the novel shares the conceptual vocabulary of contemporary human rights law, the idealist Bildungsroman shares its narrative logic and grammar. Goethe's Bildungsroman is often credited by literary critics with inaugurating the 'teleological character of the genre – the first novel in which modern historical time makes its mature appearance, as Bakhtin wrote, in the evolutionary 'image of man in the process of becoming'" (97). Following the logic of the "rational" Western subject, the linkage between the (male) bildungsroman and legal discourse both affirms literature's place in the construction of social imaginaries and confirms the need for the female bildungsroman. As Slaughter argues, "Bildung's enabling fiction (which does not mean that it is unreal, but that it remains to be realized) posits the individual's desire for self-expression as pre-social but inclining toward the world of convention...The individual of Bildung and human rights is a social institution that would make no sense on its own; nonetheless, their image of the individual is normative – the incarnation of an institutional individualism necessary to animate the social formations and relations of the modern nation state" (116). Slaughter's analysis recognizes the transformative potential in the bildungsroman; it also recognizes the normative quality, of the incorporating (male) bildungsroman, which undercuts much of the potential before it can unfold.

Brian Luke, in "Justice, Caring, and Animal Liberation" suggests the stakes, of the female bildungsroman's absence from endeavors to formulate protections for vulnerable subjects. Luke writes,

Carol Gilligan has described justice and caring as two distinct moral frameworks or orientations to ethical concerns. The *justice* framework is characterized by abstraction, the application of general rules of conduct, and an emphasis on restraining aggression, and a concern for consistency and the fair resolution of

the traditions of the female bildungsroman, depict female characters whose social worlds are so bleak as to necessitate that the heroines reject the society's values entirely and catalyze revolutionary change.

conflicting claims and interests. The *caring* framework, on the other hand, is characterized by its focus on the concrete and particular, its emphasis on the maintenance and extension of connection, and by its concern for responsiveness and the satisfaction of needs. Animal liberation is often framed as a justice issue, though, I will suggest, it may more appropriately be understood in terms of caring. (125)

Luke, with Gilligan, identifies the key difference between the female and (male)

bildungsromane: the female bildungsroman operates in the register of care, while the traditional bildungsroman is steeped in the register of justice.

Considering the failures of animal rights discourses, Luke breaks down the logic-flaws that enable rights to remain a source of differential access: some have rights, some do not. Luke argues that animal rights scholar Tom Regan proceeds from a justice framework and “attempts to move the reader from a commitment to the respectful treatment of humans to a like commitment to the respectful treatment of normal adult mammals...killing a rational human would require special justification not needed for killing a nonrational animal, even though both are harmed by being killed” (126). Following the Kantian logic that Jacques Derrida has so rigorously challenged, it is possible, Luke points out, to designate human mammals as different than nonhuman without the sense of justice, and consistency, being threatened, which results in the complacent killing of animals.

Luke addresses “essentially the same type of maneuver” in Peter Singer’s work, which

allows rejection of Singer’s argument for animal liberation. Like Regan, Singer attempts to move the reader, through considerations of consistency, from commitments concerning the appropriate treatment of animals...Singer presumes that opposition to sexism and racism must be based on the principle of equal consideration of interests. One could maintain, however, that sexism and racism are objectionable because they are disrespectful of the rationality of members of the oppressed races and sex. One could then consistently exclude nonhumans from moral consideration by holding that they lack the rational capacities of humans. (127)

Situating his own concern for animals within a framework of caring, Luke moves from a rights-based discourse to a responsibility-based model: “My opposition to the institutionalized exploitation of animals is not based on a *comparison* between human and animal treatment, but on a consideration of the abuse of animals in and of itself. I respond directly to the needs and the plight of animals used in hunting, farming, and vivisection” (130).

Luke notes that “softness” in masculinity is mocked and punished. Among animal slaughter operations, men are ridiculed for expressing reluctance to kill, often gruesomely, animals raised for slaughter. Bannatt’s argument links with Luke’s observation; Bannatt points out that, in their textual engagements with masculinity, the female bildungsroman offered a less damaged model of masculinity:

In the idealized relationships rewarded with happiness, both partners are also given the same “disabilities.” While male moralists and educationists were preaching the difference between the sexes and condemning those who transgressed the sexual boundary “a masculine woman . . . that throws off all the lovely softness of her nature” or “an effeminate fellow, that, destitute of every manly sentiment, copies the inverted ambition of your sex” . . . What these gentlemen really meant was that they were quite happy with the “frailties” which extant practices allowed them and resented the demand inspired by novels and made by ladies refusing to marry that they change. But perhaps they did change a little despite their resentment, for Mrs. Barbauld, writing in the first decade of the nineteenth century, attributed to the eighteenth-century female Bildungsroman much of the softness of our present manners, much of that tincture of humanity so conspicuous amidst all our vices. (217)

Bannatt’s lady-novelists were “giving both partners to the happy relationship both “masculine” sense and “feminine” softness and showing that women can have “manly sentiments” of honor, courage, and determination, while men can both fulfill a nurturing role and devote themselves to the good of others” (215-16).

As Luke writes, in summary, “justice-based arguments for animal liberation fail. But my own experience and the reports of others lead me to believe that direct responsiveness to

need is more central to animal liberationism than concerns about consistency...And contrary to the suppositions of the justice-oriented writers, the capacity to respond to animals is a deep and recurring feature of human life. That is precisely why societies that institutionalize animal exploitation must and do find ways to overwrite and to undercut our sympathetic capacities” (148). Precisely, this is why literary scholars – writers of speculative nonfiction – must attend to the active and sophisticated manipulation of our social imaginaries, by industry, where the wellbeing of animals, as well as humans, is concerned.

Will Kymlicka and Sue Donaldson’s *Zoopolis* takes seriously the idea of building a social imaginary capable of caring for animal and human lives. Assessing the debates, questions, and successes of the animal rights movement, Kymlicka and Donaldson come to the conclusion that

Even amongst animal advocates who share the goal of eventual abolition of all animal exploitation, there is a disagreement on strategic questions around incremental change, just as there is disagreement about the relative merits of educational reform, direct action, pacifism, and more militant protest on behalf of animals. But what surely is clear, after 180 years of organized animal advocacy, is that we have made no demonstrable progress towards dismantling the system of animal exploitation. Campaigns ranging from the very first nineteenth-century anti-cruelty laws to the 2008 Proposition 2 may help or hinder at the margins, but they do not challenge—indeed, do not even address—the social, legal, and political underpinnings of Eternal Treblinka. (3)

Positioning themselves squarely in the care framework, Kymlicka and Donaldson pull together threads of the social imaginary, as they determine that human responsibilities to animals should determine animals’ rights. Kymlicka and Donaldson propose differentiated models of political subjectivity for animals on various points of a spectrum, from wild to domesticated; the animals closest to humans (those whose care we can feel in return) are imagined as Domesticated Animal Citizens. For Kymlicka and Donaldson,

Domesticated animals must be seen as members of our community. Having brought such animals into our society, and deprived them of other possible forms of

existence (at least for the foreseeable future), we have a duty to include them in our social and political arrangements on fair terms. As such, they have rights of membership—rights that go beyond the universal rights owed to all animals, and which are hence relational and differentiated;

The appropriate conceptual framework for thinking about these relational membership rights is that of citizenship. Citizenship, in turn, has at least three core elements: residency...inclusion in the sovereign people...and agency (they should be able to shape the rules of cooperation). (101)

Kymlicka and Donaldson's formulation imagines animals as having the capacity for citizenship, based in part on laws relating to disabled human subjects: "At the heart of these new accounts of the capacities for citizenship is the idea of trust-based 'dependent agency'. In this view, even the severely cognitively disabled have the capacity for agency, but is agency that is exercised in and through relations with particular others in whom they trust, and who have the skills and knowledge needed to recognize and assist the expression of agency" (104). Having traveled nearly all the distance, to the embrace Meg finds with Aunt Beast, Kymlicka and Donaldson's work falters where it imagines animals akin to "disabled" humans.

"Beast Linguistics" & the Epistemic Semiotics of A(u)nts

Sheryl Vint, whose *Animal Alterity: Science Fiction and the Question of the Animal* lays the groundwork for science fiction's capacities to differently engage with animal subjectivities, refuses the anthropocentric gesture that undermines Kymlicka and Donaldson's otherwise generative move to imagine animals as citizens. In her reading of Ursula LeGuin's "The Author of the Acacia Seeds," Vint argues that "the sf imagination can produce new potentialities for communicating with another species" (73). Science fiction's generative imagination, trained by sf tropes that seek the novum and expect estrangement from the world of the known, is habituated to looking for the unseeable, engaging the unknowable. It is work of the imagination, prior to work of practicability.

“The Author of the Acacia Seeds”²⁰ engages with questions of animals’ communication, as it perceived from a position outside the Ant language, as humans remain outside most animal language. Framed within an academic conference presentation, therolinguists analyze a fragmentary manuscript composed by an Ant; a lone ant is an anomaly, and the text found reflects a sense of catastrophe. A sense of unraveling of identity, of confusion, or perhaps insanity.

Seeds 1-13

[I will] not touch feelers. [I will] not stroke. [I will] spend on dry seeds [my] soul's sweetness. It may be found when [I am] dead. Touch this dry wood! [I] call! [I am] here!

Alternatively, this passage may be read:

[Do] not touch feelers. [Do] not stroke. Spend on dry seeds [your] soul's sweetness. [Others] may find it when [you are] dead. Touch this dry wood! Call: [I am] here! No known dialect of Ant employs any verbal person except the third person singular and plural and the first person plural. In this text, only the root forms of the verbs are used; so there is no way to decide whether the passage was intended to be an autobiography or a manifesto. (np)

The gloss of Seeds 1-13 appears to recognize variations that indicate opposing meanings; one reading is a series of avowals and affirmations, while the other is a series of commands. Both, however, contain calls, both seemingly reassurances. In attempting to decipher which reading holds meaning, there is perhaps a misunderstanding of Ant language already in evidence: perhaps the text had more than one author, perhaps the meanings read differently coming and going from the hive.

Vint emphasizes the work of the therolinguists, as this section of Le Guin’s text imagines animal communication as rich, whole, and complex beyond understanding.

²⁰ Ursula Le Guin. “The Author of the Acacia Seeds And Other Extracts from the Journal of the Association of Therolinguistics.” <http://interconnected.org/home/more/2007/03/acacia-seeds.html>

Without removing the human-centric positionality, the privileging of human linguistic systems is absented:

Therolinguistics needs to remember the importance of embodiment and social structure...as failing to account fully for these things is what has led them to overestimate the similarities between Penguin and Dolphin: “The temperature of the blood is a bond. But the construction of the brain, and of the comb, makes a barrier! Dolphins do not lay eggs. A world of difference lies in that simple fact!” (74)

It is unclear which species the therolinguists belong to; potentially, there may be many species. These kinds of reflections support Vint’s argument that “‘The Author of the Acacia Seeds’ thus uses a typical trope of sf to encourage its readers to reflect not only on the nature of semiotics, but also on our opportunities—usually missed—to communicate with the other species with whom we share the planet” (75). Vint draws attention to the achievement of the therolinguists; they have managed to see the unfamiliar in the familiar and come a far distance in realizing – as Meg does with Aunt Beast – that limited ways of knowing constrict our being in the world. Truncating our experience of animals does not render them blind to the movement of the stars through their songs; it leaves us bereft of marvels. As Vint argues, “Yet in striving for such communication, we must not be limited by either our own preformed conclusion that certain species cannot communicate or by forgetting that such communication is never (as in all good sf) transparent or complete” (75).

Meg’s encounter with Aunt Beast, in L’Engle’s *A Wrinkle In Time*, explores the ways in which science fiction extends the opportunity to engage discourses of hu(man) and animal. With its requirement that the fictional universe be believable – in accord with enough scientific principle to remain linked with “rational” expectation – science / fiction exists in opposition to itself. Far from being a detriment to the genre, Darko Suvin defines science fiction as “a literary genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an

imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" (8). Additionally, he argues that sf texts exhibit "interest in a strange newness, a novum" whose presence establishes the framework that sets the science fiction environment at odds with expected, empirically verifiable, environments (4). For Suvin, science fiction's unique value comes from its readers' estrangement from familiar worlds and their consequent cognitive work to understand the possible workings and ramifications of the new and unfamiliar upon the familiar.

With one change to Suvin's definition, literary theory might be considered as a non-literary "genre whose necessary and sufficient conditions are the presence and interaction of estrangement and cognition, and whose main formal device is an imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment." Though Suvin's classic definition is meant to explain science fiction's unique qualifications as a literary genre, his rubric can also help reframe the genre of literary theory as speculative nonfiction.

Rereading literary theory as speculative nonfiction means recognizing the intrusion of the "imaginative framework alternative to the author's empirical environment" into our engagement and asking: whose imagination constructs the framework, what is an empirical environment for the theorist, and – most significantly for this project – how is literary theory held accountable for the alternatives it creates?

Samuel R. Delany, science fiction writer and theorist, argues that science fiction's language builds worlds; the same holds for literary theory. Delany writes, "Words in a narrative generate tones of voice, syntactic expectations, memories of other words, and pictures. But rather than a fixed chronological relation, they sit in numerous inter- and overweaving relations. The process as we move our eyes from word to word is corrective and revisionary rather than progressive. Each new word revises the complex picture we had

a moment before” (5). The corrective and revisionary process holds dangers; it is susceptible to misappropriation, as can be seen in countless contexts (from racist propagandist to advertising). It is needful, then, that we use our words responsibly. What we imagine, after all, creates us.

In Delany's often cited close-reading, he demonstrates the process of imagination building. “The red sun is high, the blue low” (7). Delany traces his readerly journey from a familiar world into a place “worlds and worlds away” from the known. Though Delany’s reading of the sentence takes pages to unfold, Delany notes that the process “ordinarily takes only a quarter of a second and is largely unconscious” (7). As he demonstrates how assumptions are made and remade, woven and overwoven, all at a speed that renders readers’ worlding and reworlding within a text nearly invisible to themselves, Delany’s reading suggests that literary theory – or speculative nonfiction – must not erase the worlding the theorist undertakes.

What is the distance between science and fiction? Between hu(man)/non-hu(man)? Is it an ant, traveling across a wrinkle in a star’s skirt? Is it a sightless Aunt, singing the song of a star’s light?

The distance is as little, and as much, as it is; there is also differentiation, distinction, specificity to hold the borders between one thing and its other.

Fiction, like science, is a matter of relations: if this, then that. If science seeks fact, then fiction seeks truth. Both require evidence – the standards for evidence shift, according to the matter in hand.

In common, both disciplines hold questions of belief: what do we believe and how do we know? Epistemological differences often contribute to disciplinary differences. There are also disciplinary distances; but if distance is a measure of relation – how complex is the

relation? how many twists need consideration, before the connection between opposing concepts becomes plain? – then these distances are also indicators of connection.

Epistemology becomes a question of travel: how we get from here to there shapes the where in which we find ourselves: the who we are as we journey, which Whiches we encounter among all the whatsit we don't quite know how to understand.

Literature is not a discipline of understanding: understanding comes as it comes, or it eludes. It is a discipline of holding many truths, gathered in many ways. It is a mode of experiencing the external universe while we explore the internal; it is a way to be a singing star, for a moment, and to be transformed by that moment. If the consequences of literary writing – fiction and criticism – are limited only by the imaginaries we create, then we must proceed with utmost care.

Chapter Two

Animots Farm: Animals Within the Symbolic Ecology

Violence is a story. It is a story about permissions, and priorities. It is a story we erase, as well tell it, because the morality of this story is justification. Legitimacy.

Violence is a slippage. It is a failure to hold intact the relations among things, living or non; it collapses the distance – between *yes* and *no*, *self* and *other* – we should instead travel.

Violence is an aberration. And a process. Rather than accepting the validity of an existing story, violence requires us to object to the part of the story that runs counter to our priorities, it requires us to disappear that portion of the story and overwrite it with a story that justifies our priorities, and then we must pretend – to ourselves – that we have performed no such act. All of that is bad enough. But we must also pretend to others; it is in convincing others to join our pretense that we gain permission to enact our aberration in their lives and upon their bodies.

Animal Farm: A Fairy Story, by George Orwell, captures violence in a single maxim:

ALL ANIMALS ARE EQUAL

BUT SOME ARE MORE EQUAL THAN OTHERS (96).

Painted on the side of the barn, over the top of the Seven Commandments that initially reflected the animals' individual and collective priorities, looms Napoleon's statement that he has received permission to treat the other animals however he pleases. *Animal Farm* has been read as an allegory for Stalinist Communism; it is widely understood as a meditation upon the inevitability of power, which inherently breeds corruption.

The animals of Manor Farm have another story to tell.

It is their story, and it is ours.

It is a story of courage, and grief, and wonder; it is an opportunity to diminish our ontological violence, as some animals do more than others, in spite of Manor Farm's brutal conditions.

Patriarchy: A Fairy Story

My edition of *Animal Farm* bears a Preface, as well as an Introduction. Both frame the novella in terms relevant to a moment preceding reading: one moment occurs in 1996, and the other in 1954. The preface brings forward concerns with power and naiveté: Russell Baker argues that *Animal Farm* is a "passionate sermon against the dangers of political innocence" (vi). The Introduction, written by C.M Woodhouse, finds that "it is impossible to attach a moral of any familiar sense to *Animal Farm*, where wickedness ends in triumph and virtue is utterly crushed" (xvii-xviii). Woodhouse also struggles to access *Animal Farm*'s function as a fairy story, but he proceeds from an odd idea that fairy stories have no truths to tell: "The point," it seems, "about fairy-stories is that they are written not merely without a moral but without a morality" (xviii).

Baker implies that the animals' political innocence is the source of their victimization by the pigs. Woodhouse registers the morality of justification, which is the replacement of morality with priorities, but he misapprehends the novella's ending. As the pigs cavort with their new human partners, and the animals, starving, stare in at the scene, the novella shows that wickedness ends in vicious self-destruction and virtue goes unrecognized:

No one noticed the wondering faces of the animals that gazed in at the window...Twelve voices were shouting in anger, and they were all alike. No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which. (99-101)

The fact that no one present on the farm is capable of apprehending the animals' virtue is not a fault in the animals; it is the sign that the animals inhabit an inviolable space. Despite Napoleon's relentless gaslighting, the animals hold to their sense of wonder.²¹ Their confusion, at the pigs' horrifying transformation, shows that they have kept their own sensibilities intact – they have not eaten the fallen apples, which the pigs have taken for themselves.²² In this fairy story, the lesson is that power is another name for violence; the morality is wonder. On a farm where the animals are bred for slaughter, or worked to death, or forced to see their children sold for whiskey money, some of the animals retain their unshaken belief in their own ways of being; the animals that cannot put what they are seeing into any imaginary that makes sense are using a different meaning structure than the pigs. They remain ontologically un beholden to the conditions the pigs are willing to accept as inevitable, and therefore permissible.²³

²¹ As Lauren Duca writes, "To gaslight is to psychologically manipulate a person to the point where they question their own sanity." The animals' puzzlement and surprise at the pigs' depredations demonstrates that they have retained a "sanity" beyond the pigs' ability to manipulate.

²² Jacques Derrida considers the construction of liberal subject, in two works he considers central to Western anthropocentric humanism: the Biblical story of Genesis, from which Derrida extracts his meditation upon shame, and the myth of Prometheus, which might be considered foundational to notions of punishment – and possibly atonement – that Michel Foucault excavates throughout his analyses of the Greek philosophical tradition. "I situate this time of the fall at the purposive intersection of two traditions, because in the Genesis tale as much as in the myth of Prometheus... (and the moment when Prometheus steals fire, that is to say, the arts and technics, in order to make up for the forgetfulness or tardiness of Epimetheus, who had perfectly equipped all breeds of animal but left 'man naked,' without shoes, covering, or arms), it is paradoxically on the basis of a fault or failing in man that the latter will be made a subject who is master of nature and of the animal" (20). Foucault's "Care of the Self" offers a complementary arc to Derrida's concern: if Man is born of the violence of unacknowledged shame, care of the self makes visible the need to recuperate the double violence of man's depredations accomplished in the absence of his ability to acknowledge, or heal, himself.

²³ Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* fuses psychoanalytic with postcolonial theory in his deconstruction of the linkages between language and ontological colonization: "The wearing of European clothes, whether rags or the most up-to-date style; using European furniture and European forms of social intercourse; adorning the native language with European expressions; using bombastic phrases in speaking a European language; all these contribute to a feeling of equality with the European and his achievements....[W]e would like to try to show why the black man posits himself in such a characteristic way with regard to European languages. We recall once again that our findings are valid for the French Antilles; we are well aware, however, that this same behavior can be found in any race subjected to colonization" (8-9). In resonance with Fanon's thinking, *Animal Farm's* subjugation occurs along lines of species being, which are of course imbricated with racialized, sexualized, and gendered asymmetries of power. As he outlines the connections between linguistic

Prior to the animals' revolution, in which they drive their cruel human owner Jones from the farm, "prize Middle White boar" Old Major holds the position of highest regard amongst all the animals. Calling a convocation, to share a dream he has had, Old Major speaks from a dais; the other animals, who hold Old Major in high regard and are willing to "lose an hour's sleep" to hear his words, range themselves in a half-circle around him (3). Among the animals introduced are the novella's major characters: carthorse Boxer, motherly plough horse Clover, foolish and pretty carriage horse Mollie, donkey Benjamin and goat Muriel, the hens, the dogs, and even the cat. The pigs settle in, as well, to hear Old Major's dream. The dream is a dream of his mother, and it prompts him to speak his vision of Animal Farm – a farm run by the animals who serve it, a farm based in peace, dignity, and comfort. The whippings are to end, and the castrations and slaughters will stop. Only, warns Old Major, "remember...that in fighting against Man, we must not come to resemble him" (8).

In the terms set forth by Old Major, the pigs – among all the animals – are the only ones to fall, in their battle against Man. One vice after another, the pigs succumb to Man's pitfalls: hierarchy, power, alcohol, and money. There is, however, a peril even Old Major does not reckon with, and in his failure to recognize it, he sets the pigs on the course toward

and psychic colonization, provides an intricate analytic for examining black identities within the frame of white, French colonialism. As he does, he also opens the way to see the characteristics of the mask of whiteness, in relation to the mask of humanity: as with the pigs, who become indistinguishable from humans, acceding to a position of privilege requires "mutation" (7). There are two points here: white colonizers are not free from the engine of colonization; it is differently expressed and experienced according the differences in privilege between those at the top of the hierarchy and those at the bottom. Colonization occurs at the level of ontology, which is made vulnerable at every juncture that epistemologically is separated according to the idea that binary oppositions are mutually exclusive rather than mutually constitutive. Old Major's failure to warn against linguistic violence, with its concomitant ontological violence, dooms the pigs but leaves the opening for the animals "too stupid" to internalize human (written) language conventions to remain outside the reach of ontological colonization, even as they live within the pigs' hegemonic tyranny. The windmill serves as an expression of the animals' relation; Snowball's vision of a power generator that spares the animals time for dignity and enjoyment is set against Napoleon's aim to control the animals' imaginaries. Though Napoleon eventually coopts the windmill, and drives Snowball from the farm, the animals retain their pride in the building they did and the dream they served while building: the dream of mutual aid and collective wellbeing.

destruction. Just prior to his caution, that the animals not come to resemble Man as they fight him, Old Major takes pains to categorize, to essentialize, Man versus Animal and enemy versus friend: “Comrades,” he said, “here is a point that must be settled. The wild creatures, such as rats and rabbits—are they our friends or our enemies?” (8). Old Major uses a category of being – “wild” – to designate another category of being – friend or enemy. Both are defined in terms of his relation to these concepts, not in terms of how the rats or rabbits identify. He then uses these categories to determine the positionality of all creatures. Old Major instantiates the rebellion in one of the most damaging pastimes of Western Man, the pursuit of ontological certainty. Animal Farm suffers because his heirs fight to secure his legacy.

Napoleon and Snowball, the only other boars on the farm, do not appear by name or category until after Old Major’s death. Present in the novella, but absent from all critical interpretations, is the pigs’ dilemma. Boars are sexually mature pigs; porkers are pigs castrated prior to reaching sexual maturity because castration keeps the “meat” from acquiring the musky taste of boar. Old Major has sired more than 400 “children”; among these are the porkers, whose fate Old Major knows with certainty, as it is a yearly event: “you will scream your lives out at the block within a year” (7). Old Major’s survival on the farm is owed to his breeding capacity; Napoleon and Snowball are his successors, and they have been allowed to survive, as his heirs apparent.

Upon Old Major’s death, Napoleon enters a contest with Snowball for survival; within the breed or die patriarchy that Napoleon inherits, Napoleon’s progress can be seen as gathering the tools he needs to ensure that he will not spend his later years living in the fear he has known to this point.

Priorities of capitalist patriarchy dictate Napoleon's course: acquire the land, acquire breeding partners, acquire the means of production, control the workers' imaginations, and adapt a militarized force to silence dissenters. Napoleon has no trouble with any portion of this project, until he encounters the animals' imaginary; however much control he gains over the farm's propaganda, via designating Squealer and Maximus (both porkers) to interpret events for the animals, Napoleon attempts to control the narrative – the story of events and their meanings – but he fails to grasp or damage the animals' imagining.

With such clear stakes, we might look for the workings of patriarchy to be obscured in the text. Violence and patriarchy are close companions, as the pigs' demise exemplifies. Still, the degree to which patriarchy escapes attention in *Animal Farm* is surprising: “A successful farmyard revolution by the resident animals vs. the farmer goes horribly wrong as the victors create a new tyranny among themselves” (*Cliffsnotes*). This is the summary for *Animal Farm*, presented by Cliffsnotes, which goes on to argue, “While Jones' tyranny can be somewhat excused due to the fact that he is a dull-witted drunkard, Napoleon's can only be ascribed to his blatant lust for power” (*Cliffsnotes*). There is no mention of where Napoleon's lust, or power, originates. In fact, the argument sweeps aside the idea that power is not universally desired, nor is it a thing a pig generally aspires to. Cliffsnotes provides an interesting site to examine because it is a resource consulted by countless students (countless because few will admit to reading it), and it gives an interpretation that reinforces patriarchal value structures, including ideas about human dominion over animal lives. According to the site, Jones's debauchery is excusable; he drinks. Napoleon, though, is a criminal: “Napoleon's greatest crime...is his complete transformation into Jones — although Napoleon is a much more harsh and stern master than the reader is led to believe Jones ever was...His final act of propaganda...shows just how much Napoleon has *wholly disregarded*

the words of Old Major” (*Cliffsnotes*, emphasis mine). By treating Jones and Napoleon differently, based on species difference, this reading misses the entire point of the novella, and it urges those caught within patriarchal violence to embrace the conditions of their own destruction – through the mechanism of denying the presence of either patriarchy or violence.

However mangled, this interpretation does recognize that Napoleon’s disregard of Old Major is a betrayal. The nature of the betrayal, however, goes unrecognized – as it must, for the story to continue as an affirmation of Man’s permission to exercise power. Power, it seems, is inevitable and its desiring omnipresent. If power is inevitable, best not to have criminals at the helm. Except, look!, even the animals’ revolution ends with worse conditions than before it began; power corrupts, we know, and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Animal Farm contests a reading like this, perhaps most clearly with its ending: the pigs transform into the thing they most fear and hate – Man. They do so precisely by refusing to see that the vices they embrace are the tools of their self-destruction. Given the animals’ gaze, the novella provides an opportunity for humans to see what the pigs do not: the pigs fail to see that they have denied themselves the ability to inhabit Animal Farm and have instead consigned themselves to the charnel patriarchy from which they were trying to be free.

Regarding The Violence of Ontology

While Napoleon’s lust for power is tied to his drive to breed offspring, it is also tied to his service in Orwell’s novella as a ventriloquizeable Joseph Stalin. With the deposing of Jones, combined with Old Major’s death, the stakes of Napoleon’s and Snowball’s existences alter; Snowball dons the mantle of Old Major’s discursive potency. He is the

more persuasive speaker; he is the mind behind the windmill, which is intended to provide energy that will replace the energy the animals must contribute with their bodies and their labor. Napoleon, however, grasps Jones's and Old Major's legacies; he blends authoritarian punishment with narrative supremacy in order to drive Snowball from the farm. He proceeds to take Jones's place, in the house, and Old Major's place, as the only breeder of the farm's sows, all the while building a mechanism to ensure that his discursive vitality is unchallengeable.

In linking discursive with reproductive virility, *Animal Farm* accurately portrays the stakes of patriarchy. To be heard, to be treated as valued, to assert closely-held priorities – it is necessary to be the top breeding pig. In order to maintain his position, which is experienced by Napoleon as tenuous – as all positions are, within the structure of patriarchy – Napoleon acts in preemptive self-defense.²⁴

The pigs, again following Man's example, use writing as an attempt to compel the animals' compliance; the pigs cannot allow their narrative to be undermined by the animals, as there are still humans to contend with. (It is a bit of a stunning feat to hold at bay the (external) human aggressors, just on the strength of narrative, as the pigs do, for a time.) However, while the animals that cannot or do not read are cast as "stupid," these are the animals who retain their sensibility and their hope; though immersed in the pigs' aberrations, these animals remain uncolonized by the ideologies that come to possess the pigs:

As for the pigs, they could already read and write perfectly. The dogs learned to read fairly well, but were not interested in reading anything except the Seven Commandments... Benjamin could read as well as any pig, but never exercised his faculty... Clover learnt the whole alphabet, but could not put words together. Boxer could not get beyond the letter D. He would race out A, B, C, D in the dust with his

²⁴ Asad, *On Suicide Bombing*.

great hoof and then would stand staring at the letters with his ears back...trying with all his might to remember what came next. (25)²⁵

Continuing on, from Old Major's error, the pigs assemble seven commandments and paint them on the side of the barn. The pigs' dissolution can be traced as the commandments shift; their transformation from Animal to Man parallels the changes in what constitutes Animal, and what constitutes an enemy:

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal. (19)

Each of the prohibitions, of course, becomes altered. No animal shall sleep in a bed, with sheets. No animal shall drink, to excess. No animal shall kill any other animal, without cause. As the pigs change the meaning of what it means to be Animal, and begin to resemble Man, the animals that cannot read or write do not undertake the "brainwork" that damns the pigs.

The point of exploitation in the pigs' propaganda lies within their attempt to gaslight the animals. In an interesting intersection between ontology and psychological warfare, the pigs continue on with adjusting conditions and aligning these conditions with categories of being: at the outset, an animal was defined by the things prohibited by the Seven Commandments. As the commandments shift, it seems, so does the meaning of animal. It is not, however, the category of animal that changes – it is the pigs. As they revise their means of self-determination, the only thing that really changes is the relation of information to

²⁵ Far from advocating that reading and writing not be taught, the novella offers itself as a cautionary tale – it demonstrates the dangers of teaching reading and writing without also teaching sophisticated narrative and discursive tactics for decoding the underlying stakes.

being. Ontology, in the novella, is a means of capturing relations, though it is deployed as a means of determining relations. As the pigs continue to adjust the commandments, they hide the changes from the other animals, and they claim that the changes exist only in the animals' (mistaken) memories.

Recounting the satisfactions of the farm, in the face of growing tyranny and starvation, the animals seem to fall in line with Napoleon's manipulation. Choosing the best interpretation of events, the animals consider that the "advantage of only having to feed themselves, and not having to support five extravagant human beings as well, was so great that it would have taken a lot of failures to outweigh it" (46). Their positivity, however, poses a threat to Napoleon's position. Simply going on without fulfilling the demands seeded by patriarchal ideas of power, the animals would have no need of the pigs' "brainwork."

Among the farm's species, only the pigs and hens have no job except as food or as producers of meat, or eggs. With the humans gone, the pigs and hens have no obvious work to do on the farm. While the hens are able to help with harvest, having agile beaks, the pigs are neither suited nor trained to labor as the other animals are. Unlike the pigs, the hens occupy a feminized, racially othered position that lessens their ability to access patriarchal power. In increasingly dire conditions, the pigs contract for 400 eggs per week, which they will sell to a neighboring farm. Promised that they need no longer lay eggs for sale, upon learning of the new arrangement, the hens

raised a terrible outcry...They were just getting their clutches ready for a spring sitting, and they protested that to take the eggs away now was murder...Led by three young Black Minorca pullets, the hens made a determined effort to thwart

Napoleon's wishes. Their method was to fly up to the rafters and there lay their eggs, which smashed to pieces on the floor. (55)²⁶

The hens hold out for five days, as Napoleon orders their corn rations withheld. Nine hens die, before the rest return to their nesting boxes.

Napoleon's fury is based in his impotence. The hens demonstrate that all they need to do to bring Napoleon down is to refuse to cooperate; had the farmer contracting for the eggs not received them, Napoleon's position among the humans would have become vitiated. Conversely, the animals are secure in their strength – secure enough to build Animal Farm alongside the suffering mockery Napoleon creates. While Napoleon attempts to control every aspect of the animals' lives, including their understanding of their own lives, the animals make adjustments. The mechanism – belief – that Napoleon uses as a weapon of oppression, the animals use as a generative tool. In spite of the dogs, the short rations, and the shifting commandments the animals enjoy a sense of ownership over the farm. Their work, after, benefits their fellow animals: “And since no animal now stole, it was unnecessary to fence off pasture from arable land” (46). The pigs, of course, have been stealing all along; the fresh milk and cream, and the windfall apples from the orchard, the pigs confiscate for themselves. But the pigs' dissolute acts have no place on the animals' farm; unable to change the pigs' conduct, the animals excise the pigs from accountability.

²⁶ The Black Minorca pullets are racialized and exoticized, as they are the only animals whose species is non-native to the British Isles. The hens' resistance resonates with Toni Morrison's exploration of the intersection between race, gender, dehumanization, and capitalism in *Beloved*. Sethe kills her daughter, to spare her daughter and herself the atrocity of living as a slave; this is an act of radical love. While the hens' resistance is not expressed as love, in the novella, the hens resist together. As some of their number die, and others will survive only to be executed for their successful rebellion, the hens exhibit the most savvy understanding of Napoleon's power, and – alone among all the animals – the unflinching commitment to the stakes of refusal. W.E.B. DuBois's *The Souls of Black Folk* introduces “double consciousness,” which provides an opportunity to grasp the distinction between the hens' perceptions of their position and the other animals'. “From the double life every American Negro must live, as a Negro and as an American, as swept on by the current of the nineteenth while yet struggling in the eddies of the fifteenth century – from this must arise a painful self-consciousness” (136). Multiply precarious in their position, the hens cannot afford the self-deception required of Derrida's liberal humanist subject.

They practice selective forgetting, which, while it leaves them open to Napoleon's tactics, also leaves them open to inhabiting a bearable existence.

It is a difficult solution. Napoleon constantly rewrites, and overwrites, events, as he does the commandments in order to enhance the animals' uncertainty of their own perceptions. He preys in particular upon those animals that cannot use writing to record their knowledge. The animals, though struggling, find other means to understand what is real. Boxer, among the "stupidest" animals, offers endurance and loyalty as his means. Napoleon, after driving Snowball from the farm, assures that he will never return by casting him as the hidden villain of the farm. Boxer resists this, unfortunately in a public forum, which earns him Napoleon's retribution: "Snowball fought bravely at the Battle of the Cowshed. I saw him myself. Did we not give him 'Animal Hero, First Class,' immediately afterwards?" (58). After the humans return, and try to retake the farm, Squealer immediately sets about proclaiming Napoleon's victory: "What victory?" said Boxer. His knees were bleeding, he had lost a shoe and split his hoof, and a dozen pellets had lodged themselves in his hind leg" (75). Boxer has killed three humans, in defending the farm, and many animals have lost their lives; his grief tells him a story more compelling than the self-aggrandizing narrative Napoleon would have him substitute.

Napoleon, ever astute, is aware that his narrative making fails to inspire, or to compel. The lengths to which he goes to assert his version of the truth demonstrates the depth of importance narrative plays in upholding, and denying, structures of power and those whose lives are caught inside them. Napoleon reaches the extreme endpoint of violence, when he conducts a series of executions designed to silence all challenges to his discursive authority: the animals are required to pretend that the executions occur for the reasons stated,

while knowing that the real motivation is retribution and intimidation.²⁷ Progressing in stages, Napoleon first ends the weekly meetings, at which all animals participated in debates about how to conduct the farm's business. He encounters resistance from the pigs, first: "Four young porkers in the front row uttered shrill squeals of disapproval, and all four of them sprang to their feet and began speaking at once. But suddenly the dogs sitting round Napoleon let out deep, menacing growls, and the pigs fell silent and sat down again" (41). Squealer provides the authorized interpretation of this event, which continues a familiar vein of argument: "Comrades," he said, "I trust that every animal here appreciates the sacrifice that Comrade Napoleon has made in taking this extra labor upon himself" (41). The sacrifice Napoleon demands is reconfigured as the sacrifice he makes; his absence from all work is refigured as taking upon himself the more difficult work of thinking, on behalf of the less intelligent animals.

²⁷ Arjun Appadurai's *Fear of Small Numbers* offers a formulation, "predatory identities," that brings forth the connections between violence, narrative, culture, and ontology in the context of genocide. "I define as predatory those identities whose social construction and mobilization require the extinction of other, proximate social categories, defined as threats to the very existence of some group, defined as a we. Predatory identities emerge...out of pairs of identities, sometimes sets that are larger than two, which have long histories of close contact, mixture, and some degree of mutual stereotyping. Occasional violence may or may not be parts of these histories, but some degree of contrastive identification is always involved. One of those pairs of identities turns predatory by mobilizing an understanding of itself as a threatened majority...The formation of an ethnos into a modern nation often provides the basis for the emergence of predatory identities" (51).

Complicated by the farm's economic position, which is increasingly precarious as the animals need to replenish food, tools, and supplies, Napoleon cannot create an us / them opposition – which might better be considered a we / you relation – without losing his labor force. Instead, he must convince the animals to speak his violence, not to create distance between us/them, but in order to bring "you" animals within the fold of Napoleon's "we" where he can position himself as a stern patriarch rather than an aberrative Jones. Appadurai continues, "My suggestion is that all majoritarianisms have in them the seeds of genocide, since they are invariably connected with ideas about the singularity and completeness of the national ethnos" (57). Napoleon acquires singularity when he banishes his fellow boar from the Farm; within the carnophallogocentric frame of the Farm, however, the question of completeness resonates with Derrida's elaboration on man's shame. The rational liberal subject, founded in lack, attempts to find completion in mastery over an animal "them." The novella suggests, as a fight erupts because Napoleon and a human farmer have both played the same ace, that such a cheat results only in self-debasement. Far from finding completion, "we" cannot eliminate "you" without sacrificing both paired identities.

Referencing the Nazi "project," Appadurai finds that "it may have been extraordinary in its consistency and the reach of its genocidal imagination. But as an ideology or majoritarianism turned predatory, it does not allow us to imagine that liberalism is immune from the conditions that produce majoritarian genocide" (58). In fact, the construction of the liberal subject – in lack, shame, and servitude to an imagination

Epitomizing the need of violence to receive permission, Napoleon follows with the executions: he compels the animals to “confess” to ridiculous crimes that do nothing to conceal that the animals are simply being punished for speaking against Napoleon. As his targets, Napoleon chooses the porkers who objected to the end of weekly debates: “When they had finished their confession, the dogs promptly tore their throats out, and in a terrible voice Napoleon demanded whether any other animal had anything to confess” (60). Next, the “three hens who had been the ringleaders in the attempted rebellion over the eggs now came forward and stated that Snowball had appeared to them in a dream and incited them to disobey Napoleon’s orders” (61). The dogs again tear the animals apart. “When it was all over, the remaining animals, except for the pigs and dogs, crept away in a body. They were shaken and miserable. They didn’t know which was more shocking—the treachery of the animals who had leagued themselves with Snowball, or the cruel retribution they had just witnessed” (61).

Shockingly, the animals hold equal the “treachery” and the retribution. Baker’s claim, about the dangers of political naivete makes sense here, except that the animals’ balance between two truths – one given by Napoleon, the other unspoken but understood by the animals themselves – is the source of their survival. The animals occupy a landscape in which confusion, or naivete, shields them from knowing as the pigs know, or as the pigs would have them know. Simultaneously, it allows them to act in accordance with Napoleon’s edicts, without either incurring his ire or fretting themselves into torment about the irreconcilability between what they know and what they are told.

of privilege that does not recognize the epistemological tie between privilege/abasement and so fails to forewarn its privilege holders of their danger – has no more rational endpoint than genocide.

As conditions on the farm worsen, and the animals' strength of belief is continually tested, the animals nevertheless go on believing. They cultivate hope as the determining factor in their estimation of what is, and what is not:

For the time being, certainly, it had been found necessary to make a readjustment of rations (Squealer always spoke of it as a 'readjustment,' never as a 'reduction'), but in comparison with the days of Jones, the improvement was enormous...The animals believed every word of it. Truth to tell, Jones and all he stood for had almost faded out of their memories...But doubtless it had been worse in the old days. They were glad to believe so. (80)

The animals' ontological structure, contrary to the pigs' (human) system, is not based in assigning external attributes to qualities of being. Instead, it is based on accepting as real that which affirms their sense of what real is: real is dignity, joy, and a sense of wonder. All else does not become unreal; it simply is confusing, or painful, or saddening.

Tilting At Windmills: From Economy to Ecology

As the novella concludes, the stakes of imagination are clear. Napoleon has sired 31 offspring and is seeing to their education; the novella does not specify whether he will educate them as he did the puppies he took from their mothers. But there are no more designations among boars and porkers; the next generation may not grow under the same conditions of charnel patriarchy that mark Napoleon so deeply.

The windmill, after two attempts, has been built. Carried stone by stone by Boxer, the first windmill is destroyed in a storm on a night when the hens "dream" of hearing a gunshot. Snowball is blamed, and Napoleon uses the opportunity to solidify his rule over the farm. The second windmill is blasted apart by humans, who are trying to prevent the idea of Animal Farm from spreading; they do not want their own animals rising up. Under Napoleon's direction, the "windmill had been successfully completed at last...The windmill,

however, had not after all been used for generating electrical power. It was used for milling corn, and brought in a handsome money profit” (92).

Imagination in physical form, the windmill represents the relation between what we can dream and what we can create. The windmill, in its cautionary form, is not used to fuel the animals’ pastoral free time; it is harnessed to feed capitalist dreams. Unlike the greater body of literature on *Animal Farm*, C. Letemendia’s “Revolution on Animal Farm: Orwell’s Neglected Commentary” identifies the moral of Orwell’s fairy tale as a caution against cynicism:

In the last scene of George Orwell’s ‘fairy tale,’ *Animal Farm*, the humbler animals peer through a window of the farmhouse to observe a horrible sight: the pigs who rule over them have grown indistinguishable from their temporary allies, the human farmers, whom they originally fought to overthrow. The animals’ fate seems to mirror rather closely that of the common people as Orwell envisaged it some six years before commencing *Animal Farm*: “what you get over and over again is a movement of the proletariat which is promptly cannibalized and betrayed by astute people at the top, and then the growth of a new governing class. The one thing that never arrives is equality. The mass of the people never get the chance to bring their innate decency into the control of affairs, so that one is almost driven to the cynical thought that men are only decent when they are powerless.” (127)

Though Letemendia upholds an essentializing idea of “innate” and “natural” characteristics, for both humans and animals, he notes that “decency hinders the worker animals from discovering the true nature of the pigs until the final scene” and that it “provides them with an instinctive feeling for what a fair society might actually look like” (129). Letemendia finds that the story ends on a “note of hope,” related to the animals’ decency remaining intact, and that this note complicates Marxist conceptions of revolution. While he misidentifies the “most corrupting force on *Animal Farm*,” as the “deception practiced upon the other animals by the pigs” instead of the deception of the liberal subject practiced upon itself, he does find the discursive moral of the fairy story: “the greatest danger came from the reluctance of the oppressed creatures to believe in an alternative between porcine and human

rule. Yet it was in the affirmation of dignity, freedom, and equality tacitly provided by the nobler qualities of the presumed lower animals that Orwell saw the beginnings of such an alternative” (137). Without an animal studies perspective, Letemendia accedes to the simple view that the pigs succumb to a hunger for power; power itself is no thing to hunger for, unless the presumption of completion that it symbolizes provides an overwhelming lure.

Letemendia reads *Animal Farm* in comparison to a letter Orwell wrote, to his friend Dwight Macdonald, which allows Letemendia to draw a parallel between the fictional animals and human readers. As with the novella, Letemendia argues

The final note of Orwell's letter is optimistic: if people mistook his message for a conservative one, it was precisely their problem. They had no confidence in the possibility of an alternative to either capitalism or dictatorship. In a sense, they would be like those animals who, when forced into making a choice between a false set of alternatives by Squealer – either the return of Farmer Jones or unquestioning obedience to the rule of the pigs – failed to consider the possibility of a third choice,²⁸ a democratic Socialist society. For although Orwell was prepared to provide a fairly detailed explanation of his animal story for his friend Macdonald, his letter makes it quite evident that the burden of understanding still lay with its reader. (137)

For Letemendia, the novella operates as both fairy story and fable. In a fable, animals are anthropomorphized and ventriloquized; the actual animals are disappeared and their figures appropriated, so that human readers may undertake the burden of understanding. While the possibility of actual animals to express their stories directly gives way, to the possibility that their disappearance will be witnessed by the text and its readers, it is important to consider: within a construct based in disavowal of our disavowal (our shameless shame), we can observe that the novella asks us to face – not animals – but ourselves.

It is, of course, crucial to restore the plight of actual animals to the novella; restoring the being imaginary of the humanist subject at the cost of the material beings of animals

repeats the sacrifice that Derrida places as the crux of human and animal relations: the sacrificial economy must cease operations altogether. Drew Leder's "Old McDonald's Had a Farm: The Metaphysics of Factory Farming" proceeds from an animal studies perspective, and performs a Marxist close reading of the factory farm. As Lederer works through the reading, ecological concerns are given greater priority than economical investments:

Bred and fed for rapid meat and egg production, animals develop severe anatomical problems and disease patterns that are only partially addressed—and often exacerbated—by a stream of hormones, food additives, and antibiotics (Singer, 2001, 2006). Not only animals but also humans suffer from factory farms, also known as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Such operations are energy-intensive and largely petroleum-based, using up nonrenewable resources. They produce large quantities of environmentally toxic waste that enters ground, air, and water and affects the health of surrounding inhabitants. (73-74)

Leder hinges ecology and economy in order to demonstrate the machinic operation of Western humanist metaphysics.²⁹ For Leder, "One way into such issues is to examine the term itself: 'factory farm.' It contains within it a number of hinges. A hinge is a joint that holds two parts together, while allowing one to swing relative to the other" (74). According to Leder's reading of Marx, nature and capitalism meet in the figure of the worker, where the capitalist symbolic economy imagines labor without, in a sense, a laborer: "[i]n contrast to the natural hinge that connects/separates the human and animal, capitalism thus creates an

²⁸ Queer Chicana feminist, poet and scholar, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands / La Frontera: The New Mestiza* speaks from the space of third ways. In resonance with double consciousness, Anzaldúa explores non-binary identity from the positionality of a bordered / borderless subjectivity.

²⁹ Giorgio Agamben writes of the anthropological machine, in his work *The Open: Man and Animal*. Agamben argues that the anthropological machine operates upon contradiction: "Insofar as the production of man through the opposition man/animal, human/inhuman is at stake here, the machine necessarily functions by means of an exclusion (which is also always already a capturing) and an inclusion (which is also always already an exclusion). Indeed, precisely because the human is already presupposed every time, the machine actually produces a kind of state of exception, a zone of indeterminacy in which the outside is nothing but the exclusion of an inside and the inside is in turn only the inclusion of an outside" (37). The result of the machine is the space of the concentration camps, further discussed in Agamben's *Means Without End*; the machine is an engine that produces dehumanization and animalization, and is "able to function only by establishing a central zone of indifference" (37) that enable the machine's "lethal" and "bloody" outcomes, which Agamben aims to engage in order that "we might eventually be able to stop them" (38). *The Open: Man and Animal*. Stanford University Press, 2004.

unnatural hinge. It swings together, even reverses, what should be separate: ‘What is animal becomes human and what is human becomes animal’ (Marx, 1964b, p. 111). The worker is made brutish by labor’s brutal conditions” (77). Capitalism mobilizes its exploitation of species being at the level of ontology; as with the commandments on Animal Farm, manipulation of categories translates as manipulation of meaning: transacted through the capitalist symbolic economy, in which a worker is translated as the goods his labor produces, Leder’s study shows the extent to which wishing, or believing, can make a thing so.

Taking religious, philosophical, and scientific belief systems into account, Leder characterizes industrial farming an expression of the failure of Western metaphysics, which is at the same time the expression of Western metaphysics’ principles working as they are designed to work.

Philosophically, one might...view mechanistic metaphysics as the most powerful “engine” powering the factory farm. We have seen that it links together religious and scientific elements of the Western tradition. It helps us better understand how animals and humans can both be treated similarly (qua alienated labor) and differently (qua our unrestrained cruelty to animals who are farmed). As such it serves as a hinge holding together the disparate elements that form the factory farm. This entity seems inconceivable without the philosophy, science, and technology of mechanism. (83)

Western philosophical anthropocentrism places the focus “on human beings as the pinnacle of nature and/or as having a unique supernatural significance. Nonhuman nature is often consigned to an instrumental role; it is important insofar as it serves human needs” (78). The result of such an instrumental view of animals is that the “cultural tradition of anthropocentrism, the economics of capitalism, and the worldview and practices of mechanism interact in ways that are mutually enhancing—or from another point of view, maximally destructive—for the animals subject to their rule” (83).

Leder focuses on mechanism, which he examines in terms of the displacement of the natural world by early modern science, as the hinge that conjoins human with animal suffering.

In a much-told story, early modern science ushered in a new world-picture. As developed by experimentalists and theorists such as Galileo and Descartes, the natural world was reconceived according to the physics and mathematics of mechanics... This effected what Merchant has famously termed “the death of nature” (Merchant, 1980). The natural world was no longer conceived of as ensouled and purposive. Expunged were both the neo-Platonic ascription of occult sympathies and antipathies to matter and the Aristotelian notion of substantial forms with final causes they sought to actualize (Thomas, 1997). What remained was nature viewed as machinelike, its passive matter driven by mechanical forces. Even living bodies were assimilated to this paradigm based on the inanimate. (79-80)

As vitalist and new vitalist works challenge the inanimacy of objects, there remain fewer grounds for upholding species – human, animal, insect, plant – hierarchies or for justifying dealing with organisms without relation to their complete ecosystems, including those byproducts classified as waste. For Leder, the machinic tendencies of Western metaphysics are countered at the site of the human / animal hinge by ecotheology, phenomenology, ecofeminism, and deep ecology. However, it is the plight of animals that calls for us to “reintroduce elements of diversity, creativity, and ‘humanity’ into our human–animal relations” (84). It is the work of humanities and animalities to rebuild a symbolic ecosystem that refuses a machinic, transactional belief structure. As purveyors of language, and dealers in imaginaries, it is literary scholars’ task to build Squealer’s windmill, not Napoleon’s.

Literary Animals: Species *Différance* As Recuperation in the Symbolic Ecology³⁰

³⁰ *Derrida and Différance* sums *différance* as Derrida’s effort “to gather a number of...threads of difference—including Hegel’s ‘differentiating relation’ – into a difference with a difference: *différance*, in which he attempted the fusion of the logical ontological, and (transcendental) aesthetic values that might be involved in a difference that would be not merely opposed to identity” (X). For Derrida, it is not that the distance between two points is resonance, more that the difference between two points is to defer. In this sense, species *différance* in literary works recuperates anthropomorphic anthropocentrism and examines its ability to restore naked self-awareness to human subjectivity.

Fairy story and fable, *Animal Farm* is also a work of dystopic fiction. While it's ecocritical dimension has remained more latent than explicit,³¹ the novella's linkage of science- or speculative-fiction with concerns about how we inhabit our symbolic ecosystem offers a way through the impasse between humanist anthropocentrism and animals studies' (rightful) insistence our interventions must not further erase or appropriate animals' lives.

Eric Otto's *Green Speculations: Science Fiction and Transformative*

Environmentalism examines science fiction's ability to open third (or fourth or infinite) alternatives to choosing between false either/or dichotomies. Otto offers, "About science fiction [Ernest] Yanarella writes, 'as critical political theory [science fiction] often issues in a powerful critique of existing social institutions, cultural norms, and prevailing structures of power. In the process, it opens up alternative ways of socially constructing the lived world and disclosing utopian possibilities latent in the present and emergent in that different possible future'" (3). Naiveté, decency, utopian possibilities – these are all ways of naming what we must notice in the "wondering faces" of *Animal Farm*'s *animots*, as they stare in at the pigs' dissolution; situating wonder at the level of ontology, *Animal Farm*'s *animots* bypass the mechanism of rational Western ontology, even as the animals suffer its effects.

³¹ Donna Landry makes a significant point regarding the alignment of ecocriticism with animal studies, arguing that from "an ecological perspective...the operative category in debates about biodiversity, sustainability, endangered status, conservation, and preservation is the species, not the individual" (89). It is only by extension that *Animal Farm* engages species destruction; the pigs dying on Animal Farm are not all pigs, everywhere, except that the pigs on Animal Farm are exemplary of all animals that are killed to feed human appetites. At the level of the symbolic ecosystem, we can articulate the ways in which animals are always already rendered extinct – before the fact of their deaths. In one direction, the pigs are so divorced from their own sociocultural behaviors that there is nothing "pigs" left of them, except their physiognomies; as the novella shows, pigs have otherwise been rendered no different than the man-kind that so constructs them. In another direction, breeding provides an endless supply of bodies: if we define extinction solely in terms of numbers of available pig bodies (and if we define genocide solely in terms of numbers of available human bodies), then pigs can never reach the threshold of extinction. Animals, and *animots*, become immobilized at an intersection of biopolitics with necropolitics. As imaginary beings, humans share the *animots* ontological vulnerability; assigning a human group the status of "animal" places the targeted human group at a very similar nexus of bio- and necropolitics.

Otto's formulation draws forward the intersections between transformative environmentalism and science fiction literature and articulates the aims of literature, which, counter to the aims of the sciences, undertake transformations of our subjective, interior worlds. "Informed by the life sciences, which remind us of our dependencies and effects upon nonhuman nature and ecosystemic processes, as well as by various schools of philosophical thought, transformative movements instead work to change the inputs of...destruction, 'the individual attitudes, habits, and behavior that lead us all to want and demand things that necessitate environmental damage'" (1). In other words, we read to discover our engagement with the world; we journey to interrogate and affect our ability to engage in meaningful, purposeful, and conscious ways. Literary transformations occur inside-out – we change, at the level of imagination, and these changes condition the actions we undertake. Anthropocentrism, in this frame, is an appropriate and necessary element to our explorations, as the slippage that underlies human treatment of animals depends upon erasing first the conflation – and then the manipulation – the position "we" with the position "you."

To ground anthropocentrism, to hold its discovery while containing its conceptual bent toward reifying what it finds, species difference needs species *différance*. Elizabeth Cherry presents a sociological study of Miru Kim's 2011 photographic series, in which Kim goes nude among the sows of a factory farm. Cherry's analysis shows "how visual art plays a role in the animal rights movement, by making animals visible, focusing "the gaze" on animal issues, and by shifting symbolic boundaries between humans and animals" (68). Cherry considers Kim's photos within the context of her artist statement, which accompanies Kim's exhibition, and finds that Kim "attempts to put herself on the same visual and physical plane as pigs. Instead of emphasizing the distinctiveness and exclusion of animals

from humans and vice versa, Kim's work bridges the human–animal divide... through...closeness" (72). In a deliberate making-animal of herself, Kim recuperates the symbolic boundary between animals and humans as inherently, simultaneously, imagined and material.³²

Kim describes her inspiration for her work in terms of shock, what science fiction might term estrangement:

By the time I was six, I knew that the cat enjoyed gentle massages in the shoulder area. It came to me as a shock, that this small, furry being had shoulder blades and a neck, much like my mother or any other person. At that young age, I could already sense that the anatomy of a cat was not so far from that of a human being. As I got older, I learned that pigs were strikingly similar to humans in their physiology. In some ways, pigs are anatomically closer to humans than non-human primates. As such, they are commonly used as specimens in laboratory classes for premedical students like myself back in college years. I remember peeling away carefully with forceps, scalpel, and scissors, the integument of a fetal pig. Layer by layer, I got to the abdominal cavity. When it was finally cut open, I saw an elaborate cluster of organs arranged in a way almost identical to what I'd seen in human anatomy books. (70)

As she has peeled, layer by layer, the body of a pig, Kim peels from within herself the layers of social construction that presented the pig as an object for Kim's intellectual consumption. As naked as Derrida, Kim's expression of shock is like, but in contrast, to Derrida's awareness of his position before his cat.³³ Both encounters serve as catalysts for a

³² Elizabeth Anker's *Fictions of Dignity* takes account of the ways in which "liberal human rights discourses, along with the theories of the human that sustain them, evince significant ambivalence toward embodiment...All in all, liberal formulations of human rights marshal a particular symbolic economy of the liberal social body, which sanctions concrete structures of oppression that find legislation in both law and sociopolitical practices" (47). Kim's boundary work emphasizes a point that is more difficult to access in Derrida's philosophical engagement: the shameless shame of the rational liberal subject depends upon divorcing imaginary from material modes of being. Derrida discusses man's need for clothes, to hide his sex; his cat reminds him that hiding his sex does not make it disappear. In contrast, Kim's nudity among the pigs finds no need to hide; rather, Kim uses her nakedness to express her sense of the shared vulnerability of material experience, which she experiences as "closeness."

³³ Cherry notes the intersections of gender and sexuality present in Kim's work, which are in contrast to Derrida's. Cherry writes, "Adams (1990), along with many other ecofeminists, likens the abusive treatment of women to the abusive treatment of animals. Rather than participating in or recreating this denigration, Kim's photographs more resemble the "subversive potential of cross-species identification" (Deckha 2008:59). In this strategy, female subjects align with animal bodies without disparaging both women and animals, and

reevaluation of their relations to animals. Where Derrida pursues difference, Kim focuses on similarity. Both Derrida and Kim, however, explore with the animals before them; they follow where the animals lead in a manner of “deferring” that delays coming to judgment and that exhibits deference before an unknown other.

For Cherry, Kim’s boundary work offers a method for interrogating and adapting, at the symbolic level, the ethics of the human/animal imaginary. “Kim focuses on the arbitrary boundaries between humans and pigs, with the end result of effectively blurring the boundaries between the two species and putting the two on the same physical, visual, and moral plane. More typically, in symbolic boundary work, powerful humans create boundaries that privilege some and harm others” (77). Blurring boundaries, without erasing them, Kim reconstructs these boundaries as constituted by physical, visual and moral dimensions; the violence Derrida deconstructs remains presents and is held in tension by Kim’s title for her exhibition, “The Pig That Therefore I Am.”

Kim’s artist statement addresses her intention to explore the “physiological and ontological similarities between humans and pigs” (79). Cherry acknowledges the risk Kim takes, in potentially anthropomorphizing the pigs, but finds that Kim avoids this error because “she does not attribute human form, activities and attributes, or intentionality to pigs” (79). Instead, “wonders aloud about the extent to which her and the pigs’ experiences and bodies can comingle. Kim gets as physically close as possible to the pigs, she explores

without reducing women to mere body parts. Although Kim’s skin-on-skin photographs could arguably do so, in depicting mere inches of skin without the viewer being able to clearly tell which body part is being shown, the sexualization of specific body parts is lost and the viewer is compelled to view the images in terms of the pig–human comparison rather than in terms of a naked breast or thigh” (75). Kim’s positionality – female to Derrida’s male – inverts the patriarchal perspective that Derrida inhabits, and which conditions Napoleon’s experiences at the hands of patriarch Jones.

the internal similarities through the externality of skin, but she will never fully understand the pig's point of view, nor the pig hers" (77).

Entering the symbolic ecology through visual means, Kim offers a performance of species *différance* valuable to the literary performances undertaken by human *animots*. Giving priority to material and imaginary ecosystems, and rescinding permissiveness relative to mechanistic economies, we are able to arrive at an ontology imbricated with the morality of wonder, rather than shame. If violence is a story, it is not the only story. Having noticed the wondering faces of Orwell's animals, and Animal Farm's *animots*, we may return to Orwell's concluding lines, "No question, now, what had happened to the faces of the pigs. The creatures outside looked from pig to man, and from man to pig, and from pig to man again; but already it was impossible to say which was which" (99-101). What was always already impossible to say is now possible, accessible, and open. What remains is to give ourselves permission, and courage, to enact a worthy story.

Chapter Three

Becoming Kin(d): Octavia Butler's Irresistible Erotics of Witnessing

Torn between extinction and becoming – neither human nor animal but other – Octavia Butler's Lilith Iyapo chooses love. Genetically and culturally adapted for survival by the alien Oankali, Lilith stands as xenophilic witness to the central act of reclamation explored in *Xenogenesis*: the transformation of the genocidal to the genophilic.³⁴

The *Xenogenesis* trilogy follows Lilith's encounter with the extraterrestrial Oankali. Visually grotesque, their bodies strike horror and revulsion in Lilith; she describes their multiple, mobile sensory organs as tentacles, worms, and writhing snakes. While the Oankali are aware of their physical ugliness; they are less able to access the truth of their undesirability.

The Oankali have rescued, or captured, Lilith after a nuclear war on Earth. All surviving humans have been brought aboard the Oankali's living vessel, which orbits the Earth. Through a series of Awakenings, undertaken during a span of two hundred and fifty thousand years, the Oankali observe their human trading "partners": that their partners are unaware and unwilling for the trade poses no conflict for the Oankali. In fact, the *ooloi* –

³⁴ Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of Subjection* examines the problem of witnessing, with reference to the spectacle of Black suffering. Infusing Freudian psychoanalysis with the excluded presence of black lives, Hartman argues that "the passage through the blood stained gate" is a "primal scene," it is the "inaugural moment in the formation of the enslaved," and that "the terrible spectacle dramatizes the origin of the subject and demonstrates that to be a slave is to be under the brutal power and authority of another; this is confirmed by the event's placement in [Frederick Douglass's] opening chapter on genealogy" (3). Lilith Iyapo, whose name locates her identity in Western mythology and in her Yoruban cultural legacy, fuses the traditions of the slaver with the traditions of the enslaved. These dual histories peer through her gaze and inform her journey through Octavia Butler's reimagining of the future-becoming of humankind in kinship. Hartman's terming of the passage through the symbolic and material gate as a primal scene evokes, through its connection to the primal scene of Freud's Wolf Man, the Western libidinal investment in an erotic and eroticized other, whose animal- and sexualized body both forbids and beckons the animality disavowed in Western subjectivity. In *Xenogenesis*, the animal presence remains implicit and attached to a disguised (white) subjectivity; like Derrida's most cunning animal, whiteness in Butler's trilogy wears the shape of the serpent(s) in order to show and to hide itself; the "simple" animal is exchanged for the simply alien. This substitution is not a slippage; while *Animal Farm* engages the relation between Man and an animal other, *Xenogenesis* engages the relation between a dehumanized Man and a (dehumanizing) Man as other to himself.

Oankali geneticists, gendered neither male nor female but “it” – are deemed unqualified for their work if they are not able to compel their selected partners to join in the trade.

As a captive, Lilith observes the Oankali through the *ooloi* who keep her isolated through her two years of Awakenings. Kept in suspended animation, within the pod of a formerly carnivorous plant, Lilith is only awakened for observation and experimentation. Unwilling witness³⁵ to the Oankali’s deepest wants, hopes, and insecurities, Lilith’s life depends upon her ability to perceive her captors – and her own species – with love enough to heal the wound that prevents both species from becoming kin(d): vulnerability, masked in (shameless) shame.

(Re)Birth of the Human Imaginary

³⁵ Like Felman and Laub, Hartman emphasizes the “precariousness of empathy and the uncertain line between witness and spectator” (4). However, Hartman contrasts the “benumbing spectacle” against the “narcissistic identification that obliterates the other,” which is situated in the “prurience that too often is the response” to displays of suffering made spectacle (4). Butler presents a very difficult engagement with erotics, in Audre Lorde’s sense, and the eroticized, as these converge in the body of Lilith’s (con)textualized experience. Object of *ooloi* “obsession,” for the cancerous cells the *ooloi* discover in her – and take from her while she is unconscious – Lilith is also intended to “mother” the first generation of Oankali / human hybrid beings. Lilith’s position is in resonance with the history of sexualized black female bodies; her desire, initially coerced, for the beings who so objectify her becomes the bridge into salvation for all species – human, Oankali, and hybrid.

Lilith, violated but not victimized, participates in the tradition bell hooks examines in “Mama Love”: “Rape of black women during slavery distinguished our experience from that of black men... Violated black females had to cope with the disgust and disdain of everyone around them. No one cared about the impact of traumatic rape on their psyches. Enslaved black women were caught in a paradoxical situation. When they coped with rape at the hands of white and black men with grace, they were seen by their oppressors as superhuman, animalistic, and monstrous, capable of enduring atrocities that would break the spirits of ‘real women.’ As black women testified in slave narratives, even other black people held them responsible for circumstances under which they had no control. No one praised black women’s generosity of heart, their willingness to practice forgiveness” (*Salvation* 95). Extending hooks’s argument, Lilith receives pleasure from her use by the Oankali – eroticized pleasure as well as satisfaction in what might be termed the erotics of kinship, the pleasure in being “touched” within a community. Lilith is unique among the humans who experience Oankali erotics, in her ability to tolerate the experience as well as in her ability to transmute her violation into the Mama love hooks discusses and the revolutionary love Chela Sandoval outlines.

To connect back, once more, through Derrida, Lilith’s paradoxical subjectivity mirrors – in the sense of a reverse and so complementary image – the paradox of the serpent. If the paradox of the serpent reveals by showing hiding the truth of the Western (white, heteropatriarchal) subject, Lilith’s acceptance of her position as inviolable violated relative to the Oankali’s position of violator – a position the Oankali disavow, by terming it their “commitment” to the trade – makes Lilith able to listen, in Felman and Laub’s sense. Lilith registers the chord cord and is able to witness the vigilantly foreclosed witnessing of the Western subject; she thereby defeats the Western subject’s ability to achieve shameless shame. Participating in the erotics

The first word of Butler's trilogy sets the stakes for Lilith's story: *womb* – it is the place Lilith finds herself, and it is what she is to be for the next Oankali generation. Lilith Awakens by degrees. Always at the will of the Oankali, Lilith is disgorged from her pod, and she comes to awareness: “Alive! Still alive. Alive...again” (9). Undergoing a series of births, Lilith is fed, watched, and taught by captors she is not permitted to see. Isolated, Lilith first comes to know the Oankali by means of the prison they create for her to experience:

She held out, did not speak directly to her captors...There came a time when she could not stop talking to herself, when it seemed that every thought that occurred to her must be spoken aloud...She thought she would lose her sanity...Eventually, as she sat on the floor rocking, thinking about losing her mind, and perhaps talking about it too, something was introduced into the room—some gas, perhaps. (13)

Ruthless, she knows, as they give no response to her pleading for companionship or knowledge. Patient, in their questioning. Alien, though she does not think the word even to herself, lest she speak it and force herself to grasp too quickly a truth she cannot tolerate. Awake, Lilith catalogues the differences between her current straits and her previous circumstances. In an otherwise featureless room, uniform except for a bed platform, this time she is provided clothes. Dressing, she waits, as she always must, to be addressed.

Emotionally emptied, weary, she is nearly asleep when she hears her name and realizes that the voice speaks from within the room, rather than from above, as it always has before. Her observer has entered her cell: “She sat up quickly and looked around. In one corner she found the shadowy figure of a man, thin and long-haired. Was he the reason for the clothing, then? He seemed to be wearing a similar outfit: Something to take off when the two of them got to know each other better? Good god” (15). With no information but what she has gathered, from the questioning she has undergone, Lilith begins to imagine –

eroticization of her own spectacle, Lilith exemplifies an erotics of witnessing that is common to many of Octavia Butler's works, including “Blood Child” and “Mind of My Mind.”

correctly – that the fate she has feared is coming to pass. Entering into the idea by degrees, she begins by resisting; she will end by accepting the role of “mother” to the Oankali / human hybrid species.

This is the trade of the Oankali. The Oankali do not distinguish between who they are and what they do. They roam the universes, looking for genetic combinations and “talents” to mix with their own genetics in what they call a trade. “What do you trade?” asks Lilith, as her interlocutor begins to speak with her. “Ourselves” (26). The Oankali insert their genetic manipulation into the bodies of their partners; they insert their psychic manipulation into the neurological centers of their captive partners; and, in so doing, a portion of the Oankali give up their current incarnations in order to be changed by the genetic material they are harvesting from their partners.³⁶

The Oankali seem to have no conception of genocide, perhaps because their species links cultural with genetic characteristics. As long as this relation is intact, the Oankali remain Oankali. All other factors the Oankali consider malleable, in their species and in those they trade with. Introducing Lilith to the plant pods used to keep the humans alive during their extended sleeping periods, her guide Kahguyaht explains the plants’ origin as slow-killing carnivorous plants. Lilith asks how they were made to stop eating people, and Kahguyaht replies, “We altered them genetically—changed some of their requirements, enabled them to respond to certain chemical stimuli from us” (56). In changing some of their

³⁶ Eric White points out, in “The Erotics of Becoming: *Xenogenesis* and “The Thing,” that the Oankali “trace their lineage back to a tiny virus-like “organelle.” They evolved “through the organelle’s invasion, acquisition, duplication, and symbiosis” with other life forms (*Imago*). The aliens are driven by the organelle to evolve, to hybridize with other species and thus continually to transform themselves and the species with which they interbreed” (403). In other words, the Oankali colonizers are colonized from within. White’s observation suggests that it is not the problem of hierarchy that most contributes to colonizism (hierarchy is a characteristic of the human, not the Oankali) but the problem of teleology: the Oankali need to “evolve,” to reach the imago, is what drives their deprivations.

requirements, the Oankali shifted the plants' function from consuming living beings to sustaining them. Though the plants exist, they do not exist as they were. They continue, however, to live in a form that fulfills a purpose; for the Oankali, the purpose is changeable.

In fact, the Oankali are designers of purpose. It is the task of the *ooloi* to perceive a life form's actions, extrapolate that those actions devolve from the life form's function or purpose, and then alter the species' genetics in order to ensure that a satisfactory – according to the Oankali – purpose is being fulfilled. Approaching humankind, after the attempted “humanicide” of nuclear war, the *ooloi* determine that humans' genetic structure is to blame:³⁷ “Your bodies are fatally flawed. The *ooloi* perceived this at once... You have a mismatched pair of genetic characteristics... You are intelligent... You are hierarchical. That's the older and more entrenched characteristic” (40-41). According to the Oankali, either trait alone is valuable, but intelligence in service of hierarchy creates unresolvable conflict.

The Oankali determine that the humans' perceived need for healing makes them ideal trade partners. The Oankali can give themselves to a purpose they find worthy, which gives them permission to act. As they do with Lilith's cancer, which they remove during one of her enforced periods of deep sleep, they intervene for what they see as the betterment of both species.

³⁷ The same species of instrumental, utilitarian error characterizes the Oankali calculation of the human that Stephen Gould examines in *The Mismeasure of Man*. Gould presents the lineage of “race science” based on specious connections between observable data and preexisting racist biases. In the case of Paul Broca's work, Gould argues that Broca “traversed the gap between fact and conclusion by what may be the usual route – predominantly in reverse. Conclusions came first and Broca's conclusions were the shared assumptions of most successful white males during his time – themselves on top by the good fortune of nature, and women, blacks, and poor people below. His facts were reliable...but they were gathered selectively and then manipulated unconsciously in the service of prior conclusions. By this route, the conclusions achieved not only the blessing of science, but the prestige of numbers” (117). L'Engle's work offers a lesson on traversing the gap – the intuiting of relations through the inhabiting of resonance – and the discipline required to make such leaps.

Hierarchical, but also individualistic where the Oankali are oriented as a collective, Lilith experiences the Oankali interventions as a series of violations. Observing the changes the *ooloi* have made to their now-symbiotic species companions, Lilith objects to their plans for humankind. She objects that the physical changes will render future generations of humans unrecognizable; more importantly, she objects that the human imaginary will be damaged. The genetic changes the *ooloi* intend to make will create cultural changes that will effectively end humankind.

In order for Lilith to accomplish the work the Oankali have set for her, to “mother” the next generation of human/Oankali children, *ooloi* Nikanj is charged with altering Lilith’s ability to access her mind and memories. It intends to give her an eidetic memory, in order to help her access the linguistic and cultural information her hosts are offering:

“I don’t want to be changed!”

There was a long silence. Finally it asked, “Are you afraid?”

“What’s frightening is the idea of being tampered with....Listen, no part of me is more definitive of who I am than my brain. I don’t want—“

“Who you are won’t be changed. I’m not old enough to make the experience pleasant for you, but I’m old enough to function as an *ooloi* in this way.” (77)

Nikanj, unable to grasp Lilith’s concern, reassures that changing her relation to her memory will not change her. It instead worries that, as it is not sexually mature, it will not be able to *make* Lilith want the change it insists upon. This, in combination with the ability to encompass genetic makeups, is what makes an *ooloi* an *ooloi*. Tate, a fellow captive, earns the *ooloi*’s admiration by making it think she is “more like an *ooloi* than like a female. She was good at manipulating people—could do it in ways they did not seem to mind” (123). It is, apparently, a new idea for the *ooloi* that their partners should have preferences where the trade is concerned. As Nikanj tells Lilith, “Ooan wanted me to act and say nothing...to...surprise you. I won’t do that” (76). It gives her a non-choice – allow Nikanj to

make the change when she is ready, or wait and let Kahguyaht surprise her – without understanding that part of what makes humankind human is its perception of individual choice and agency.³⁸

Confronted directly with the Oankali plan to cross genetic paths with Lilith and her fellow survivors, against what Lilith and the Oankali know will be their wishes, Lilith refuses:

“No. I don’t care what you do with what you’ve already learned—how you apply it to yourselves—but leave us out of it. Just let us go. If we have the problem you think we do, let us work it out as human beings.”

“We are committed to the trade,” he said, softly implacable.

“No! You’ll finish what the war began. In a few generations – “

“One generation.”

“No!”

He wrapped the many fingers of one hand around her arm. “Can you hold your breath, Lilith? Can you hold it by an act of will until you die?”

“Hold my--?”

“We are as committed to the trade as your body is to breathing. We were overdue for it when we found you. Now it will be done—to the rebirth of your people and mine.”

“No!” (45)

³⁸ White’s discussion of the “Erotics of Becoming” in *Xenogenesis* suggest an alternative to neoliberal subjectivity. White argues that “Butler’s appropriation and redeployment of the idioms of sociobiology involves recasting the usual origin story of the evolutionary rise to dominance of the heroic individual (that first organelle floating in the primeval soup) through ruthless competition and survival of the fittest, by privileging instead the ‘marginally acceptable’ story of Lynn Margulis, the microbiologist who collaborated with James Lovelock on the Gaia hypothesis. Her ‘symbiotic theory of the origin’ of the species remains ‘controversial (McDermott 49). Margulis’ theory that many of the microbiotic components of our cells, like the mitochondria, evolved from free-living species which later entered into symbiotic relationships, posits a human identity which suggests that “All of us are walking communities.” As Jeanne McDermott describes the implication of this alternative origin story: “Margulis challenges the...myth of the rugged individual-alone, self-contained, and able to survive” (50). If, as Margulis suggests, “our concept of the individual is totally warped,” and “we...are [really] composites,” or symbionts, “living together in intimate association of different kinds of organisms,” then our usual notions of “individuality” and “independence” are really “illusions.” In addition, “the traditional view of a cutthroat Darwinian world,” in which the mechanics of evolution justified “exploitation, since it was natural, [as therefore] morally acceptable,” is also an illusion. It becomes “a fallacy” to think that “evolution works at all times for the ‘good of the individual’”; instead, there is a “thin line between evolutionary competition and cooperation...guests and prisoners can be the same thing, and the deadliest enemies can be indispensable to survival” (54). White’s point gestures toward a complicated presentation of kinship, in which utopian ideals balance dystopian concerns. Kinship, situated within erotic becoming, positions tensions – between guest \angle prisoner and friend \angle enemy – as constitutive rather than oppositional or mutually excluding.

Lilith realizes immediately what it takes the remaining books in the trilogy for the Oankali to work through. While humankind is hierarchical and intelligent – and individualistic – the Oankali are intelligent and teleological – and collective. The Oankali seem to have no concept of consent, perhaps because they are unable to hold back from the trade. As Lilith observes later, the Oankali “didn’t lie often to humans because their sensory language had left them with no habit of lying—only of withholding information, refusing contact” (234).

From their means of communication to their method of trading, the collective minded Oankali pursue what they deem best for both species and consider this the only needed good. Intelligent, they have recognized that their means of trade causes pain to their partners; teleological, they cannot change their progress; compassionate, they have learned to minimize fear, by “surprising” their partners, and to overwhelm their partners’ pain with pleasure.

For a species whose intelligence is bound up with ideas of individual agency – which includes the ability to consent – the Oankali trade is violence. As Lilith argues, “If you knew anything about the human imagination, you’d know you were doing exactly the wrong thing,” she said (28). Too quick to move from ends to means, the Oankali risk excising the material between: the human imaginary. However flawed, however fraught, the human imaginary cannot be replaced with the Oankali imaginary of what humankind is or might be. Lilith, left her fear but not her pain, is gradually forced to accept the role the Oankali would have her perform. However her physiognomy changes, Lilith holds to her humanity; in so doing, she catalyzes a change in the Oankali that enables them to mediate their commitment to the trade.

Lilith, anthropologist instead of geneticist, chooses her position among her Oankali and human companions; as she does, she selects for the most damaging trait the species hold

in common, self-deception, and does what she can to minimize its expression. Her offspring bring this trait to the Oankali; as humans' hierarchical tendencies are mediated by their enforced deferral to the Oankali, the Oankali's teleological compulsion is moderated by human insistence upon an imaginary that contains human agency. Intelligence, hindered by self-deception in both species, is healed by its passage through Lilith's physical and emotional presences.

Akin, the youngest of Lilith's first generation of offspring, is the child of Joseph and Lilith; he is implanted by Nikanj, who has impregnated Lilith with Joseph's sperm. Human males pose problems; though initially the *ooloi* are drawn to human males as potential "parents," human males prove so unstable that the *ooloi* prohibit the birth of human males to human females.

Lilith's first encounter with a human male aboard the Oankali ship ends with her being beaten unconscious, as the *ooloi* observe and fail to intervene until it is nearly too late. Paul Titus has been raised among the Oankali; he has participated in the trade by having his sperm mixed with eggs from human donors he will never meet. Kept in isolation from his kind, he fits well with his Oankali family, though he refuses to acknowledge the truth of Oankali gender identities. He has attached his hatred and resentment to the *ooloi*, for imprisoning him and using him as an unwilling participant in their breeding system; this manifests as masculinizing the neutral-gendered *ooloi*: "That, Lilith thought, was a foolish way for someone who had decided to spend his life among the Oankali to think—a kind of deliberate, persistent ignorance" (90). In common with the *ooloi*, who accept that forcible pleasure erases the violence they do to their partners, Paul assaults and attempts to rape Lilith because he has accepted that it is his right to reclaim his use as a tool by asserting sexual dominance over her.

Wary, Lilith chooses carefully when she is tasked with Awakening a group of 40 humans, who will be trained to survive Earth's new conditions. Choosing women first, including Tate, the only male Lilith wishes to Awaken is Joseph Shin. Relatively calm during his captivity, he does not indulge in posturing or threats. He instead reserves his judgment until he has enough information to determine whether he will become angry, or feel a need for retribution. As Joseph and Lilith come together, she values him for his ability to keep her from falling into the Oankali's mode of thought: "She found it impossible to delude herself when he was around" (145). His encounter with Nikanj, however, causes Joseph to retreat into the protection of misinformation. After Nikanj introduces Joseph to Oankali sex, in which Nikanj inserts its sensory tentacles into Lilith's and Joseph's nervous systems and shares overwhelmingly sensual and emotional contact amongst the three of them, Joseph is unable to admit his pleasure in Nikanj's participation. He rails against Nikanj, like Paul Titus, and refers to Nikanj as "he," rather than it:

"The refusal to accept Nikanj's sex frightened her because it reminded her of Paul Titus. She did not want to see Paul Titus in Joseph."

"It isn't male, Joseph."

"What difference does that make!"

"What difference does any self-deception make?" (167)

Unaware of its own self-deceptions, with regard to how its interventions alter and violate its partners, Nikanj engages with Lilith more directly than any of the other *ooloi* engage with their human mates. Lilith's rigorous self-awareness, and her mental discipline, refuse any lesser engagement.

Lilith, perhaps as a result of her panoptic imprisonment or perhaps due to her conditions of survival on pre-war Earth, holds a line between imaginaries. Whatever the Oankali tell her, whatever she believes herself, she distinguishes between belief and action. Faced with the self-defeating denial of her fellow captives, who initially opt to disbelieve

Lilith's claims about their extraterrestrial hosts, Lilith loses patience with her companions' repeated failures to act responsibly with regard to their imaginations: "Believe what you want! I'm telling you how to act if you ever want to feel the ground under your feet again!" (136). For Lilith, in contrast to every other character in the novels, the link between action and imagination remains clear: imagination prepares the ground for actions. What cannot be imagined cannot be accomplished. If Lilith cannot imagine the survival of humankind, it cannot be achieved. If she indulges in misbelief, or in the disbelief that prevents her fellows from accepting their straits, the consequences will be lived by Lilith and those she parents. While this holds true among humans, it is magnified within the Oankali. The Oankali collapse the distance between imagination and action into a single entity: genetics.

(A)kin: (Af)iliation & Kinship As Shared Contingency

Akin, whose name means Brave Boy, is the first male human / Oankali child to be born; he becomes the bridge that links human with Oankali, as he must span the distance the Oankali ignore. A genetic anomaly, Nikanj, in reply to Lilith's worries that he will be a monstrous conglomeration of human and nonhuman, reassures her: "Nothing in him is mismatched. He's very healthy. He'll have a long life and be strong enough to endure what he must endure" (252). What Akin endures is being kidnapped by sterilized human resisters. The resisters, so-called because they continue to refuse the Oankali's genetic bargain, have been sterilized by the Oankali and have grown desperate in their childlessness. They kidnap Akin, young enough to still look human, without knowing of his Oankali heritage. Akin can communicate telepathically from infancy, he can speak before he can walk, and he can manipulate human genes, though to a lesser extent than can *ooloi*. Akin is held captive for years, and he is forced to undergo metamorphosis without the aid of his Oankali parents or his nearest sibling; he thereby loses the chance to form the closest bond, save mating, that

Oankali can experience: the bond with his age-mate sibling. Akin, stripped of insulating bonds within his family group, instead develops bonds with human children and with the adoptive human parents that raise him as they keep him captive. As a result, Akin enters into kinship with humans, as no previous Oankali has done, but only at the expense of the (genealogical) family bonds he will never replace.

Gaining an experience of individual existence, Akin becomes an advocate for the human resisters. Born of Lilith's captivity and reborn of his own, he challenges the Oankali assumption that they have the right to meddle in what they perceive to be the human flaw: "The Human Contradiction held them. Intelligence at the service of hierarchical behavior. They were not free. All he could do for them, if he could do anything, was to let them be bound in their own ways. Perhaps next time their intelligence would be in balance with their hierarchical behavior, and they would not destroy themselves" (455). Though the negative expression of free will might be, as the Oankali believe, self-extinction, free will can also be expressed as spontaneity, regeneration and unpredictability: traits the Oankali lack, traits that mitigate a single-minded drive like that the Oankali have for the trade. As Akin argues, Oankali drives to intervene are as self-blinding as human drives and as in need of careful observation as Oankali drives are. Ultimately, Akin's advocacy sends resister humans, whose reproductive abilities have been restored, to establish a colony on Mars: "In less time than they probably realized, some of them would be aboard shuttles headed for Mars, there to watch the changes begin and be witnesses for their people" (504). The Mars colony is left to work out for itself whether humans may decline self-deception and break the link between hierarchy and intelligence that leads, over and over, to destruction. Akin, the first male Oankali/human hybrid, is also the first Oankali to witness, rather than merely observe, humanity. He takes the first steps away from the Oankali insistence upon teleological logic,

in his provision that unexpected developments might occur, and his advocacy begins to uncouple the underlying determinism of teleology.

In *Imago*, Lilith's children Jodahs and Aor complete the trilogy's arc, in which the Oankali break their own destructive linkage. Though the Oankali have decided not to let human and Oankali hybrid children develop into *ooloi*, because the *ooloi* possess skills deemed too dangerous to release into the unknown, and unstable, mix of human/Oankali, two *ooloi* children develop.

The Oankali fear that hybrid *ooloi* children like Jodahs and Aor might become “flawed natural genetic engineer[s]...who could distort or destroy with a touch” (528). A backhanded acknowledgement that *ooloi* are as unstable as humans, the first hybrid *ooloi* develop spontaneously, and they do present unprecedented dangers. Through Aor’s near death, the siblings are able to imagine vulnerability as humans do and humans are able to imagine as *ooloi* do. As Nikanj represented a change, from Kahguhyat’s willingness to surprise Lilith to Nikanj’s insistence upon her consent, Jodahs and Aor experience the gift of a willing human embrace of Oankali ways. Their experience transforms the relation between species and opens the possibility for their hybrid descendants to grow a culture free from the “flaws” that normalize genocide.

Jodahs metamorphoses into an *ooloi* in part to fulfill Nikanj's need: “You had mates and children, but to me, you always tasted...empty in some way—as though you were hungry, almost starving” (524). Recognizing the need in another, Jodahs does not change Nikanj – it chooses to develop itself in a way that will serve Nikanj’s need. Aor does not have Nikanj’s bond with Jodahs; alone as no other *ooloi* has ever been, Aor suffers through the metamorphosis that Jodahs undergoes with enthusiasm.

The novel's title, *Imago*, contains a double reference. Imago refers to the last stage in insect metamorphosis; the imago is the sexually mature form of the insect, and it is the insect's final, or adult, form. Imago also connects with Jungian psychoanalytic theory and refers to the relationship between a child and a child's unconscious, idealized image of a parent. Jodahs successfully transfers its relationship with Nikanj into a bond with two human mates and thereby becomes a happy and stable adult member of the Oankali/human settlement. Aor, however, is excluded from Nikanj's awareness. It identifies itself, not as an answer to Nikanj's loneliness, but as "one more mistake! ...One more *ooloi* who shouldn't exist" (645, ellipsis in original). While Jodahs sees itself reflected in Nikanj, Aor sees itself reflected – nowhere. There is no image for Aor to model itself upon or against. Unfit for all places within Oankali and human society, Aor is unimaginable. Unable to find its place, Aor is also unable to enter its adult body. Aor is left dangerously unstable to those living within the settlement, including itself: "[Aor] changed radically: grew fur again, lost it, developed scales, lost them, developed something very like tree bark, lost that, then changed completely, lost its limbs, and went into a tributary of our river" (654). Aor's body is protean; as it looks, inside and outside, for something that will reflect itself back to it, its body expresses its desperation to be complete by becoming whatever it sees. Aor's body is penetrable; it cannot physically hold boundaries between itself and the animals, the trees or the river.

In its way, Aor is the first true child of Lilith's ongoing violation; it is also the first Oankali child that escapes, temporarily, instrumentalizing others' bodies because Aor cannot hold onto its own bodily integrity long enough to interact with anyone. After it enters the river, Aor rapidly begins to dissolve, and it exits the river looking like a "slug": "Aor had become...a near mollusk, something that had no bones left. Its sensory tentacles were

intact, but it no longer had eyes or other Human sensory organs. Its skin, very smooth, was protected by a coating of slime. It could not speak or breathe air or make any sound at all” (654-55). As Aor dissolves, it sheds the veneers of both human and Oankali superiority and, perhaps, gives a glimpse into what the Oankali would be without the invasive social and cultural traditions they have developed.

Jodahs notes that Oankali transformations do not go well for isolated Oankali; though Aor's case is extreme, and complicated by its hybridity, Aor's dissolution affirms what Lilith has already noted: that the Oankali must constantly interpenetrate each other and, while their collective society thrives, there is little space for refusal.

Aor's suffering ends when it bonds the first fertile human couple it finds. Aor binds its human mates to itself before it knows their names or attempts to gain their consent. Desperate to join a bonded union, Aor lays bare the *ooloi* “commitment” to trade; unable to survive refusal, or rejection, the *ooloi* bind by compulsion.

Aor's plight reframes the Oankali's perceptions about what is dangerous about humanity. Though the Oankali identify humans' fatal flaw as the site of their intervention, they become caught by the vulnerability that informs the insecurities between intelligence and hierarchical behavior. And they find the vulnerability that their intelligence disguises in their teleological drive for the trade.

Aor's vulnerability finally brings the two species together, as its dissolution presents a case that neither species can deny. While the conservative Oankali initially argue to have Jodahs and Aor confined on an Oankali ship, in order to neutralize the changes threatened by Jodahs and Aor, Jodahs and Aor convince them to face the question: “This will probably happen again,” it said. ‘An *ooloi* subadult who doesn't want to go to the ship should be sent here. The Humans who want to stay here should be left here and let alone.

They want mates and I think there are Oankali and constructs who are willing to come here to mate with them” (722). Rather than attempt to hold *ooloi* and human development along carefully controlled lines, Aaor argues that each individual should be given choice. Without attempting to design the outcome of lives and species, the Oankali are asked to place their intelligence in service of vulnerability rather than teleology.

As the novel concludes, Jodahs performs the altered art of the *ooloi*. Sorting its genetic memory along lines that reflect the changing imagination of what it means to be Oankali, human, and hybrid, Jodahs produces a seed. It plants the seed in a place chosen by mutual human and Oankali consent, in a place that evokes vulnerability:

“I worked through the vast genetic memory that Nikanj had given me. There was a single cell within that great store—a cell that could be ‘awakened’ from its stasis within yashi and stimulated to divide and grow into a kind of seed. This seed could become a town or a shuttle or a great ship...In fact, my seed would begin as a town and eventually leave Earth as a great ship...I took the...seed...still within my body to the place that the Humans and the visiting families had agreed was good for people and towns...There I prepared the seed to go into the ground...I planted it deep in the rich soil of the riverbank” (726).

As it feels the individual cells within the seed begin to stir, and prepare to grow, Jodahs wakes the single cell whose growth places teleology in service of vulnerability, and it plants its seed in the deep, rich soil of mutually chosen ground – fed by the river of Aaor’s longing.

Xenophilia to Genophilia: (Re)Narrativizing Human Being

Xenogenesis is a retelling of the Genesis story, in which humanity is (re)born from the line of Lilith, rather than Eve. Lilith Iyapo, of Yoruban descent, is in resonance with the Lilith of Jewish mysticism, though, where one Lilith is cast aside for refusing sexual and existential dominance under Adam, Butler’s Lilith finds herself acceding to an enforced desire for the Oankali. Cathy Peppers’s “Dialogic Origins and Alien Identities in Butler's

Xenogenesis” takes up the story of Genesis that Derrida’s Eurocentric analysis leaves unexplored:

As the title of the trilogy suggests, *Xenogenesis* is an origin story, a story about the origins of human identity, but it is a story with a difference. *Xenogenesis* means “the production of offspring different from either of its parents”; this is reproduction with a difference, the (re)production of difference. And the “xeno” of this genesis comes from the Greek *xenos*, which in its original bivalence meant both guest / friend and alien / stranger. As an origin story, this trilogy tells about the genesis of an alien humanity, of a humanity which will survive not, as Donna Haraway puts it, by “recreat[ing] the sacred image of the same” (*Primate Visions* 378), but because Lilith, the African-American heroine of the first novel, will become the progenitrix of the new race of “constructs” (children born of Oankali and human parents). She will give birth to herself as other. As she asks the Oankali, “What will our children be?” Their answer: “Different.... Not quite like you. A little like us.” (*Dawn* 47)

Immediately engaging the problems of teleology, Peppers argues that, while origin stories within a master narrative serve oppression, origin stories written to reinsert the stories and lifeworlds of those whose existence has been erased from the dominant narrative engage in anti-oppression work. Peppers notes that

Foucault claims that we should “challenge the pursuit of the origin” because “it is an attempt to capture the exact essence of things, their purest possibilities, and their carefully protected identities; because this search assumes the existence of immobile forms that precede the external world of accident and succession”...At the same time, it’s important to read how alternative / rewritten feminist origin stories destabilize, contradict, and contest the traditional discourses of origin on their own turf. These origin stories are powerful precisely because they not only denaturalize the dominant accounts, but also because they partake of the enabling power that marks all discourse about origins. (48)

Lilith Iyapo, as the “mother” of a new Genesis, stands in opposition to the hierarchical and teleological restrictions in the version of Genesis that ends with mankind giving himself permission, by means of Adam’s directive from God, to deny his shame by exerting control over all other living beings.

Proceeding in parallel to Derrida, what Derrida does for the animal, Peppers does for racialized subjectivities harmed by Western imaginings of difference as threatening. In Peppers's analysis,

Xenogenesis "seizes as tools" our culture's most powerful origin stories, those stories which are at the origin of what it means to be human in the Western order: the Biblical story of our genesis as "Male and Female, created He them"; the sociobiological story, which situates our identities in our genes; and the paleoanthropological story of our evolution from our Stone Age ancestors. To these dominant discourses, the trilogy adds what Foucault might call a "subjugated knowledge," a genealogy often written out of the dominant accounts, and therefore a powerful tool for resistance: the narrative of the African diaspora and slavery (a / the origin story of African-American identity)" (49).

Slavery, the unacknowledged genocide, is also the origin story of white American identity; just as Derrida locates Man in the subjugation and killing of animals, Peppers's analysis restores visibility to the intersection of whiteness with Man, which links white Western subjectivity with the subjugation and killing of Black subjects.

For Peppers, *Xenogenesis* prompts a rewriting – which is not an overwriting – of human origins that allows us to imagine different outcomes. Beginning from a different starting point, Peppers posits with the novels, perhaps we can reach different end points. "As an origin story and as sf, is not about denying the discourses of science (biology, anthropology), nor the discourse of Biblical genesis; rather, it's about changing them from within, using the very power of these discourses to help us imagine the origins of human identity in other ways" (49). While the ultimate task is to unravel the hierarchical and teleological crossings that combine to give us Social Darwinism, the aim of this unraveling is to free human subjectivity from the idea that human becoming is an individualized process that has a definitive endpoint or goal.³⁹

³⁹ Butler's *Xenogenesis* offers ground to consider how it is that we have never been human, and yet how we have yet become posthuman. As Donna Haraway's "Cyborg Manifesto" contends, we are contingent and

Reading the Oanakli as representations of the (showing and hiding) self-revulsion at the heart of the Western human subjectivity, Peppers's discussion of "imperfections" opens a recuperative glance at the pain buried in the Western psyche.⁴⁰ For Peppers,

Butler's use of sociobiological explanations for human identity in her sf tends to focus on "imperfections," (Bonner 52) and she continues this focus with a vengeance in *Xenogenesis*. For example, the Oankali are particularly attracted to Lilith's "talent" for cancer, which they are able to genetically engineer to enable the regrowth of lost limbs, and eventually to create construct children who are shapeshifters. Seeing cancer in this way...disrupts the usual sociobiological story of human evolution, which assumes that every biological characteristic has a clear purpose either favouring or disfavouring survival. And, as I've had reason to come to understand, cancer is a particularly frightening disease because it doesn't allow for the usual medicalized use of military language to describe it. We cannot "battle" cancer as a "foreign enemy" which has "invaded" us and must be "expelled"; cancer cells are not wholly other, but exist precisely on the border of me / not me. In revaluing cancer, the text is also therefore valuing "mutation" and "boundary crossing" identity. (52-53)

It is not precisely that the Oankali are attracted to Lilith's talent for cancer; they *ooloi* at first have trouble touching her. But, once they become acquainted with her cancer, they become obsessed.⁴¹ The *ooloi* operate with artistry that is as beautiful as their forms are ugly. They have the skill to create any kind of life, to heal nearly any kind of injury. But they lack the ability to change themselves; the *ooloi* are so eager are they to share what they are – and to take in exchange the essences of the other – and so ravaged by their undesirability to any

coextensive with our technologies; as Katherine Hayles argues, in *How We Became Posthuman*, the limiting factors of "the human" require us to move beyond conceptions of human subjectivity that risk instrumentalizing new forms of (artificial) intelligence, as we have done with all past encounters with being.

⁴⁰ In White's reading, "At issue here is the dream of residing within the precincts of the sacred, secure in the knowledge that a place has providentially been provided for everything and everything is eternally in its proper place. But such an 'inside' is inevitably constituted in relation to a hostile 'outside' that comprises a permanent threat. The center finds itself persecuted by 'hybrids' and 'confusions,' by 'monsters' that 'confound the general scheme of the world' or reveal every representation of reality to be a historically contingent interpretation rather than an immutable truth" (399).

⁴¹ In the instrumental sense, the *ooloi* fascination evokes the *Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*. Published long after Butler's death, Rebecca Skloot's recounting of Henrietta Lacks, a Black United States citizen, whose virulent and fatal cancer led to the establishing of the first immortal line of cancer. As the first line of cells that scientists could study without limits, the benefits – in treatments and in medical research investment dollars – are incalculable. Henrietta Lacks received none of these benefits, nor have her descendants.

potential partners. Their adaptive neurological interface, which they use to stimulate intense feelings of pleasure in Lilith and the other captive humans, is a sign of shame expressed as pride. In making Lilith “want” their cultural, physiological, and sensual touch, the *ooloi* are able to deceive themselves (or pretend they can) into believing their exchange is more than forcible violation. They are able to imagine themselves as having something worthy to offer; they are able to foreclose Lilith’s rejection or refusal, and so they can participate in a hallucination in which they have a chance to be other than refused.

Lilith’s choice, toward mama love and revolutionary love, accesses what Peppers identifies as the key dynamic of the human / Oankali interaction. “It is this desire for the alien, the other, for difference within ourselves which, more powerfully than forsaking origin stories altogether, can allow us to recognize the value of origin stories while resisting and changing them from within. As Lilith says, “Human beings fear difference.... Oankali crave difference” (*Rites*); by putting readers in intimate association with the Oankali, *Xenogenesis* generates xenophilia in place of xenophobia” (60).

Xenogenesis does more than generate xenophilia; it recovers genophilia.⁴² In Peppers’s explication of the links between *Xenogenesis* and Genesis, Peppers finds an intertextual, dialogic movement that “does not pretend”:

⁴² Lilith, characterized as mother of monsters, allows for an ego development that is not wholly constructed by fear. “Abjection” designates an unnameable “other” that abolishes clarity and distinction, order and degree, an unnameable nemesis, in fact, that threatens the subject with a return to primordial chaos. In Kristeva’s psychoanalytic rendition of the genesis of the self, the subject who confronts the abject experiences a recurrence of the moment of crisis when the infant first separates itself from its original environment in order to begin the difficult task of constructing its own distinct identity. “Abjection” thus pertains to the inaugural act of what will eventually become an “I,” the first fragile and precarious emergence of order out of chaos, structure out of indifferenciation, permanence out of turbulent fluidity...At the moment of crisis, the turbulent forces of the id provoke, in horrified response, an attempt to expel...energies in order to achieve a condition of imperturbability no longer vulnerable to disruptive intrusions from without. The abjecting of both the mother’s and its own body clears a space within which the infant begins to elaborate a narcissistic fantasy of totality that will form the basis for a rigidly fixed adult ego that finds its characteristic social corollary in pyramidal structures of hierarchical subordination. Such a dogmatically inflexible form of selfhood, which seeks to check the disquieting spontaneity of the body by channelling its desires along reassuringly routine itineraries, can only

In place of this “mythic Adam,” *Xenogenesis* begins with one of Adam's others, Lilith, which reminds us that even “our ordinary ancestor” in Biblical discourse did not stand alone at the start of the human story. Adam himself is “created” in two slightly different versions of Genesis: in 1:27, “God created man in his own image; male and female created He them”; in 2:7-25, God creates Adam from dust, Adam gives names to the animals, and then Woman (Eve) is created from Adam's rib. Lilith's genesis story, however, happens off-stage between these two chapters. Originally a Sumero Babylonian goddess, she was assimilated into the Biblical genesis by Hebraic tradition as Adam's first wife; however, because she refused to submit to his rule (in particular, would not lie beneath him in sex), she was repudiated and cast out of Eden. Her “fate” was to couple with “demons” and give birth to a monstrous brood of children. Clearly, in a genesis story that begins with Lilith as first ancestor, we have a text which does not pretend to have the privilege of escaping a dialogic relation with the “alien” or with the “already known” stories of the origins of gender and race. (50)

Xenogenesis and Genesis meet in the erotic dimension of Lilith's submission/violation, which explores a subtle power dynamic comprised of Lilith's determination to make of her non-choice a decision to thrive. In holding both readings, Lilith is positioned to claim both her cultural lines: produced by the narrative operating in Genesis, Lilith also reinstatiates the histories excised by slavery. Keeping both stories in play, rather than privileging one over the other, Butler avoids the violence that divides Biblical Lilith from her own story – from her narrative self – and she pulls the Western Genesis narrative into relation with the history it hides from itself. Paired, the two narratives witness the experience of the other.

Like her literary ancestress, Lilith Iyapo mothers monsters – hybrid beings who gradually learn to face their externalized and internalized monstrousness. The tentacled Oankali – whose serpent-like tentacles are capable of intense sensitivity and delicacy – ask for a mediated witnessing of the wounded, shamed heteropatriarchal Western rational

consent to its animal embodiment on the certain promise that it must, one day, ascend to a spiritual plane of everlasting perfection.” (White 397-98). In other words, the Western subjectivity is burdened by an apperception that worth and belonging devolve from divesting ourselves from our “animal” embodiment. Reception at this level recapitulates any need for fear, or shame, and it unravels the need for “everlasting perception.” In White's formulation, the abject liberates subjectivity from teleology via the erotics of becoming. Lilith's refusal of Adam's domination is, perhaps, refigured as a refusal of his mask – an invitation to accepting his human / animal being in its entirety.

(masculine) subject. Exemplifying Lorde's erotics, as expressed by Gill, Lilith allows these others who reach for her to find her reaching back. In so doing, she (re)sets the scene for a cultural imaginary founded in kinship and accomplished through the erotics of witnessing.⁴³

Octavia's Brood: Visionary Fiction and the Irresistible Witness

Identifying as kin through Octavia Butler's lineage, the social justice activist-writers of *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* beckon. Framed by the writers' hope to inspire "new conversations in classrooms, inspire vigorous discussion in coffeehouses and book clubs, and create new organizing tools and 'case studies' for strategizing in our community organizations," *Octavia's Brood* completes a chiasmatic structure that extends the parallel between Genesis and *Xenogenesis*. As the human / Oankali constructs are the descendants of Lilith, the science / fiction writers continue Octavia Butler's line. *Octavia's Brood*, crowdfunded to publication, is situated, by its Foreword, in a sense of responsibility to (re)create meaning:

Today social justice represents one of the most serious challenges to the conscience of our world. New technology and corporate political policies make it possible to accumulate wealth and power in startling, fantastic ways, while widening the gulf between those who have and those who don't. In America and in the big beautiful world beyond, the gulf widens perversely, making a mockery of freedom, justice, democracy, and even mercy. James Baldwin said that we are not born knowing what these concepts mean, that they are neither common nor well defined. If we "individuals must make an enormous effort to arrive at the respect for other people that these words imply," as he wrote, then our communities must make a sustained and concentrated effort to create societies that reflect that same sense of respect and meaning.

⁴³ "We begin our journey with love, and love will always bring us back to where we started. Making the choice to love can heal our wounded spirits and our body politic. It is the deepest revolution the turning away from the world as we know it, toward the world we must make if we are to be one with the planet—one healing heart giving and sustaining life. Love is our hope and our salvation" (*Salvation* 224). *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* deploys science / fiction as the "emergent strategy" needed to reach salvation: "We hold so many worlds inside us. So many futures. It is our radical responsibility to share these worlds, to plant them in the soil of our society as seeds for the type of justice we want and need. It has been beautiful to gather these stories, collaboratively edit them, and begin to understand not just the challenges we face or the enemies we need to transform, but the abundance of imagination we in the social justice realm hold, and must cultivate." (np)

The stories in *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* represent a global quest for social transformation, for justice. They are about people from different backgrounds and worlds, expanding the notions of solidarity and community, redefining service, and exploring and rediscovering the human spirit in baffling times, under challenging circumstances. The writers collected here offer stories that explore a broad range of social justice issues, from urban gentrification, bioterrorism, racism, and militarism to motherhood, environmentalism, spiritual journeys, and psychological quests. Culled from artists who in their other lives work tirelessly as community activists, educators, and organizers, these stories incite, inspire, engage. If the purpose of a writer, as Toni Cade Bambara said, "is to make revolution irresistible," these writers, these stories represent.

With incisive imagination and a spirited sense of wonder, the contributors bridge the gap between speculative fiction and social justice, boldly writing new voices and communities into the future. (np)

The stories composing *Octavia's Brood* offer – next to the masking mask of white Western subjectivity – lifeworlds seeded in dignity, creativity, and personal and community growth. Considering frames of justice versus frames of care, *Octavia's Brood* situates justice as care.

The Outro offers the term "visionary fiction" to describe the expectations met by the works selected for the volume: visionary fiction "explores current social issues through the lens of sci-fi; is conscious of identity and intersecting identities; centers those who have been marginalized; is aware of power inequalities; is realistic and hard but hopeful; shows change from the bottom up rather than the top down; highlights that change is collective; and is not neutral—its purpose is social change and societal transformation" (np). As the editors argue:

The stories we tell can either reflect the society we are a part of or transform it. If we want to bring new worlds into existence, then we need to challenge the narratives that uphold current power dynamics and patterns. We call upon science fiction, fantasy, horror, magical realism, myth, and everything in between as we create and teach visionary fiction. (np)

As "Evidence," of the potential of visionary fiction to engender revolution, Alexis Pauline Grumbs contributes a field study in which Alandrix affirms – in advance – her transformative accomplishments. Beginning with the epigraph, Grumbs's piece argues that,

to bring into being a socially just future, the present needs to have included the possibility of such a future:

Today the evidence we need is legacy. May the public record show and celebrate that Alandrix consciously exists in an ancestral context. May this living textual copy of her digital compilation and all its future amendments be a resource for Alandrix, her mentors, her loved ones and partners, her descendents, and her detractors to use in the ongoing process of supporting her just intentions.

We are grateful that you are reading this. Thank you for remembering.

With love and what our ancestors called “faith,”
the intergenerational council of possible elders (np)

Creating an imaginary line of descendants, Grumbs’s Alandrix addresses Grumbs from a point in Grumbs’s future. Proceeding as a set of exhibits, the text includes writing taken from various points on Alandrix’s timeline that include a letter from Alandrix’s 12-year old self, a fragment of Drix’s dissertation, an etching – from a time of breaking – on a cave wall.⁴⁴ The cave signifies a time of chaos; it is the transition time that instantiates the retrospective era in which Drix presents the culmination of generations of work: it is a “Lecture Capsule: “The Black Feminist Time Travel of Self in the Twenty-First Century BSB [Before Silence Broke] Era” (np).

Charting the fall of capitalism, whose identities were shaped in “billable minutes” and “narrowed into excuses to hurt and forget each other,” after capitalism Lex writes a letter to capitalism Lexi. Life is not easy, but it “is life all the time”:

Your heart sings everyday because your ancestors are thrilled with themselves, a.k.a. all of us. Just breathing is like a choir. And I have the presence of mind and the generosity of spirit to even be proud of the you that I was when you are reading this, back in capitalism with all of our fear, and all of our scarcity-driven behavior contradicting and cutting down our visionary words. Counterpoetics right? I am proud of you for being queer. I am proud of you for staying present to the meaning of your beliefs and to the consequences of your actions even when they were crashing into each other every day. I am proud of you for letting the tide of your revolutionary heritage grind your fear of failure and lack to sand. I love you. The me that I was.

⁴⁴ “Note: Archaeologists say that this engraving came slightly earlier than the other markings all over the planet in small mostly unrecorded places spelled: love love love love love love love love.” “Evidence.”

But breathe this deep because this is the message. We did it. We shifted the paradigm. We rewrote the meaning of life with our living. And this is how we did it.

We let go. And then we got scared and held on and then we let go again. Of everything that would shackle us to sameness. Of our deeply held belief that our lives could be measured or disconnected from anything. We let go and re-taught ourselves to breathe the presence of the energy that we are that cannot be destroyed, but only transformed and transforming everything.

Breathe deep, beloved young and frightened self, and then let go. And you will hold on. So then let go again.

With all the love and the sky and the land and
the water,
Lex (np)

Within the sensibility of a subjectivity caught in the tides of inexorable forces – life and capitalism – Grumbs’s piece explores witnessing as an emergent strategy. According the editors,

A strategy is a set of plans toward an action. Emergence is the way complex systems and patterns emerge from a series of relatively simple interactions. Instead of linear, hierarchical, outcome-oriented strategies and strategic plans that can’t adapt to changing conditions, we need ways of strategizing together based on understanding and respecting change. So far, the elements of emergent strategy are that it is intentional, interdependent and relational, adaptive, resilient because it is decentralized, fractal, uses transformative justice, and creates more possibilities. (np)

A corollary aspect of emergent strategy is that nothing is wasted: with no tools, except words and imagination – and a queer identity that refuses heteropatriarchal capitalist subjectivity – Grumbs and future descendants inhabit a new world based in their ability to witness, with love, that which needs to have been loved in order for the revolution to have occurred.

As the line of Genesis goes forth in shame – which causes the white, masculine, heteropatriarchal Western subject to hide himself from himself (to hide his humanity within the damning serpent animality), the line of *Xenogenesis* goes forth in love that has no choice but to love. In the space between lines, *Octavia’s Brood* imagines irresistible connection born of witnessing the self in love, instead of shame, and offers this as the basis of a shared kin(d)ness.

Being afraid, holding on, letting go. Free from hierarchical and teleological imperatives, *Octavia's Brood* envisions a life built of imagination; once imagined, it requires only the body's need to breathe for Lexi's dream, each breath "like a choir," to be realized. The quality of the dream, however, depends upon the skill of the dreamer. By consciously exercising the (social) imagination, in a framework of social justice, *Octavia's Brood* offers crucial tools for skillful, just dreaming.

Chapter Four

Iahklu': The Awakening of Consciousness

George Orr has come unstuck.⁴⁵

In the psychosomal landscape of Ursula Le Guin's *The Lathe of Heaven*, the capacity to inhabit unreality is the gift of humankind – though few of us seem able to tolerate our experience. Instead, we pathologize and medicate those individuals who are overly open to, or opened by, the vagaries of what might be termed our jellyfish teleology.

Like a jellyfish, humankind drifts: “Hanging, swaying, pulsing, the most vulnerable and insubstantial creature, it has for its defense the violence and power of the whole ocean, to which it has entrusted its being, its going, and its will” (1).⁴⁶ A protagonist adrift, George has been evaluated for psychosis (71); he is being treated with electroshock therapy for schizophrenia because he says he is dreaming dreams that come true. What is true for George is true; he can accept mutually contradictory realities. The conflict he experiences occurs when his realities contradict externally imposed, normative ideas about how (singular) reality operates, and how he is supposed to operate within it.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ Like Kurt Vonnegut's Billy Pilgrim, Ursula Le Guin's George Orr is unmoored from his sense of omnipotence, in the psychoanalytic sense. Traumatized by the bombing of Dresden, Billy Pilgrim becomes unstuck in time and, following the *po-tee-weet* of the birds, Pilgrim wanders in and out of his own timeline. George's trauma, which the novel suggests is either related to a sexual encounter with his Aunt or to the nuclear end of the world, unmoors him from the sense that reality is fixed. In the conflict between George and Dr. Haber, the novel suggests that reality is not fixed, and this is the source of its stability. Were there rigid rules for what is and is not, few psyches could withstand the shocks of becoming conscious, as Dr. Haber's psyche cannot withstand the world of his right/wrong, strong/weak construction. The challenge the novel pursues is not a challenge to find the real reality: it is to find a sense of wellbeing within the constant flux of changing understandings.

⁴⁶ Like an ocean, the currents of deep time offer an appropriate scale for considering humankind's experience; taking stock amidst a geologic time clock, the turn toward the Anthropocene offers a counter to narratives of human evolution, or human progress.

⁴⁷ Offering a paranoid reading, Ian Watson compares Le Guin's writing to Phillip K. Dick. Comparing Le Guin's more critically engaged works, among them *The Left Hand of Darkness*, Watson writes that “It is as though while writing of those inner lands with her left hand, and of outer space with her right, a third hand has mysteriously intruded on the scene, attached to Palmer Eldritch's prosthetic arm, and it is this hand that has

Throughout the novel, George's dreams remain consistent with his physical and psychic circumstances. Waking from a dream of nuclear fallout, George's return to consciousness – after a period of limited- or un-consciousness – is rendered in sensory terms that evoke forcibly delivered, shockingly electric stimuli: “His eyelids had been burned away, so that he could not close his eyes, and the light entered into his brain, searing. He could not turn his head, for blocks of fallen concrete pinned him down and the steel rods projecting from their cores held his head in a vice” (2).

Dreaming of invasive light and an immobilizing vice, which soon enough is somehow “gone,” George inhabits parallel, contiguous experiences. He wakes from a reality in which nuclear radiation has devastated the land and steps into an “endless” linoleum corridor with an elevator at the end. Sick, sliding, disoriented, George weaves from the wall onto the heaving floor, as he tries to make his way to the men's room down the hall (2).

“Easy now. Easy there.”

The elevator guard's face was hanging above him like a paper lantern, pallid, fringed with graying hair.

“It's the radiation,” he said, but Mannie didn't seem to understand, saying only, “Take it easy.” (2)

Mannie, who may understand more than he seems, does not affirm or deny George's radiation sickness. Instead, he responds to George's need for help, which does not depend

tapped out *Lathe* on the typewriter” (67). Watson further expresses anxiety, related to the intrusion of identities not recognized as belonging to oneself: “*Lathe* is about paranormal events impinging on an initially realistic Earth of the near future-about a dreamer whose dreams can change the whole fabric of reality. They replace history with false histories that become objective truth, only to be overthrown and modified by further dreams as his well-intentioned yet power-hungry psychiatrist manipulates him, and the whole objective world along with him, trying to steer it away from pollution, overpopulation, social evil, yet only producing successive devastations as a consequence: plague, “citizen arrest” of the sick, alien invasion. And all along the irony lurks that we have been in a “false” world from the very start; for, before ever being referred to a psychiatrist for illegally obtaining drugs to stop himself dreaming, George Orr had “effectively dreamt” a nuclear holocaust out of existence; there is in truth no way to go homeward” (67-68). The idea that there are true and false worlds, or that the third hand belongs to an other – that it is not the birthright of a consciousness embracing what lies beyond binary oppositions – reflects fear of the loss of omnipotence. If everything is real, then we control nothing.

upon whether he is sick from radiation or from electric current overload. Mannie is an elevator guard, and later, as realities shift, George's landlord. As the novel goes on, and George's dreams or delusions intensify, George receives care from nine-foot tall Aliens that resemble sea turtles.⁴⁸ These creatures speak in a language of resonance: they return George Orr as Jor Jor. And they bear designations – Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe and E'nememen Asfah – that reflect George's experience of care.

The novel's two existences, institutionalized and fantastic, resonate via the gluey, thick-tongued, shock-heavy speech that transforms George Orr to Jor Jor. George is first greeted by Mannie, an amalgam of man and many, who is stationed near the elevator of George's building. Later, Jor Jor entrusts his being, his going, and his will to Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe and E'nememen Asfah. As realities multiply, in GeorJor's effective schizophrenia, he journeys amidst the countercurrents of his dual experience: as a patient, whose therapies gradually render him catatonic, and as a white, heterosexual, masculine hero whose triumph manifests as a will to let be, let be.

Toward A Jellyfish Teleology? *Iahklu'*

For the jellyfish, carried along the currents, it is not the ocean that threatens but the “stubborn continents...shelves of gravel and...cliffs of rock [that] break from water baldly

⁴⁸ Watson argues that “nuclear war has already been averted by effective dreaming when the book opens; so the characters are committed to the false reality from the start (else they perish). Subsequent fluctuations in population size, skin colour, and urban geography, due to Dr. Haber's programming of George Orr's dreams, are vast enough, yet all are basically quantitative changes in the structure of Earth reality. The qualitative change, and the haunting mystery of the book, comes with the dreaming into being of the aliens-initially as invaders, later as compassionate if enigmatic friends. Conceivably George dreamt a hostile invasion into a peaceful one; yet the dominant probability is that the aliens are, as they maintain, “of the dream-time” (10), that their whole culture revolves round the mode of “reality dreaming itself into being,” that they have been attracted to Earth like the Waveries in Fredric Brown's story, only by dream-waves rather than radio waves” (71-72). The “fluctuations” Watson cites range from decimating plagues to wholesale genocide; these are qualitative changes in the structure of Earth reality, as there are whole types of lives that cannot occur based on George's imaginings. These are, in fact, part of the qualitative shift Watson notes: that the aliens are passengers of “reality dreaming itself into being.” The novel's shift is imagining that an agential dreamer, George, is not required; reality is dreams-becoming, and agency is more of a stumbling block than an asset in this process.

into air, that dry, terrible outerspace of radiance and instability, where there is no support for life. And now the waves betray, breaking their endless circle, to leap up in loud foam against rock and air, breaking...” (2).

Dr. Haber is a stubborn continent. A psychotherapist, who specializes in dream disorders, Dr. Haber seeks – and finds – the usual triggers. He finds George’s history of sexual abuse; he maps George’s alternating abuse of narcotics, as an attempt to self-medicate. However, steeped in rigorous adherence to the idea of progress – and applying the utilitarian arithmetic of the greater good – Dr. Haber refuses the experience of *iahklu*, even as he attempts to appropriate it in the name of curing societal violence.⁴⁹

Tall, bearded, decisive, successful, Dr. Haber is a picture of normative white masculinity, and Dr. Haber is in control. He adapts an electroencephalograph, used for mapping brain patterns, into an Augmentor, a device he uses to impose George’s brain patterns on his own dreaming mind in order to end environmental catastrophe, war, hunger, and racial violence. Dr. Haber begins by (mis)treating George, then compounds his error by (mis)applying his “cure” for an individual – a violence in itself, as he has failed his responsibility to understand George – to humankind.

Viewing George as a “weak” tool, Dr. Haber endeavors to wrest George’s effective dreaming patterns under control – first by suggesting dreams to George, and then by dreaming effective dreams himself. Each dream Dr. Haber suggests, however, goes awry:

⁴⁹ According to Paul Barach’s post, on *Medium.com*, Fritz Haber used his discovery of one chemical reaction to “draw bread from the air” and to unleash chemical warfare. “At the start of the 20th century Fritz Haber figured out how to break nitrogen’s bonds. After forcing air into a huge iron tank under extreme heat and pressure, he added hydrogen into the tank. This pried the nitrogen atoms apart as they each bonded with three hydrogen atoms, forming ammonia. Out of the tank dripped liquid fertilizer. He’d done it. The nitrogen had been pulled from the air and could be put into the ground to grow food.” “The Tragedy of Fritz Haber: The Monster Who Fed The World.” In common with Dr. Haber, Fritz Haber had seemingly conflicting ambitions to save and to destroy; as poles of the same continuum, however, one might be expected to coexist with the other.

Dr. Haber tells George, under hypnosis, to dream that he feels “uncrowded, unsqueezed,” and George dreams of a Plague – when he wakes, six billion people who existed before his dream have always already been claimed by a carcinogenic epidemic caused by environmental pollution (65). Attempting to correct, Dr. Haber directs George to dream of peace: “No more mass killings of humans by other humans. No fighting in Iran and Arabia and Israel. No more genocides in Africa. No stockpiles of nuclear weapons, ready to use against other nations. No more research on ways and means of killing people. A world at peace with itself. Peace as a universal lifestyle on Earth” (85).⁵⁰

In response, George dreams of Aliens – a threat from space that unites humankind.

George, caught in Dr. Haber’s belief structure, (mis)understands his role in these dreams:

“Look, it’s not that I want to block you, to frustrate your plans. Ending the war was a good idea...But I guess I can’t, or my subconscious can’t, even imagine a warless world. The best it can do is substitute one war for another...Your own ideas are sane and rational, but this is my unconscious you’re trying to use, not my rational mind...

⁵⁰ Lewis Call identifies Le Guin’s Taoist exploration in George’s conflict with Dr. Haber: “*Lathe* describes an encounter between the Western scientific ideology that holds that knowledge and reason can be used to shape the world for the good of humanity, and a very different Taoist perspective, which holds that the attempt to shape the world through human willpower is futile and potentially destructive, both to the world and to those humans who would mold it. The connection between Taoism and anarchism is well established, and has been noted by writers working in both traditions. Yet few commentators have recognized the powerful connections between the delightful premodern philosophy of Taoism and late twentieth-century critical theory. By insisting that human rationality can never succeed in its quest to dominate, Taoism provides a powerful critique of the form of reason that was of such great concern, for example, to the Frankfurt School. Marcuse called it the logic of domination (111); it is the controlling rationality that governs the West. In place of this, Le Guin offers us the spontaneous joys of world creation. *Lathe* teaches us that if we would truly make the world a better place, we must abandon all pretense towards rational control. We must renounce all distinctions between ourselves and the rest of the world. Only when we know ourselves to be inseparable from the world can we dream the dreams that will change it.”

Situating Le Guin’s work within an anarchist tradition, Call argues that “Orr’s “effective” dreams—dreams that radically revise reality—represent an intriguing new anarchist possibility. Because these dreams change everything, they do much more than simply alter a political or economic system. They alter the structure of the universe, thus creating what I call ontological anarchy. When it is challenged on the terrain of politics or economics, hierarchical thinking retreats to the level of ontology: here, at least, there must always be fixed structures, law and order. Yet Orr’s dreams challenge the final recourse of statist thinking. His dreams mean that nothing is permanent and everything is provisional. From a perspective of power, such a position is intolerable. And so the hierarchical system must try to recapture Orr’s dreams, to harness them and put them to use for its own purposes. It does so in the person of Dr. Haber, Orr’s psychiatrist (96). Call’s ontological anarchy offers to unravel the logic underpinning biopower, and it points directly to the state’s stakes in manipulating a power it denies as powerful: dreaming.

Or maybe it's not just my unconscious, irrational mind, maybe it's my total self, my whole being, that just isn't right for the job. I'm too defeatist, or passive, as you said, maybe. I don't have enough desires. Maybe that has something to do with my having this—this capacity to dream effectively.” (86)

Showing the faults in Dr. Haber's (il)logic, George proceeds from considerations of responsibility; he tries to understand how he is impacting, through dreams, the life chances of the whole world. What Dr. Haber sees as lacks in George are actually virtues: his desires are not so great that they supersede his concern for how his dreams effect the world. He grasps, but articulates from the other side – from the subject position – that Dr. Haber has a flawed research methodology: Dr. Haber uses quantitative measures to evaluate and influence qualitative conditions. As to sane and rational, Dr. Haber consistently upholds and exemplifies normative cultural definitions of virile, heterosexual, masculinity that is – as with the carcinogenic Plague – toxic: normative is not sane, or rational; it is merely normative. Though it takes time for George to understand, his character refuses the violence of normativity; inherent in each of Dr. Haber's suggestion is an assumption that depends upon invalidating agency. Choice. Identity.

As an antipode, not an antidote, to Dr. Haber's toxic masculinity, George dreams into being Aliens who eventually land on Earth to offer guidance and aid. This aid comes in paired concepts: *iahklu'* and *Er'perrehnne*, in the Alien tongue. *Er'perrehnne* the novel translates clearly, and urgently: it is an imperative, though refusable, to ask for help. *iahklu'* cannot be defined, though it can be done.

During the landing event, an Alien enters Dr. Haber's office and appears to note the electroencephalogram George is generating:

“Worthy,” said the Alien, and took a short, checked step toward he couch, as if longing to look. “The individual-person is *iahklu'*. The recording machine records this perhaps. Is all your species capable of *iahklu'?*”

“I don't—know the term, can you describe – ”

The figure whirred a little, raised its left elbow over its head (which, turtle-like, hardly protruded above the great sloped shoulders of the carapace) and said, “Please excuse. Incommunicable by communication-machine invented hastily in very-recent-past.” (122)

The Alien takes a checked step toward George, whom he deems immediately worthy; the Alien seems to approve that George can dream. However, its phrasing can also be read as a statement that precedes a question. Among humans, the individual is *iahklu*’ – but is humankind, as a species also capable of *iahklu*’ collectively? As Dr. Haber, for the only time in the novel, says he doesn’t know, the Alien whirrs, places its forearm over its head, then demurs. Dr. Haber has made a joke, albeit tragic; perhaps this is why the Alien says its response is too complicated to convey.

Each time the term *iahklu*’ arises, the Alien responses are given as gestures, as metaphor or parable, as resonance. Inquiring at an antique shop, called Junque, about the meaning of *iahklu*’, George receives this response:

“What comes is acceptable,” the Alien replied.

“A congenial point of view. I wonder if you’d tell me something. In your language, what is the meaning of the word *iahklu*’?”

The proprietor came slowly forward again, edging the broad, shell-like armor carefully among fragile objects.

“Incommunicable. Language used for communication with individual-persons will not contain other forms of relationship, Jor Jor.” The right hand, a great, greenish, flipperlike extremity came forward in a slow and perhaps tentative fashion. “Tiua’k Ennbe Ennbe.” (153)

Iahklu’ exceeds communication through language, as language is based in relations between individuals; the Aliens find no way to speak of collective agency, or collective experience, among human vocabulary. Extending his flipper, the Alien says, “Tiua’k Ennbe Ennbe.”

Continuing the conversation, George persists:

“Is there any way to control *iahklu*’, to make it go the way it...ought to go?”
The Alien...sidled majestically over...

“One swallow does not make a summer,” it said. “Many hands make light work.” It stopped again, apparently not satisfied with this effort at bridging the

communication gap. It stood still for half a minute, then went to the front window and with precise, stiff, careful movements picked out one of the antique disk-records displayed there, and brought it to Orr. It was a Beatles record: “With a Little Help From My Friends.” (154)

George is not confused. He understands his dreaming. In response to Dr. Haber’s inquiry, as to why George did not simply dream away the inscrutable Aliens, George replies: “I don’t choose,” Orr said. “Don’t you see that yet? I follow” (125). George does not know where his dreams will take him – nor does he ask to know; this state of unknowing is part of *iahklu’* – in more tightly elucidated syllables, it is a jellyfish-like state of not having a clue about his purpose or aim or destination, but of following the current. Being born(e) by what is.

Er’perrehne! Or, Do Sea Turtles Dream of Collective Responsibility?

The magnitude of this thought, the difficulty of this existence, is not lost on George – or the Aliens who offer him the key to *iaklu’*: a little help from friends – or *Er’perrehnne*. Listening to the antique disk-records, “With A Little Help From My Friends,” George falls asleep – his thoughts heavy, his words slowed, his tongue thick. Whether he sleeps from the drug he is taking to relax, or from exhaustion from treatment, George receives rest and aid from the song playing over and over.

The aid is needed. As George realizes, speaking to Dr. Haber, he’s a dreamer, but he’s not the only one: “Did you ever happen to think, Dr. Haber,” he said, quietly enough but stuttering a little, “that there might be other people who dream the way I do? That reality’s being changed out from under us, replaced, renewed, all the time – only we don’t know it? Only the dreamer knows it, and those who know his dream. If that’s true, I guess we’re lucky not knowing it. This is confusing enough” (71).

When faced with confusion, Dr. Haber’s response is to become the centralized dreamer. Founding his own institute, ensconced in his own mansion, he has carved his

commitment to violence in concrete: “Over the pillared portico, incised in white concrete in the straight Roman capitals whose proportions lend nobility to any phrase whatsoever, was the legend: THE GREATEST GOOD FOR THE GREATEST NUMBER“ (136). Dr. Haber’s character is, fittingly, in direct antagonism to George’s. While Dr. Haber focuses on tuning out external noise, the sounds of phones ringing and secretaries talking in his office, George is looking for ways to limit the amount of influence he exerts. Dr. Haber does not seek to expand his mental horizon: “The real trick was to learn how not to hear them. The only solid partitions left were inside the head” (7). George cannot stop: “Couldn’t find the fit,” he said, meaning that he had been trying to lock the door through which the dreams came, but none of the keys had fit the lock” (3). Foreshadowing the final confrontation between Dr. Haber and George, Dr. Haber is looking to turn ON his Augmentor and to fulfill – not his dream – but his ambition to be a benefactor to humankind.

At the same time, George is gathering the courage, and the self-worth, to press the OFF button. Worthy, affirms the Alien:

“Do you know the term *iahklu*?”

Haber paused momentarily. “Heard it. It’s untranslatable. You’ve decided it means ‘dream,’ eh?”

“I don’t know what it means.”

“I don’t pretend to have any knowledge you haven’t got, but I do think that before you go on with the, with the application of the new technique, Dr. Haber, before you dream, you ought to talk with one of the Aliens.”

“*Iahklu*’ is too much for one person to handle alone,” George was saying “it gets out of hand. They know what’s involved in controlling it. Or, not exactly controlling it, that’s not the right word; but keeping it where it belongs, going the right way...I don’t understand it. Maybe you will. Ask their help. Say *Er’perrehnne* before you...before you press the ON button.” (167-168)

Unworthy is Dr. Haber’s bullying hubris, which he perversely supports with his

(mis)use of diagnostic tools meant to provide care and aid. Phenomenologically, and epistemologically, getting it wrong, Dr. Haber’s utilitarian views (mis)cast George’s metaphysical balance among polarities as nullification:

Your introversion/extroversion score, for instance, was 49.1. This is, you're more introverted than extroverted by 0.9 of a degree. That's not unusual; that is, is the emergence of the same damn pattern everywhere, right across the board. If you put them all on to the same graph you sit smack in the middle at 50. Dominance, for example, I think you were 48.8 on that. Neither dominant nor submissive. Independence/dependence—same thing. Creative/destructive, on the Ramirez scale—same thing. Both, neither. Either, or. Where there's an opposed pair, a polarity, you're in the middle; where there's a scale, you're at the balance point. You cancel out so thoroughly that, in a sense, nothing is left. (137)

Challenged by George's increasing insistence to let him be, Dr. Haber falls back on narratives of power, which conflate biological and social evolution, to throw George off-balance. George, drifting against Dr. Haber's current, responds with resolute quiet:

“What's wrong with changing things? Now, I wonder if this self-cancelling, centerpoised personality of yours leads you to look at things defensively... You afraid of *losing your balance*. But change need not unbalance you; life's not a static process... Life—evolution—the whole universe of space/time, matter/energy—existence itself—is essentially *change*.”⁵¹

“That is one aspect of it,” Orr said. “The other is stillness.”

He was fatherly and patient now; and Orr forced himself to go on, knowing it was no good.

“We're in the world, not against it. It doesn't work to try to stand outside things and run them that way. It just doesn't work, it goes against life. There is a

⁵¹ Haber's frustration at George's anti-impotence suggests the challenge George gives to Haber's sense of self, which resides in his perceived mastery over himself and his environment: “Why had this gift been given to a fool, a passive nothing of a man? Why was Orr so sure and so right, while the strong, active, positive man was powerless, forced to try to use, even to obey, the weak tool?” (Le Guin 124).

Lewis Call codes Orr's as non-rational, in his subjectivity. Orr consistently refuses the comforting but restrictive binary logic that characterizes the modern Western mode of thought. Naturally, Haber finds this incredibly frustrating. “Where there's an opposed pair, a polarity, you're in the middle; where there's a scale, you're at the balance point. You cancel out so thoroughly that, in a sense, nothing is left” (134). Haber says this as if it's a bad thing, and of course from his perspective, it is. Orr is the living embodiment of deconstruction. He can have no teleology. He can never arrive at a final position. The text constantly emphasizes that he is in the middle. “There was a singular poise, almost a monumentality, in the stance of his slight figure: he was completely still, still at the center of something” (68). Because Orr is the node through which all reality must flow, he himself cannot succumb to any fixed discourse, any ultimate interpretation. His ontological anarchy is thus postmodern in its orientation. It is supremely ironic, then, that Orr, who renounces the rationalist attempt to control the world, is actually the only person in the novel who does have power over that world. Orr attains this special status precisely because he has come to understand himself as an integral, organic part of the universe, rather than an autonomous Cartesian subject at war with his environment. Orr can change the world only because he is the world. In this sense, what he does is no different from the actions of any other human, animal, vegetable or mineral. “Everything dreams. The play of form, of being, is the dreaming of substance. Rocks have their dreams, and the earth changes” (161). This is the radical message of *Lathe*. The modern model of revolutionary change presupposes the existence and efficacy of rational, independent political actors. But *Lathe* argues that we must not look to progressive technocrats or revolutionary vanguards of the working class for change. Instead, we must become the change we wish to see in the world, as Gandhi suggested” (70).

way, but you have to follow it. The world is, no matter how we think it ought to be. You have to be with it. You have to let it be.” (140)

Schizophrenic dreamer George is troubled, as he should be. He has, in the most vulnerable circumstance, come face to face with the annihilating (il)logic of patriarchal masculinity.

Gently, Alien voices offer him another way: “Please forgive unwanted interruption. You are human capable of *iahklu*’ as previously noted. This troubles self” (141). It is unclear whether the Alien is the self. It is clear that the Alien speaks with a collective voice when it continues:

“We also have been variously disturbed. Concepts cross in mist. Perception is difficult. Volcanoes emit fire. Help is offered: refusably. Snakebite serum is not prescribed for all. Before following directions leading in wrong directions, auxiliary forces may be summoned, in immediate-following fashion: *Er’perrehnne!*”

“*Er’perrehnne*” Orr replied automatically, his whole mind intent on trying to understand what the Alien was telling him.” (142)

Time to Wake And Be, And Be

One swallow does not make a summer. Many hands make light work. Mannie dreamers make many dreams; so if one goes awry, all is not lost, lost.

“Do you remember April, four years ago – in ninety-eight?” George asks of Heather LeLache, variously his lawyer, his lover, his wife, his connection made and lost and sought as realities jump. “That’s when the world ended...Nobody else remembers” (106).

Miss LeLache enters George’s journey as an observer; she is a lawyer, and he has asked her to help him rescind Dr. Haber’s control over George’s therapy, and so over his dreams. Gradually, she begins to change her view of George; or, her perception reflects George’s growth as the strength of his character emerges. Initially, she views him as pitiable and helpless. But as she proceeds with him through the shifts, she accepts that she, like George, is experiencing multiple, consecutive realities.

She does not recall the end of the world; nor does she recall the reality in which she was never born. George recounts nuclear retaliation as the reality that catapulted him into the string of effective dreams that has resulted in the Alien timeline. Suffering radiation sickness, knowing the world was dying with him, George falls asleep and dreams himself home: “I’ve told myself ever since that it was a dream. That it was a dream! But it wasn’t. This is. This isn’t real. This world isn’t even *probable*... We are all dead, and we spoiled the world before we died. There is nothing left. Nothing but dreams (107). She believes him, and she offers him fury in exchange for their shared fear that the world hangs on his dreaming. In her fury, she offers him her own wisdom: “Who the hell do you think you are? There is nothing that doesn’t fit, nothing happens that isn’t supposed to happen. Ever! What does it matter whether you call it real or dreams? It’s all one – isn’t it?” (107).

Heather does not experience the color-blind world Dr. Haber prompted, in his attempt to eliminate racialized violence. Dreaming color away from human skin, Dr. Haber effectively eradicates the history of racial oppression, including the Gettysburg Address and Dr. Martin Luther King. Suffering a literal erasure from her own story, George’s is the only voice available to speak Heather’s loss:

But now, never to have known a woman with brown skin and wiry black hair cut very short so that the elegant line of the skull showed like the curve of a bronze vase—no, that was wrong. That was intolerable. That every soul on earth should have a body the color of a battleship: no!

That’s why she’s not here, he thought. She could not have been born gray...She could not exist in the gray people’s world. She had not been born. (130)

Reborn, in another iteration, Heather emerges as George’s guide. Hers is the voice he hears, when he enters the abyss of Dr. Haber’s final creation. She is the person he turns to in his last effort to stop his dreams: “George... Stay awake, stay awake just a little, I want to try the hypnosis. So you can sleep” (108).

Heather's experience of hypnotizing George contrasts Dr. Haber's; she asks all of the questions he should ask but does not. Heather has no desire to "play God": "Only those who have denied their being yearn to play at it" (108). Heather, as she expresses to George, believes that "things fit: that there is a whole of which one is a part, and that in being part one is whole" (108). Though Heather puts George into a suggestible, hypnotic state, when the moment comes to implant her suggestion, she hesitates – upon finding George completely in her power, with his dreaming power "uncalculable," she considers: "What unimaginable responsibility had she undertaken?" (108). Heather suggests that George dream of a benevolent Dr. Haber, that the Aliens are no longer a threat "out there on the moon," and that when George wakes, he will be rested and all will be well.

It is Heather's influence that spurs George to dream the Alien landing. It is her act of compassion, framed in responsibility, that enables the previously hostile Aliens to transform and enter into the conversation George experiences:

"What comes is acceptable," the Alien replied.

"A congenial point of view. I wonder if you'd tell me something. In your language, what is the meaning of the word *iahklu*?"

The proprietor came slowly forward again, edging the broad, shell-like armor carefully among fragile objects.

"Incommunicable. Language used for communication with individual-persons will not contain other forms of relationship, Jor Jor." The right hand, a great, greenish, flipperlike extremity came forward in a slow and perhaps tentative fashion. "Tiua'k Ennbe Ennbe." (153)

As Heather suggests, George is to wake and be well. Responding to the anxiety in George's question, the anxiety that comes from having dreamed himself beyond the end of the world, the anxiety of having dreamed nightmares into reality, the Alien extends its flipper and says: Time to wake and be, and be.

MAN MANKIND M N AAA

George wakes; Dr. Haber dreams. It is chaos, and the unmaking of all things.

Passive, submissive, following – the novel’s climax shows these qualities as courage, and heroism. George walks to the center of Dr. Haber’s desolation, which is the physical expression of the emptiness at the heart of Dr. Haber’s normative, virile, “healthy” and sane psyche. Consistently, Dr. Haber’s performance showcases the genocidal, self-annihilating precepts of the version of normality Dr. Haber upholds.

George enters the void already forming in Dr. Haber’s mansion. Entering beneath the concrete legend, indoors George traverses the black marble foyer, domed, with an inscription that runs around the inner circle of the dome: “THE PROPER STUDY OF MANKIND IS MAN” (136). As realities deteriorate around him, George begins to lose cohesion: “MAN MANKIND M N AAA. The A’s tried to trip his feet. He stepped onto a moving walkway; though it was not visible to him; he stepped onto the helical escalator and rode it up into nothing, supporting it continually by the firmness of his will. He did not even shut his eyes” (173).

Riding up against the current of Dr. Haber’s aberration, George asks for help.

“Help me,” he said aloud, for the void drew him, pulled at him. He had not the strength all by himself to get through nothingness and out the other side.

There was a sort of dull rousing in his mind; he thought of Tiua’k Ennbe Ennbe, and of the bust of Schubert, and of Heather’s voice saying furiously; “What the hell, George!” This seemed to be all he had to cross nothingness on. He went forward. He knew as he went that he would lose all he had. (173)⁵²

⁵² Carol Gilligan engages Freudian contributions to masculinized senses of identity. In addition to following a justice, versus care, framework, her “male” subjects demonstrate difficulty tending to the relationships that her “female” subjects prioritize. As Gilligan notes, “Thus if the secrets of male adolescence revolve around the harboring of continuing attachments that cannot be represented in the logic of fairness, the secrets of the female adolescent pertain to the silencing of her own voice, a silencing enforced by the wish not to hurt others but also by the fear that, in speaking, her voice will not be heard” (52). If it is not the silencing of men’s voices that is feared, then it is the silencing of their feelings.

Gilligan references Freud in order to locate this reluctance, partially, in men’s fear of rejection: “[T]here is an intimation on Freud’s part of a sensibility different from his own, of a mental state different from that upon which he premises his psychology, the ‘single exception’ to the primary mutual hostility of human beings,’ to the ‘aggressive-among people,’ and this exception is located in women’s experience, in ‘the mother’s relation to her male child’. Once again women appear as the exception to the rule by demonstrating a love not admixed with anger, a love arising neither from separation nor from a feeling of being a one with the external world as a whole, but rather from a feeling of connection, a primary bond between other and self. But this love of the mother cannot, Freud says, be shared by the son, who would thus ‘make himself dependent in a

All George has is Heather, whom he finds to be beautiful, beautiful. Following her voice as a bridge, George faces Dr. Haber, who is at the center of the nightmare – the nightmare to end all nightmares: “It was a cold, vaguely moving, rotating darkness made of fear that pulled him aside, pulled him apart” (173). The nightmare of normativity is made of fear that pulls identity aside, pulls it apart. George reaches into this morass and presses the OFF button, then he calls to Dr. Haber to wake. Dr. Haber opens eyes that stare “into the unbeing at the center of William Haber,” and George exits Dr. Haber’s office – not now the mansion, but an office that is dingy and unfamiliar – and enters a world marked by a permanent schism. It is also marked by the absence of Heather; as people acclimate to possessing multiple memory streams, George’s thought is that “there would be much death and terror following Dr. Haber’s dream. And loss. And loss” (175). George keeps moving, “Dreaming, dreaming” (175).

Dazed, George is rescued on the streets by an Alien who explains, “rather laboriously, that he was called Jor Jor and it was called E’nememen Asfah” (177). The Alien takes George to a bed, lays him down, and listens as George surrenders to rest:

most dangerous way on a portion of the external world, namely his chosen love-object, and expose himself to extreme suffering if he should be rejected by that object or lose it through unfaithfulness or death” (47). George’s relationship with Heather – whose Blackness makes her beloved existence impossible in Dr. Haber’s colorblind dream suggestion – resonates with Derrida’s shame, winds through Lilith’s rejection of Adam, has a troublesome intersection with Black women’s emotional labor, and, in a sense, recuperates the violence of this trajectory: George separates his love from Heather from his need for her, he lets go of her – shifting from a frame of rejection and possession (frames related to a misaligned sense of justice) to a frame of care and loss – finally, at the novel’s end, it is left for Heather to find George, if she is so drawn.

Also notable is the novel’s uncoupling of defenselessness from “civilizing”: “Although Freud, claiming that we are never so defenceless against suffering as when we love’, pursues the line of defense as it leads through anger and conscience to civilization and guilt, the more interesting question would seem to be why the mother is willing to take the risk. Since for her love also creates the possibility of disappointment and loss, the answer would seem to lie in a different experience of connection and a different mode of response” (47). Giving up his defenses, George has no need to impose himself upon the world(s), as Dr. Haber does. George accesses the different experience of connection and the different mode of response that Gilligan finds in girls’ responses. In the sense of Eve Bannatt’s female *bildungsroman*, perhaps *Lathe of Heaven* may extend the tradition of the (male) *bildungsroman* to include a journey like that undertaken by Meg Murray: the journey within that is accepting of all elements of a subject’s identity and which allows the protagonist to fit themselves

“I did a lot today. That is, I did something. The only thing I have ever done. I pressed a button. It took the entire willpower, the accumulated strength of my entire existence, to press one damned OFF button.

“You have lived well,” the Alien said. (178)

He lay back. He clearly sensed the pity and protective compassion of the Alien standing across the dark room. It saw him, not with eyes, as short-lived, fleshly, armorless, a strange creature, infinitely vulnerable, adrift in the gulfs of the possible: something that needed help. He didn't mind. He did need help. Weariness took him over, picked him up like a current of the sea into which he was sinking slowly. “*Er'perrehnne*” he muttered, surrendering to sleep.

“*Er'perrhnnne*,” replied E'nememen Asfah, soundlessly. (178)

MANKIND M N AAA; the A's try to trip his feet. The everything George has lost includes his separation between dream and waking. M N AAA; E'nememen A's feet. In some landscape, perhaps one with invasive light and a vice holding his temples still, George has lost the connection between word and thought, language and sense. The invasive, searing light at the end of the world is followed by dazed drifting, on streets populated by Aliens that look like nine-foot tall sea turtles. Here, George sleeps. “He dreamed. There was no rub. His dreams, like waves of the deep sea far from any shore, came and went, rose and fell, profound and harmless, breaking nowhere, changing nothing... Through his sleep the great, green sea turtles dived, swimming with heavy, inexhaustible grace through the depths, in their element” (179).

A Different Relation to Identity: Inhabiting Paradox, Inhabiting Authenticity

William Connolly's *Identity \ Difference: Democratic Negotiations of Political Paradox* situates identity in paradox and “challenges teleological theories that ground identity in a higher harmony in being and ambiguates transcendental philosophies that treat reason or the normal individual or reciprocal rules of discourse as media sufficient to establish a true identity” (67). Marking “normal” identity as insufficient, or lacking,

to themselves, not to the demands of socially constructed disciplining. Michel Foucault's “Care of the Self” completes a similar arc, from *Discipline and Punish* through *The History of Sexuality*.

Connolly positions the teleological insistence upon legible, coherent, individuated subjectivity within an arc that leads to violence. For Connolly,

An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognized. These differences are essential to its being. If they did not coexist as differences, it would not exist in its distinctness and solidity. Entrenched in this indispensable relation is a second set of tendencies themselves in need of exploration, to congeal established identities into fixed forms, thought and lived as if their structure expressed the true order of things. When these pressures prevail, the maintenance of one identity (or field of identities) involves the conversion of some differences into otherness, into evil, or one of its numerous surrogates. Identity requires difference in order to be and it converts difference into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty. (64)

Echoing Agamben's study, articulated in terms of *zoe* and *bios*, Connolly's work additionally implies that "congealed" identities serve state power, at the expense of "true" identities – authentic identities – which better serve "a world where life flows through and over the structures of responsible agency" (117).⁵³ Connolly's perspective conceives of identity as fluid; the pressure to pretend otherwise requires that difference, a crucial element of selfhood, be converted into otherness: it is not a quality of subjectivity that I oppose myself against another, in order to know myself – that is a requirement of the biopolitical state.⁵⁴

⁵³ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*.

⁵⁴ Connolly's convergence with Michel Foucault's conception of biopower (*Society Must Be Defended*) also resonates with Derrida's psychoanalytic work. Following the linkages among the three: a biopolitical subject becomes vulnerable to the pressure of the state via the subject's (socially instantiated) shame, which Derrida traces both to the story of Genesis and to Freud's Oedipal myth. Connolly places subjectivity on a different continuum, as he explicitly reacts against the teleological imperatives embedded in the structures Foucault and Derrida analyze: original sin, which returns to the myth of man's (sexual) insufficiency before his mother, is sublimated into the "civilizing" state because Man is, emphatically, not lacking but developing according to a divine imperative to progress. Foucault traces the move from the divine to the monarch, via the body of the king, which is followed by the slippage of sovereignty; the divinely invested sovereign gives way before the sovereignty of the state. Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* squarely places the mechanisms of sovereign power within the framework of contagion, or sickness: keeping the sick from the healthy, in order to prevent the spread of the plague, migrates into hospitals, barracks, and schoolrooms, until we arrive at a place – with Connolly – where sickness is configured as *difference without the imperative to violence*.

Connolly's concern for authentic identity is keyed to a true / false register: "To possess a true identity is to be false to difference, while to be true to difference is to sacrifice the promise of a true identity" (67). At stake is not a choice between true or false, but an ability to inhabit paradoxical true / false positionalities without becoming frayed, or fragmented, to a point where the commission of violence becomes not only possible but justified. As Connolly puts it,

The double relation of identity to difference fosters discursive concealment of the most difficult political issues residing in this relation. The spiral of concealments may be summarized as follows. First, as one's doubts about the credibility of teleological and transcendental philosophies become acute, the suspicion grows that while no social life could be without bestowing privilege upon a particular constellation of identities, most historically established systems of identity veil the element of arbitrary conquest in the differences they create and negate. But then, once this doubt has impressed itself upon thought, a reactive impulse emerges to dissolve the new ethical paradoxes created by this admission... The first impulse, to expose and respond to violence in the relation of identity to difference, now often gives way to a renewed attempt to vindicate an ethic in which the identity affirmed (the good) is seen as unambiguous, inclusive, and free of dirt. (67-68)⁵⁵

From a discursive concealment, Connolly expands to a spiral of concealments. Doubt challenges credibility, suspicion engenders ethics, the impulse to expose and respond to violence gives way to the act of telling a story that vindicates an identity built upon teleological and hierarchical privilege.

As an alternative to violence, Connolly dismantles the "hegemony" of fixed identity and seeks, via his formulation of identity/difference, to recuperate relational structures that invigorate a moral (I would say, responsible) engagement with life: "The idealization of

⁵⁵ As Derrida notes, the animal serves as the vehicle for Man's "discursive concealment," from himself, of his unethical subjectivity; Octavia Butler catches (white, Western) Man, at the moment of his attempt to dissolve into violence, and counters with Lilith as resolute witness. With such tight pairing between speciesism and racism, outbreaks of genocidal violence that operate by dehumanizing racialized subjects, through a discursive making animal, shock but do not surprise.

Derrida writes, in relation to the animal holocaust, as Connolly writes in relation to the Holocaust: "In a brief, unglossed passage, Sartre suggests that 'anti-Semitism' has kept something of the nature of human sacrifice'... The Jew must be sacrificed so the anti-Semite can inflict cruelty without responsibility... The other

individuality draws attention to that which is unique or special in any self...The thematization of difference...calls attention to entire types and categories of being that are neutralized, marginalized, or defeated by the hegemony of an identity. The language of individuality, when it is given too much priority, can thereby divert attention from ways in which relational structures of identity\difference de-moralize entire categories of life” (86). Emphasizing the unique, and special, Connolly gathers these qualities as they appear on the reverse side of his \ : the neutralized, marginalized, and defeated. De-moralized, Connolly considers, “It may be that the quest for unequivocal responsibility and true identity is grounded in existential resentment against the human condition and that a politics that struggles against existential resentment is necessary to modify established ideals of identity and responsibility” (121). Resolutely arguing for the need to modify established ideals of identity and responsibility - for the need to modify the (white, “normal,” rational Western subject) – Connolly finds that unjust, undemocratic treatment of our fellows stems from an existential malaise that affects our ability to give care: “People tend to demand, to put it all too briefly, a world in which suffering is ultimately grounded in proportional responsibility. We resent a world in which it appears that this is not so. But resentment must locate an appropriate object if it is to be discharged as resentment. It thereby seeks a responsible agent that it can convince itself is worthy of receiving the load of incipient resentment it carries. Otherwise its existential rancor must be stored or translated into something else” (121). In other words, resentment at (our) suffering seeks a responsible agent – a worthy agent capable

is sacrificed so that the self can project an infantile image of self-identity, national unity, and the human condition” (101).

of responding, capable of showing it is affected by our resentment – to witness (our) existential pain, before we can be induced to more generous responses.⁵⁶

Alain Badiou takes a different turn, in his thinking with Gilles Deleuze, co-auteur of rhizomatic thinking and *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Badiou opens with a question; not what is Man, not who am I, but: “Which Deleuze?” (9). Like Connolly, Badiou recognizes identity as multiple; as too far-flung to rest upon tripartite divisions of ego, super-ego, and id. Badiou writes of Deleuze, in his contradictions:

There is an image of Deleuze as, at once, radical and temperate, solitary and convivial, vitalist and democratic. It is fairly commonly believed that his doctrine promotes the heterogeneous multiplicity of desires and encourages their unrestrained realization that it is concerned with the respect and affirmation of differences, and that it thus constitutes a conceptual critique of totalitarianisms...as an inventor of the contemporary Baroque, in which our desire for the multiple, intermixtures, and the coexistence of universes free of any common rule – in sum, our planetary democratism – is able to recognize itself and unfurl. In short, we end up with Deleuze as the joyous thinker of the world’s *confusion*. (10)

Badiou claims, for Deleuze, a method by which our heterogeneous multiplicity may recognize itself, and rather than hide in shame, unfurl. Between shame and care lies joy, as between reason and imagination lies confusion. The Deleuzian subject enters a discursive domain in search of a non-restrictive univocality, rather than in disavowal of his disavowal (and perhaps this is why Deleuze is less concerned with the plight of the animal).

In terms of subjectivity, however, the multiple Deleuzian subject is less concerned with mastery than with limits. Working with the outside edges of being, Badiou argues that, in Deleuze’s thinking:

⁵⁶ Connolly gestures toward what Hartman terms the “spectacle” of witnessing: “By combating the self-reassurance provided by theories of neat coordination between the social function of responsibility and the essence of human being, one becomes alert to new dimensions of ethical concern in the relations of identity to difference. One becomes alert to the element of existential revenge lodged within idealizations of identity and responsibility” (121). The erotics of witnessing, when tinged with Connolly’s element of existential revenge, turns away from kinship and toward a taking pleasure in the sight of another’s torture. In a similar vein, the suffering of animals could be said to be an outlet for the “revenge” lodged within the suffering Western subject.

If the limit can only be thought as a mobile trace affecting the outside, it is not certain that we can save univocity. For Being would still be said according to two senses: the outside and the limit, space and the trace being and event. Thus it is necessary for the act of thought to correspond to the surface (the outside), *as to what is, in itself, the limit*.

But, what is simultaneously the movement of a surface and the tracing of a limit, if not, precisely, a fold? If you fold a sheet of paper, you determine a traced line where the folding takes place, which, although it certainly constitutes the common limit of the two subregions of the sheet, is not, however, a tracing on the sheet, black on white. For what the fold presents as a limit on the sheet as pure outside is, in its being, a movement of the sheet itself. (89)

/. Without grasping this figure, as does L'Engle's tesseract, as a mode of travel undertaken by means of resonance, Deleuze still encounters an epistemology that is not sundered from the motion that constitutes its shape. Accurate, and joyful in its reach and exploration, Deleuze's work offers the possibility of a subjectivity unburned by the Oedipal "myth" – a subjectivity whose being is constructed along the fold. L'Engle's novel also imagines such a possibility, in its observation that Mr. Murray is inexperienced, rather than impaired, in his capacity to tesser.

It's Turtles All the Way Down; Or, It's All True, Now What?

The problem of multiplicity of being, of identities, does not occur with the proliferation of possibilities. As George Orr discovers, problems occur when one impinges on others. As in the fable of the tortoise, standing on the backs of turtles, there are many realities all in play at once; however clever, attempts to locate the "real" reality, or the "right" reality, repeat the hierarchical and teleological violences that stunt our ontologies, truncate our epistemologies, and construct subjectivity in shame, and resentment.

Empathy – a practice of witnessing through care – is the *différance*. Lynn Hunt's "Torrents of Emotion: Reading Novels and Imaging Equity," an early chapter in *Inventing Human Rights*, argues that the experience of identifying with another, through the guided experience provided by fiction, of imagining their suffering generates empathy. Empathy,

Hunt argues, led to the recognition of universal suffering that, in turn, generated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. While 18th century French philosophy was formulating rational ideals for the treatment of hu(man)kind, an 18th century novel “gave currency to the term ‘rights of man’” as the novel – *Julie* – “encouraged a highly charged identification with the characters, and in so doing enabled readers to empathize across class, sex, and national lines” (38). As Hunt notes, empathy is “rooted in the biology of the brain” as well as learned: “Normally, everyone learns empathy from an early age” (39). According to Hunt, the epistolary novel engendered empathy because it was able to “demonstrate that selfhood depended on qualities of ‘interiority’ (having an inner core), for the characters express their inner feelings in their letters” (48).

Lacking human letters, animals must inspire empathy – in Beings constructed along the fold of a piece of paper – by other means. Writing about animals appropriates animals’ interiority, even as it offers a means to guide our hu(man) encounters. The risk, to animals, is that misappropriation – the capturing of animal forms without animal materiality – reifies their plight: if it’s turtles all the way down, what are the turtles left to stand on?

Dr. Seuss, in the realm most open to unbridled imaginings – the children’s book – considers what it means, for the turtle, to carry all of existence upon its back. *Yertle the Turtle* tells the story of dehierarchizing the turtles, all the way down, as a turtle called Mack jostles the turtles who have climbed to their places upon his back. Ordered by a turtle king, with delusions that he is master of all he can survey, the turtles climb. They suffer. They groan. Until Mack, with an anticlimactic “burp”, destabilizes the precarious stack and all the turtles fall back into the pond.

While the story creates an empathetic engagement with the obedient turtles, who are ill-used, there is a larger point: as in the epistolary novel, each character displays their

interiority. With Hunt's work in mind, if we accept a Deleuzian, or perhaps schizo, model of identity – the possibility emerges that we might empathetically identify not with one character, but with each. If we can identify with one turtle – we can identify with turtles all the way (up /) down.

Catching the Drift: A (Re)turn To The Western Cultural Imaginary

At the novel's end, George wakes. He visits Dr. Haber, and he recognizes what Dr. Haber suffers: "He had seen it himself. He was looking at the world after April 1998. He was looking at the world as misunderstood by the mind: the bad dream" (180). Dr. Haber's condition has converged with GeorJor's, but the confusion between real and unreal offers George another life, while it leaves Dr. Haber staring into the emptiness at the center of himself. "There is a bird in a poem by T.S. Eliot who says that mankind cannot bear very much reality; but the bird is mistaken. A man can endure the entire weight of the universe for eighty years. It is unreality that he cannot bear" (180).

As the novel's ending suggests, it is neither reality nor unreality that cannot be borne; it is that neither can be borne alone, and it is that reality / unreality requires that balance to be kept: "You must learn the skills, the art, the limits" (167).

Collective dreaming is no easy task, especially as our individual and institutional dreams do effect the life conditions for all species. Dr. Haber collides with every kind of example of misalignment among skill, art, and limit; his disastrous dreaming is founded in the deepest void of Western philosophy. Utilitarian, patriarchal normativity works to strip the self from the self – and then to "cure" those who maintain wholeness, or who resist having their selfhood torn away.

The final scene of the novel shows George, employed as a designer of kitchen implements, for E'nememen Asfah. George leaves to get a cup of coffee with Heather, and

asks for a ten minute break: “Take evening,” the Alien said. “There is time. There are returns. To go is to return.” “Thank you very much,” Orr says, before he takes Heather’s hand and goes out into the rainy afternoon. “The Alien watched them from within the glass-fronted shop, as a sea creature might watch from an aquarium seeing them pass and disappear into the mist” (184).

The lesson of the turtles is that teleology is a burden, and unneeded. The notion that all things must have a purpose is, itself, an invitation to violence – who decides what a thing is? What its purpose must be? In the landscape of the novel, and at the scale of deep time, there is no need of purpose. Time, is. Being, is. We may go. We may return. To go is to return: *∫*. And our work is to inhabit these shifting, resonant relations with courage, and skill: “passive,” “submissive,” following, and continually seeking the limits that help us to maintain balance. Without teleology, uncertainly freed from our developmental straightjacket, the novel offers the comfort of unknowing and, when many ways converge, and choices must be made, a method for proceeding: *er’perrehnne*.

Conclusion

Companion Species, Companion Imaginaries

Writing from a position within the sciences, in which killing and caring for “experimental” animals is part of the landscape, Donna Haraway’s *When Species Meet* makes a case for companion species. Accepting, with reluctance, the necessity of causing animal suffering and death, Haraway reaches for language to inject into scientific discourses that deploy reason to legitimize their use of animal subjects. Her exaggerated kiss, swapping genetic material with her dog as he licks her face, might be read as an attempt to overwrite the story that places animals at the disposal of humans.

Haraway puts forward responsibility, as a term that acknowledges the responsibility of response, in the fact of actions Haraway undertakes as part of her work: “I act...I am not quit of respons-ability, which demands calculations...Calculations – reasons – are obligatory and radically insufficient for companion species worldliness” (88). Haraway’s experience of her animal subjects, who show her love and who she loves in return, prompts her to argue that reasons for their suffering are “radically insufficient” to account for the animals’ being with her, in their co-created landscapes. For Haraway, in the company of animals:

We are face to face, in the company of significant others, companion species to one another...Instead of being finished when we say this experimental science is good including the kind that kills animals when necessary and according to the highest standards we collectively know how to bring into play, our debt is just opening up to speculative and so possible material, affective, practical reworlding...Maybe sf worlding – speculative fiction and speculative fact – is the language I need. (93)

Seeking a way to imagine worlds that differently position animals and humans, Haraway grasps the potential of speculative worlding to change the fundamental dynamic that informs human and animal interactions. Without fully expanding her notion – without explicitly

recognizing that her own words are creating a worlding for herself and her species companions to inhabit – Haraway looks to the humanities for assistance.

In Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Haraway finds a “sustained work against the monomaniacal, cyclopean, individuated Oedipal subject, who is riveted on daddy and lethal in culture, politics, and philosophy. Patrilineal thinking, which sees all the world as a tree of filiations ruled by genealogy and identity, wars with rhizomatic thinking, which is open to nonhierarchical becomings and contagions. So far, so good” (29). Haraway picks up Deleuze and Guattari's treatment of wild / domestic animals as an anthropocentric, even condescending, failure to engage with actual animals:

[T]he wolf/dog opposition is not funny. D&G express horror at the “individuated animals, family pets, sentimental Oedipal animals each with its own petty history...” All worthy animals are a pack; all the rest are either pes of the bourgeoisie or state animals symbolizing some kind of divine myth...From the point of view of the animal worlds I inhabit, this is not about a good run but about a bad trip. Along with the Beatles, I need a little more help than that from my friends. (29-30)

Haraway insists on animals' capacity to provide help; in the animal worlds she inhabits, a good run is important and a bad trip, perhaps fatal.

Seeking among her bipedal friends, Haraway draws from Jacques Derrida, who, she argues, “came right to the edge of respect...but he was sidetracked by his textual canon of Western philosophy and literature and by his own linked worries of being naked in front of his cat...Somehow, in all this worrying and longing, the cat was never heard from again” (21). According to Haraway's priorities, Derrida “failed a simple obligation of companion species; he did not become curious about what the cat might actually be doing, feeling, thinking, or perhaps making available to him in looking back at him that morning” (21).

Haraway's focus on companion species, on the embodied encounters between humans and animals, leads her toward a misstep she suspects Derrida of making. For

Haraway, Derrida's engagement with his philosophical and literary canon is a distraction: "he missed a possible invitation... Leaving this query unasked, he had nowhere else to go with his keen recognition of the gaze of his cat than to Jeremy Bentham's question: "The first and decisive question will rather be to know *whether animals can suffer*" (22). For Haraway, closely imbricated with animal suffering, this is a non-question, though it is not without value:

The question of suffering led Derrida to the virtue of pity, and that is not a small thing. But how much more promise is in the questions, Can animals play? Or work? And even, can I learn to play with *this* cat? Can I, the philosopher, respond to an invitation or recognize one when it is offered? What if work and play, and not just pity open up the possibility of mutual response, without names, is taken seriously as an everyday practice? What if a usable word for this is joy? And what if the question of how animals engage *one another's gaze responsively* takes center stage for people? What if that is the query, once its protocol is properly established, whose form changes everything? My guess is that Derrida the man in the bathroom grasped all this, but Derrida the philosopher had no idea how to practice this sort of curiosity that morning with his highly visual cat. (22)

Confronted with the material of his cat companion, Derrida makes a turn toward the Western canon – it is not a sidetrack, however, but a meandering path he traverses following the figure of his cat and beneath her watchful gaze. If he is not playing the physical stalk and pounce game she might be inviting, he is rather inviting the figure of his cat into the stalk and pounce play of his metaphysical engagement. It is a realm from which his cat, with the figure of the animal more broadly, has been barred; inviting "her" to play, Derrida builds a world in which her active presence is proper. While Haraway accepts the invitation to play, materially, with her companion species, Derrida (re)constructs an imaginary in which his invitation to his cat, to play, becomes legible. As Haraway advocates for companion species, as the basis of a just or ethical world, Derrida insists upon a companion imaginary. Bringing the two views together, we may arrive (we may simply be here) in a world where we know,

already, that our relations with animals offer the kind of joy that provides a radical sufficiency for human / animal lifeworlds. We may find the revolutionary future, present.

Because Neglect Isn't Cute: Tuxedo Stan's Campaign for A Humane World⁵⁷

On 10 September 2012, a cat named Tuxedo Stan launched his campaign for mayor of the Halifax Regional Municipality in Nova Scotia, Canada (“Tuxedo Stan for Mayor”). Backed by his human supporters in the Tuxedo Party, he ran on a platform of animal welfare: “Tuxedo Stan for Mayor Because Neglect Isn't Working.”⁵⁸



As a feline activist, Tuxedo Stan joins an unexpected—if not entirely unprecedented—cohort of cats that advocate for animal welfare through their “cute” appeals for humane treatment. From Tuxedo Stan's internet presence to his appearance on Anderson Cooper's CNN segment “The RidicuList,” Tuxedo Stan's cute campaign opens space for a cultural imaginary that differently envisions animals' and humans' political responsibilities.

Who Can Be a Moral Agent?

Iris Marion Young proposes “political responsibility” as a way to answer a question central to human and animal welfare: “How should moral agents—both individual and organizational—think about their responsibilities in relation to structural social injustice?”

⁵⁷ Portions of this chapter previously published as “Because Neglect Isn't Cute: Tuxedo Stan's Campaign for a Humane World.” *M/C Journal*. Reprinted under Creative Commons License.

(7). In legal frameworks, responsibility is connected to liability: an individual acts, harm occurs, and the law decides how much liability the individual should assume. However, Young redefines responsibility in relation to structural injustices, which she conceptualizes as “harms” that result from “structural processes in which many people participate.” Young argues that “because it is therefore difficult for individuals to see a relationship between their own actions and structural outcomes, we have a tendency to distance ourselves from any responsibility for them” (7).

Young presents political responsibility as a call to share the responsibility “to engage in actions directed at transforming the structures” and suggests that the less-advantaged might organize and propose “remedies for injustice, because their interests [are] the most acutely at stake” and because they are vulnerable to the actions of others “situated in more powerful and privileged positions” (15). Though Young does not address animals, her conception of responsible agency raises a question: who can be a moral agent? Arguably, the answer to this question changes as cultural imaginaries expand to accommodate difference, including gender- and species-difference.

Corey Wrenn analyzes a selection of anti-suffragette postcards that equate granting votes to women as akin to granting votes to cats. Young shifts responsibility from a liability to a political frame, but Wrenn’s work suggests that a further shift is necessary where responsibility is gendered and tied to domestic, feminized roles:

Cats and dogs are gendered in contemporary American culture...dogs are thought to be the proper pet for men and cats for women (especially lesbians). This, it turns out, is an old stereotype. In fact, cats were a common symbol in suffragette imagery. Cats represented the domestic sphere, and anti-suffrage postcards often used them to reference female activists. The intent was to portray suffragettes as silly, infantile, incompetent, and ill-suited to political engagement. (Wrenn)

⁵⁸ Image courtesy of Joe Popovitch.

Dressing cats in women's clothing and calling them suffragettes marks women as less-than-human and casts cats as the opposite of human. The frilly garments, worn by cats whose presence evoked the domestic sphere, suggest that women belong in the domestic sphere because they are too soft, or perhaps too cute, to contend with the demands of public life. In addition, the cards that feature domestic scenes suggest that women should account for their families' welfare ahead of their own, and that women's refusal to accept this arithmetic marks them as immoral—and irresponsible—subjects.

Not Schrödinger's Cat

In different ways, Jacques Derrida and Carey Wolfe explore the question Young's work raises: who can be a moral agent? Derrida and Wolfe complicate the question by adding species difference: how should (human) moral agents think about their responsibilities (to animals)? Prompted by an encounter with his cat, Jacques Derrida follows the figure of the animal, through a variety of texts, in order to make sensible the trace of "the animal" as it has appeared in Western traditions. Derrida's cat accompanies him as Derrida playfully, and attentively, deconstructs the rationalist, humanist discourses that structure Western philosophy.

Discourses, whose tenets reflect the systems of beliefs embedded within a culture, are often both hegemonic and invisible; at least for those who enjoy privileged positions within the culture, discourses may simply appear as common sense or common knowledge. Derrida argues that Western, humanist thinking has created a discourse around "the human" and that this discourse deploys a reductive figure of "the animal" to justify human supremacy and facilitate human exceptionalism. Human exceptionalism is the doctrine that humans' superiority to animals exempts humans from behaving humanely towards those

deemed non-human, and it is the hegemony of the discourse of human exceptionalism that Derrida contravenes.

Derrida interrupts by entering the discourse with “his” cat and creating a counter-narrative that troubles “the human” hegemony by redefining what it means to think. Derrida orients his intellectual work as surrender—he surrenders to the gaze of his cat and to his affectionate response to her presence: “the cat I am talking about is a real cat, truly, believe me, a little cat. The cat that looks at me naked and that is *truly a little cat*, this cat I am talking about...It comes to me as this irreplaceable living being that one day enters my space, into this place where it can encounter me, see me, even see me naked” (6-9, italics in original). The diminutive Derrida uses to describe his cat, she is little and truly a little cat, gestures toward affection, or affect, as the “thing...philosophy has, essentially, had to deprive itself of” (7). For Derrida, rationalist thinking hurries to “enclose and circumscribe the concept of the human as much as that of reason,” and it is through this movement toward enclosure that rationalist humanism fails to think (105).

While Derrida questions the ethics of humanist philosophy, Carey Wolfe questions the ethics of humanism. Wolfe argues that “the operative theories and procedures we now have for articulating the social and legal relation between ethics and action are inadequate” because humanism imbues discourses about human and/or animal rights with utilitarian and contractarian logics that are inherently speciesist and therefore flawed (192). Utilitarian approaches attempt to determine the morality of a given action by weighing the act’s aggregate benefit against its aggregate harm. Contractarian approaches evaluate a given (human or animal) subject’s ability to understand and comply with a social contract that stipulates reciprocity; if a subject receives kindness, that subject must understand their implied, moral responsibility to return it. When opponents of animal rights designate

animals as less capable of suffering than humans and decide that animals cannot enter moral contracts, animals are then seen as not only undeserving of rights but as incapable of bearing rights.

As Wolfe argues, rights discourse—like rationalist humanism—reaches an impasse; Wolfe proposes posthumanist theory as the way through: “because the discourse of speciesism... anchored in this material, institutional base, can be used to mark any social other, we need to understand that the ethical and philosophical urgency of confronting the institution of speciesism and crafting a posthumanist theory of the subject has *nothing to do with whether you like animals*” (7, italics in original). Wolfe’s strategic statement marks the necessity of attending to injustice at a structural level; however, as Tuxedo Stan’s campaign demonstrates, at a tactical level, how much “you” like an animal might matter very much.

Seriously Cute: Tuxedo Stan as a Moral Agent

Tuxedo Stan’s 2012-13 campaign pressed for improved protections for stray and feral cats in the Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM). While “cute” is a subjective, aesthetic judgment, numerous internet sites make claims like: “These 30 Animals With Their Adorable Miniature Versions Are The Cutest Thing Ever. Awwww” (“These 30 Animals”). From Tuxedo Stan’s kitten pictures to the plush versions of Tuxedo Stan, available for purchase on his website, Tuxedo Stan’s campaign positioned him within this cute culture (Chisolm “Official Tuxedo Stan Minion”).

The difference between Tuxedo Stan’s cute and the kind of cute invoked by pictures of animals with miniature animals—the difference that connects Tuxedo Stan’s cute to a moral or ethical position—is the narrative of political responsibility attached to Tuxedo Stan’s campaign. While existing animal protection laws in Halifax’s Animal Protection Act outlined some protections for animals, “there was a clear oversight in that issues related to

cats are not included” (ChisholmTuxedoStan.com). Hugh Chisholm, co-founder of the Tuxedo Party, further notes:

There are literally thousands of homeless cats — feral and abandoned— who live by their willpower in the back alleys and streets and bushes in HRM...But there is very little people can do if they want to help, because there is no pound. If there’s a lost or injured dog, you can call the pound and they will come and take the dog and give it a place to stay, and some food and care. But if you do the same thing with a cat, you get nothing, because there’s nothing in place. (Mombourquette)

Tuxedo Stan’s campaign mobilizes cute images that reveal the connection between unnoticed and unrelieved suffering. Proceeds from Tuxedo Party merchandise go toward Spay Day HRM, a charity dedicated to “assisting students and low-income families” whose financial situations may prevent them from paying for spay and neuter surgeries (Chisholm TuxedoStan.com).

According to his e-book [ME: The Tuxedo Stan Story](#), Stan “wanted to make a difference in the lives of tens of thousands of homeless, unneutered cats in [Halifax Regional Municipality]. We needed a low-cost spay/neuter clinic. We needed a Trap-Neuter-Return and Care program. We needed a sanctuary for homeless, unwanted strays to live out their lives in comfort” (Tuxedo Stanley and Chisholm 14). As does “his” memoir, [Tuxedo Stan’s Pledge of Compassion and Action](#) follows Young’s logic of political responsibility.

Although his participation is mediated by human organizers, Tuxedo Stan is a cat pressing legislators to “pledge to help the cats” by supporting “a comprehensive feline population control program to humanely control the feline population and prevent suffering” and by creating “an affordable and accessible spay/neuter program” (Chisholm TuxedoStan.com). While framing the feral cat population as a “problem” that must be “fixed” upholds discourses around controlling subjected populations’ reproduction, Tuxedo Stan’s campaign

also opens space for a counternarrative that destabilizes the human exceptionalism that encompasses his campaign.

A Different ‘Logic’, a Different Cultural Imaginary

As Tuxedo Stan launched his campaign in 2012, fellow feline Hank ran for the United States senate seat in Virginia – he received approximately 7,000 votes and placed third (Wyatt) – and “Mayor” Stubbs celebrated his 15th year as the honorary mayor of Talkeetna, Alaska, also in the United States:

Fifteen years ago, the citizens of Talkeetna (pop. 800) didn’t like the looks of their candidates for mayor. Around that same time resident Lauri Stec, manager of Nagley’s General Store, saw a box of kittens and decided to adopt one. She named him Stubbs because he didn’t have a tail and soon the whole town was in love with him. So smitten were they with this kitten, in fact, that they wrote him in for mayor instead of deciding on one of the two lesser candidates. (Friedman)

Though only Stan and Hank connect their candidacy to animal welfare activism, all three cats’ stories contribute to building a cultural imaginary that has drawn responses across social and news media.

Tuxedo Stan’s Facebook page has 19,000+ “likes,” and Stan supporters submit photographs of Tuxedo Stan “minions” spreading Tuxedo Stan’s message. The Tuxedo Party’s website maintains a photo gallery that documents “[Tuxedo Stan’s World Tour](#)”: “Tuxedo Stan’s Minions are currently on their world tour spreading his message of hope and compassion for felines around the globe” (Chisholm TuxedoStan.com). Each minion’s photo in the gallery represents humans’ ideological and financial support for Tuxedo Stan.

News media supported Tuxedo Stan, Hank for Senate, and Mayor Stubbs’s candidacies in a more ambiguous fashion. While Craig Medred argues that “Silly 'Alaska cat mayor' saga spotlights how easily the media can be scammed” (Medred), a CBC News video announced that Tuxedo Stan was “interested in sinking his claws into the top seat at City

Hall” and ready to “mark his territory around the mayor's seat” (“Tuxedo Stan the cat chases Halifax mayor chair”), and Lauren Strapagiel reported on Halifax’s “cuddliest would-be mayor.”

In an unexpected echo of Derrida’s language, as Derrida repeats that he is truly talking about a cat, truly a little cat, CNN journalist Anderson Cooper endorses Tuxedo Stan for mayor and follows his endorsement with this statement:

If he’s serious about a career in politics, maybe he should come to the United States. Just look at the mayor of Talkeetna, Alaska. That’s Stubbs the cat, and he’s been the mayor for 15 years. I’m not kidding...Not only that, but right now, as we speak, there is a cat running for Senate from Virginia. (Cooper)

As he introduces a “Hank for Senate” campaign video, again Cooper mentions that he is “not kidding.” While Cooper’s “not kidding” echoes Derrida’s “truly,” the difference in meanings is *différance*. For Derrida, his encounter with his cat is “a matter of developing another ‘logic’ of decision, of the response and of the event...a matter of reinscribing the *différance* between reaction and response, and hence this historicity of ethical, juridical, or political responsibility, within another thinking of life, of the living, within another relation of the living, to their own...reactional automaticity” (126). Derrida proceeds through the impasse, the limit he identifies within philosophical engagements with animals, by tracing the ways his little cat’s presence affects him. Derrida finds another logic, which is not logic but surrender, to accommodate what he, like Young, terms “political responsibility.”

Cooper, however, applies the hegemonic logic of human exceptionalism to his engagement with feline interlocutors, Tuxedo Stan, Hank for Senate, and Mayor Stubbs. Although Cooper’s segment, called “The RidicuList,” makes a pretense of political responsibility, it is different in kind from the pretense made in Tuxedo Stan’s campaign. As Derrida argues, a “pretense...even a simple pretense, consists in rendering a sensible trace

illegible or imperceptible” (135). Tuxedo Stan’s campaign pretends that Tuxedo Stan fits within humanist, hegemonic notions of mayoral candidacy and then mobilizes this cute pretense in aid of political responsibility; the pretense—the pretense in which Tuxedo Stan’s human fans and supporters engage—renders the “sensible” trace of human exceptionalism illegible, if not imperceptible. Cooper’s pretense, however, works to make legible the trace of human exceptionalism and so to reinscribe its discursive hegemony.

Discursively, the political potential of cute in Tuxedo Stan’s campaign is that Tuxedo Stan’s activism – like Derrida’s little cat – complicates humanist and posthumanist thinking about agency, about ethics, and about political responsibility. Thinking about animals may not change animals’ lives, but it may change (post)humans’ responses to these questions: Who can be a moral agent? How should moral agents – both individual and organizational, both human and animal – “think” about how they respond to structural social injustice?

Epilogue: A Political Response

Tuxedo Stan died of kidney cancer on 8 September 2013. Before he died, Tuxedo Stan’s campaign yielded improved cat protection legislation as well as a \$40,000 endowment to create a spay-and-neuter facility accessible to low-income families. Tuxedo Stan’s litter mate, Earl Grey, carries on Tuxedo Stan’s work. Earl Grey’s campaign platform expands the Tuxedo Party’s appeals for animal welfare, and Earl Grey maintains the Tuxedo Party’s presence on Facebook, on Twitter (@TuxedoParty and @TuxedoEarlGrey), and at TuxedoStan.com (Chisholm TuxedoStan.com).

On 27 February 2014, Agriculture Minister Keith Colwell of Nova Scotia released draft legislation whose standards of care

aim to prevent distress and cruelty to pets and to strengthen their protection. They...include proposals on companion animal restraints, outdoor care, shelters, companion animal pens and enclosures, abandonment of companion animals, as well

as the transportation and sale of companion animals...The standards also include cats, and the hope is to have legislation ready to introduce in the spring and enacted by the fall. (“Nova Scotia cracks down”)

As does Tuxedo Stan, in our companion imaginary Derrida’s little cat remains in play, for as long as we care to follow.

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