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Voicing the Fox:

Vulpine Bodies and the Zoopolitics of Listening

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Bachelor of Arts in Musicology

By

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I. Introduction

In her 1992 ethnography of a foxhunting community in New Jersey's Pine Barrens, Mary Hufford writes:

The fox [...], neither wholly dog nor wholly cat, mediates the oppositions it embodies: male and female, nature and culture, home and abroad, sociable and unsociable, food and not-food, insider and outsider, concrete and abstract. As a catlike dog on the margins of society, the fox also threatens the reality that rests on such agreed-upon distinctions.¹

Her situated account signals a pervasive historical trend that reaches much wider than the Mid-Atlantic; foxes have long occupied a liminal space in the Western cultural imaginary, favorites of storytellers, folklore, and mythology, yet vilified due in part to their “uncomfortable” proximity to humanness, particularly in behavior and appearance. At various times and on various accounts, foxes embody betweenness as the emblematic tricksters of folklore; foxes occupy the “borderline between edible field and inedible wild animals,” to the degree that eating a fox often carries with it the same taboo as human cannibalism; foxes come to be simultaneously gendered (depending on what they are positioned against, either male or female) while at the same time typifying androgyny (recall the “catlike canine”); foxes tend to bounce, both legally and colloquially, between the status of vermin and protected species.² In a sense, foxes seem to trade in ferality: not quite “domestic,” not quite “wild”; too close to be “nature,” yet too far to be “culture.”³ As suggested by these characterizations and the binaries Hufford supplies, humans

¹ Mary Hufford, *Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

² For a discussion of the trickster figure, see Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, “‘A Tolerated Margin of Mess’: The Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered,” *Journal of the Folklore Institute* 11, no. 3 (1975): 147-186; on nonhumans, language, and taboo, see Edmund Leach, “Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse,” *Anthrozoös* 2, no. 3 (1989): 161; on the various classifications of foxes in human thought, see Mary Hufford, “The Fox,” in *American Wildlife in Symbol and Story*, ed. Angus K. Gillespie and Jay Mechling, 163-202, Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1987.

³ Greg Garrard, “Ferality Tales,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism*, ed. Greg Garrard (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199742929.013.018.

have particular trouble apprehending those they perceive as “charming but a thief,” as “alluring but a ‘stinky’ pest,” and, paradoxically under anthropocentric regimes, as “an animal that is intelligent.”⁴

However, though the fox may be the so-called “enemy of boundaries,” it is important to remember that these boundaries are distinctly of a human nature, imposed from without. Any boundary transgressions foxes may appear to make are only transgressions insofar as one subscribes to anthropocentric constructions of boundaries, taxonomies, and knowledge. In other words, foxes remain liminal figures in human minds *not* on account of an essential ontological ambiguity internal to foxiness, but rather due to a failure of *Anthropos* to engage with foxes on their own individualized and situated terms.

By advancing a “specific” (meaning species-specific) approach to representational analysis, this project gives close attention to how red foxes (those we call *Vulpes vulpes*) have been constituted through sound in Western cultural contexts. Species studies are common in the biological sciences, but far less so in the humanities where the literary or artistic representations of other species are often stand-ins for, at base, human characters. Neel Ahuja argues that “species studies offers new tools for rethinking transnational circuits of power and identity. By tracing the circulation of nonhuman species as both figures and materialized bodies within the circuits of imperial biopower,” Ahuja suggests that “species critique helps scholars reevaluate ‘minority’ discourses and enrich histories of imperial encounters.”⁵ Similar to how music scholars have articulated how representations of race, gender, and sexuality can have pernicious

⁴ Martin Wallen, *Fox* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 37-40.

⁵ Neel Ahuja, “Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World,” *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 557.

effects on the groups such representations presume to index, in expanding such lines of inquiry as Ahuja's to musicological work, studies of "musical representations of femininity," might provide solid methodological ground for a study of, for example, "musical representations of *felininity*."

Like problematic performances of other "Others," musical characterizations of other animals often rely on preexisting, stereotypical notions of species or kind, and often exoticize, infantilize, and generalize their subjects, adhering to notions of difference based in dominant cultural discourse. This approach, then, is concerned with how false—or at least non-nuanced—characterizations, depictions, and conceptions of a certain species have been constructed, and the tangible, material impacts these portrayals have on the lives of those meant to be represented. As a result, just as the discipline of critical animal studies has sought to bring practical application to scholarship that chooses other animals as its subjects (as opposed to the more anthropocentric "animal" and "human-animal" studies), and unlike a great deal of literature on aesthetic practice only interested in other animals insofar as they are "good to think [with]," a specific approach to representational analysis takes its urgency from a desire to improve the real-world conditions experienced by other species by prioritizing notions of difference that are usually disregarded.⁶

In centering my analyses around a specific group of animals—red foxes—I hope to resist defaulting to "the animal" as an essentialized category. Investigations mounted on representations of "the animal," particularly in humanistic approaches, often subsume vast varieties of species life under a catch-all umbrella term, generalizing to a point where "other animals" simply become a homogenized Other. This discursive tendency is the same that

⁶ Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Totemism*, trans. Rodney Needham (Boston: Beacon, 1962), 89.

prompted Jacques Derrida in his famous lectures on the subject to replace “l’animal” with “l’animot,” signaling through its wordplay “neither a species nor a gender nor an individual,” but an “irreducible living multiplicity of mortals” contained in that common label of alterity.⁷ In order to do justice to species difference, I actively refute the violent, effacing anthropocentrism that draws a line between “the human” and “the animal.”

This work also stems from an implicit conviction that, as my advisor remarked in one of our discussions over the course of this project, “foxes are people.” Historically, foxes have garnered equal parts admiration and disgust from humans; sentiments which only become amplified as we translate them into various human media. The hypocritical proximity to humanness that we afford red foxes in our mythologies (and perhaps to a greater extent, our cultural commodities) is starkly contrasted with their historical categorization as pests, as well as the fur trade that takes so many of their lives. Although, we might ask, are “pests” not liminal figures themselves, situated as they are between constructions of “civilization” and “wilderness”?

Crucially, my interest in red foxes also mirrors aspects of anthropologist Anna Tsing’s motivation for studying the matsutake mushroom as it exists within globalized commodity chains; just as Tsing’s matsutake flourishes under what are usually regarded as destructive anthropogenic interventions, red foxes have proved time and again their penchant for resilience despite the havoc capitalism continues to wreak on global ecologies (indeed, even as I write this, I come across Tsing’s quotation of a Japanese mushroom importer, remarking that “Matsutake

⁷ “Mot” in French is “word”; the addition of this suffix results in “l’animot” sounding much like “animaux” (the plural of “l’animal”). Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. Marie-Louise Mallet and trans. David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 41.

are like people”).⁸ With a habitat distribution encompassing practically the entire northern hemisphere, they thrive not only in biomes considered relatively distant from direct human contact (such as forests), but also in bustling urban centers built by humans as well. What lessons can we learn from those who themselves have learned to live in the midst of degraded, precarious neoliberal meccas?

With red foxes at the center of my inquiry, I give primary attention in this project to three cultural sites wherein acts of “voicing” occur. My deployment of the term “voicing” here denotes not only a fluid process-in-action, but also remains intentionally fuzzy and multivalent; voicing can and often does take many disparate forms, only some of which involve musical behavior of the traditional sort. Sites of voicing, or “performance[s] of claims to voice,” need only entail a projection of voice by a (perceived) subject onto some sort of (perceived) object.⁹ In other words, a site of voicing may be any case where the voice heard does not emanate from the individual or group that is being spoken for, such is the case in the human voicings of other animals I highlight here.

I begin by locating the red fox as a liminal figure in the early twentieth-century European musical imaginary, showing how Leoš Janáček’s 1924 opera *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (*The Cunning Little Vixen*) situates its titular fox within a decisively folkloric tradition through recourse to representational strategies reliant on stereotypes derived from Aesopian, and later Reynardian, traditions of “animal fable.” I contend that sound in *Bystrouška* functions as a tool

⁸ Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 8.

⁹ Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel, “Introduction: Voice Studies Now,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Voice Studies*, edited by Nina Sun Eidsheim and Katherine Meizel, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019). DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199982295.013.36.

to signal not only species difference, but differences in moral status by analyzing how Janáček articulates “foxiness” during the opera’s Act I Finale.

Next, I interpret anthropologist Mary Hufford’s account of a New Jersey foxhunting community through Steven Feld’s theorizations of acoustemology. Acoustemology advocates “listening to histories of listening” and posits the sonic as a relational site of knowledge-production, attending to the complex webs of multi-/inter-species politics that often accompany practices of listening and storytelling. For Feld, acoustemology is “grounded in the basic assumption that life is shared with others-in-relation, with numerous sources of action that are variously human, nonhuman, living, nonliving, organic, or technological.”¹⁰ By identifying the ways in which Pine Barrens foxhunting articulates a relational zoopolitics of valuation predicated on species membership, I show how assessments of nonhuman vocality operate within the logics of the chase. Additionally, highlighting contradictions inherent in epistemologies of the hunt—wherein the well-being of foxes is prioritized even as they are relentlessly pursued for sport—I ask, what might be the implications of “giving voice” to those caught up in the violent human tradition of foxhunting, be they canine, human, or otherwise? Further, how might these seemingly reverential anthropomorphisms obscure more insidious hierarchies of transspecies power relations?

Finally, by way of conclusion, I pivot to social media ethnography to discuss a 2011 viral YouTube video taken of Kevie, a red fox rescued from a fur farm. Titled “Kevie sings a pretty song,” the video depicts Kevie vocalizing while lying on the floor of a room in the home of her human caretaker. While the chirps and trills Kevie voices are presumably meant to be in the

¹⁰ Steven Feld, “Acoustemology,” in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 12-21.

service of intraspecific communication, user comments display an overwhelming interpretation of this behavior as “singing.” Reading these interpretations as a paradoxical bestowal of personhood qua the “otherworldly” singing voice and positioning the clip next to a recent explosion in popularity of internet videos and other content featuring rescue foxes, I draw attention to a tendency in popular discourse about other animals that often consists in the infantilization and exoticization of those humans presume to “speak for.”

My overall approach to these three sites is anchored in performance studies scholar Una Chaudhuri’s concept of *zooësis*, which I adopt to refer to that which “consists of the myriad performance and semiotic elements involved in and around the vast field of *cultural animal practices*.” As “the discourse of animality in human life,” Chaudhuri’s conception of *zooësis* is unbounded by notions of a conventional performance space. While Chaudhuri’s initial usage of the term is accompanied by analyses of theater performances, Chaudhuri notes that, along with the literary and dramatic, *zooësis* also encompasses “such ubiquitous or isolated *social practices* as petkeeping, cockfighting, dog shows, equestrian displays, rodeos, bullfighting, animal sacrifice, hunting, animal slaughter, and meat-eating.” As *zooësis* comprises “both our actual and our imaginative interactions with non-human animals,” Chaudhuri stresses that “its effects permeate our social, psychological, and material existence.”¹¹ In this sense, operatic performance, foxhunting, and participation in internet video culture all fall under *zooësis*’ conceptual umbrella.

Here, though I subscribe to Chaudhuri’s arguments maintaining the unavoidable ubiquity of “zooëtic” acts in the human day-to-day, I am in agreement—at least partially—with John

¹¹ Una Chaudhuri, “Animal Geographies: Zooësis and the Space of Modern Drama,” *Modern Drama* 46, no. 4 (2003): 647.

Berger when he argues that other animals have largely “disappeared” from modern human life, with “real” encounters with other species having been replaced with representations and other such “animals of the mind” as the animated cartoon, the stuffed animal, and the carefully-edited wildlife documentary (not to mention the institutional zoo, which forms the basis of Berger’s critique).¹² The “animal-as-motif” in artistic and cultural expression that Berger calls attention to has been widely studied; however, not nearly as much attention has been paid to how “the animal” (-as-character, -as-plot-device, -as-sound-object) reflexively informs our cultural perceptions of not only “the animal” as a category, but *other animals* (as diverse individual agents) as well.¹³

While I do not dispute the fact that our animal simulacra are often more present in the cultural imaginary than the living individuals they presume to represent, I contend that these instances these instances of vulpine zooësis I highlight—namely, musical representation, socio-nature-cultural traditions of hunting, listening, and storytelling, and anthropomorphic appeals to personhood via those who co-construct public discourses of animality—are necessarily *zoopolitical*. Borrowing from Fabián Ludueña’s deployment of the (originally Derridean) term, I use zoopolitics to refer to those actions, institutions, and webs of relations in the service of excluding certain bodies from “the political community of humans.” Here, the “humans” that comprise a given political community are more or less legal persons, or more specifically, those that are considered and/or treated as human within anthropocentric regimes, regardless of actual species membership. Those excluded by a selective zoopolitics can be and, indeed, are often

¹² John Berger, “Why Look at Animals?,” in *About Looking* (New York: Vintage International, 1980), 15.

¹³ A notable exception can be found in Jody Berland’s recent monograph *Virtual Menageries: Animals as Mediators in Network Cultures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2019).

human. Zoopolitics is, in essence, a politics of *dehumanization* enacted by a community that grants the human legal, moral, and ontological priority. Thus, (although here I might extend Ludueña’s conception of the term further than initially theorized) those excluded via zoopolitics from such communities can be marginalized humans, nonhuman animals, or other forms of life.¹⁴

Following literary scholar Susan McHugh’s call in her work on literary “animal fictions” to construct a proper “narrative ethology” to investigate how “forms of representation matter to the development of theories of species life” inasmuch as they “deconstruct disciplinary habits of mind via their ‘metonymic, not metaphoric’ strategies,” I argue for the serious examination of the ways in which musico-sonic representation might operate to conceal (as well as reveal) violent zoopolitical demarcations, often to the detriment of those animals represented.¹⁵

Ultimately, placing seemingly disparate sites of performance (the operatic stage, a New Jersey forest, and virtual internet discourse) together in conversation enables us to think more critically about the extent to which we continually silence the voices of other animals with our own, and seeks to provide the conceptual foundations with which we may begin to *listen to* histories of interspecific violence, both epistemic and corporeal.

¹⁴ “[...] la comunidad política de los hombres.” Ludueña characterizes his *zoopolítica* as the “original operation on animal life despite—or in a conflicting relation with—its ekstasis towards hominization. (la “operación originaria sobre la vida animal a pesar de—o en conflictiva relación con—su éxtasis hacia la hominización.”). He goes on to suggest that, in this way, “politics is originally zoopolitical, as it involves a foundational decision on how to direct the human animal in its becoming-man” (“En ese sentido, la política es originariamente zoopolítica pues implica una decisión fundacional acerca de cómo dirigir al animal humano en su devenir hombre”). Fabián Ludueña Romandini, *La comunidad de los espectros: 1. Antropotecnica* (Buenos Aires: Miño y Dávila, 2010): 12-13. Rough English translations here by myself.

¹⁵ Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 218.

II. The Operatic Fox

Though the so-called “animal turn” in the humanities has produced an exciting output of scholarship within the past few decades, traditional music scholarship has for the most part neglected such approaches. Subfields such as sounds studies and ecomusicology have been instrumental in the recent infusion of “posthumanism” into music studies, but direct attention to the ways in which we implicate other animals in our musicking, as well as a careful examination of the ethical and political consequences of sonically representing other animals—a true “animal turn”—has largely fallen by the wayside. Notable exceptions include the self-styled “zoömusicologists,” a camp of artists and scholars following François-Bernard Mâche’s call to investigate the “music-making capacities” of other species; however, these projects are largely centered around ethological questions of vocalizations in other animals rather than human cultural constructions.¹⁶ Rachel Mundy’s profoundly generative research tracking how the voices and bodies of other animals have served to ground human notions of musical taxonomy and categorical difference is perhaps one of the most significant examples of recent musicological work that has seriously pushed to problematize how we involve other animals in our musical practices. Situating my current project within Mundy’s playfully corrective “animanities,” it is due in part to this perceived lacuna of studies concerned with other animals in music scholarship that I begin with the familiar territory of operatic performance.¹⁷

¹⁶ Though Dario Martinelli imagines a broad definition of the zoömusicological—encompassing the anthropological/theoretical as well as the empirical/ethological—aside from Emily Doolittle’s early historical surveys, a vast majority of this work has been focused on observing and identifying “musical” behaviors in other animals. Dario Martinelli, “Introduction (to the issue and to zoomusicology),” *Revista Transcultural de Música* 12 (2008). <https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/articulo/93/introduction-to-the-issue-and-to-zoomusicology>.

¹⁷ Mundy describes the “animanities” as “an intervention in the postwar, postmodern, posthuman condition of present-day humanism,” an endeavor that hopes to do justice to questions of difference neglected by the current humanitarian project. She goes on to say that “the problems of musical knowledge described in [*Animal*

Musical imitations of other species are nearly ubiquitous in cultural landscapes across the globe. Emily Doolittle even goes so far to suggest that “imitations of animal songs may not only have been present in the earliest human music, but may even have been its origin.”¹⁸

Unsurprisingly, birdsong is perhaps the most widely studied nonhuman musical phenomenon in the context of music composition and scholarship, given its seemingly close proximity to human musical practices. In the tradition of Western concert music alone, there exists a long history of weaving birdsong into compositions; Janequin, Handel, Vivaldi, Beethoven, and Messiaen are only some of the most notable “canonical” figures to do this. A great number of popular, folk, and Indigenous musical traditions have perhaps even more documented instances of nonhuman references in song and dance.¹⁹

Musical representation, particularly mimesis, can seem to “give voice” to something outside our usual human experience. This practice usually only occurs through a reframing of the nonhuman element through human musical representation. In other words, as Martin Daughtry explains, “[...] a performance of Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf* may occasionally sound like a wolf or a duck, but it doesn’t look or smell like a wolf or a duck [...] [it] references the nonhuman world chiefly through sound.”²⁰ Here, however, I am more interested in instances of

Musicalities] are not answered by the disciplinary boundaries of the humanities.” Rachel Mundy, *Animal Musicalities: Birds, Beasts, and Evolutionary Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2018), 169.

¹⁸ However, this is far from an undisputed claim—see Gary Tomlinson, *A Million Years of Music: The Emergence of Human Modernity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2015) and Nils L. Wallin, Björn Merker, and Steven Brown, *The Origins of Music* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000). Emily Doolittle, “Crickets in the Concert Hall: A History of Animals in Western Music,” *Revista Transcultural de Música* 12 (2008). <https://www.sibetrans.com/trans/articulo/94/crickets-in-the-concert-hall-a-history-of-animals-in-western-music>.

¹⁹ Doolittle, “Crickets in the Concert Hall.”

²⁰ Martin Daughtry, “Did Music Cause the End of the World?,” *Transposition* Hors-série 2 (2020). <https://doi.org/10.4000/transposition.5192>.

musical representation that are perhaps not meant to overtly mimic a specific animal's cry or song: in other words, representations of species that lack an easily perceivable sonic referent. For example, while a composer might fashion a musical imitation of a wolf's howl, I am more concerned with how a composer might evoke "the wolf" in a less direct manner. These references by gesture, invocation, and "air" often rely heavily on preexisting notions of a species or kind, based in cultural metaphor and memory (the fox as "sneaky," the "sinister seduction" of the snake, etc.). As we shall see, the inability to rely on mimetic representation for certain species makes evident a number of embedded assumptions on how a particular animal should properly "sound"—the very notions of categorical difference that Mundy illuminates.

Many representational strategies used to depict red foxes fall back on stereotypes derived from Aesopian, and later Reynardian, traditions of the "animal fable" (e.g. the fox as "sneaky," "cunning," "untrustworthy").²¹ In this section, I examine one particular micro-performance of "foxiness" in the context of Leoš Janáček's opera *The Cunning Little Vixen*, giving close attention to how Janáček "voices the fox" through his compositional and textual choices.²² In doing so, I hope to provide some groundwork for what a larger-scale analysis of species representation might look like, as well as to make more clear the ways in which humans have

²¹ The Greek myth of the Teumessian fox arguably represents the first recorded story in the West wherein a fox plays a significant role; however the figure of the fox in Aesop's *Fables* in the 5th century, which would motivate the many iterations of Reynard the Fox from the 12th century onward, has proved the most influential on modern notions of fictional "foxiness." See Wallen (*Fox*) for a general overview of foxes in Western cultures, and Varty (*Reynard, Renart, Reinaert and Other Foxes in Medieval England*) for a detailed iconographic history of the Medieval Reynardian fox.

²² Though representations of many nonhuman animals are generalizations under the catch-all "animal" (i.e., most creative processes rarely take species-specific approaches to the development of the work), I choose to focus on a specific group of animals (red foxes) in order to do justice to difference across species lines. Even this might be too general—the animals we call "foxes" are in fact made up of, on some counts, upwards of thirty individual species. Out of these, only about twelve "true foxes" occupy the genus *Vulpes* (we might ask, why are some foxes "true" while others are not?). However, many artists—Western composers in particular—rarely seek to depict anything other than the red fox, so this approach will suffice for my current purposes.

specifically constructed “foxiness” in ways that we take for granted, insofar as we often ideologically ascribe characteristics to foxes that we ourselves have created over time.

I am not making the case that a species-specific approach should myopically ignore representations of other animals besides the one in question; so pervasive is this category of “the animal” that, historically, musical depictions of (and popular discourse about) other animals conflate many different lives under the aegis of the “beastly” or “creaturely.”²³ However, by centering our analyses on how particular instances of representation have affected a specific group of animals, we can begin to unpack how “the animal” has operated to obscure individuals. Though I give primary attention to foxes here, in many instances (such as so-called “beast fables” and “animal operas”) we must necessarily investigate the musical multispecies event: a vixen persuading hens to revolt against their rooster, a cat and goat saving a cock from a fox (as can be seen in Stravinsky’s opera-ballet-burlesque *Renard*), and so on. In such situations, the positioning of animals against and beside one another can often reveal how traditions of thought have influenced how we think about such animals. In musical contexts, sound becomes a tool to signal not only species difference, but differences in moral status; the sonic encodes a subtle yet superficially convincing set of instructions on how to hierarchically organize the animal figures seen on stage.

The Cunning Little Vixen

Příhody lišky Bystroušky (*Adventures of Vixen Sharp-Ears*, or more commonly, *The Cunning Little Vixen*) is an opera in three acts by Czech composer Leoš Janáček, completed in

²³ Such as in Ravel’s *L’enfant et les sortilèges* or Saint-Saëns’ *Le carnaval des animaux*, for example.

1924. Janáček wrote the libretto to the opera himself, though it is heavily based on Rudolf Těsnohlídek's *Liška Bystrouška*, a comic strip serialized in Czech newspaper *Lidové noviny* before being published as a novel in 1921. Těsnohlídek's novel tells the story of a vixen captured and raised by a forester as a cub before escaping and returning to the forest, where she meets another fox and raises a family. Těsnohlídek's prose is itself based off a collection of cartoon drawings by painter Stanislav Lolek, which accompany the text in both the comic strip and the novel. It was after the publication of the novel version of *Liška Bystrouška* that Janáček began work on his opera. The first two acts of Janáček's *Příhody lišky Bystroušky* (hereafter *Bystrouška*) more or less follow the events of the novel, though the third departs from strict correspondence to the story's temporal organization—Janáček chose to reorder and modify passages from Těsnohlídek's original, as well as to insert new narrative material as he saw fit.²⁴

Bystrouška epitomizes the musical “animal play,” a dramatic form that, as Una Chaudhuri remarks, “often contextualize[s] [...] interspecies encounters within ‘eco-sites,’ heterotopias of ‘nature’ in culture.”²⁵ During a period in Czech literature when animal satire was widespread as a genre, and often par for the course for most literary endeavors involving anthropomorphized nonhuman animals, Janáček's opera seems to have been *sui generis*. In contrast to the usual methods of employing other animals to comment humorously or ironically on human foibles and behavior, *Bystrouška* constantly switches between instances of human-to-human interaction to ones involving interactions between other animals—even at times mixing the two, such as when lines by a nonhuman character are sung seemingly in response to those of

²⁴ John Tyrrell, “The Cunning Little Vixen,” *Grove Music Online*, 2002, <https://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-5000008664>.

²⁵ Chaudhuri, “Animal Geographies,” 651.

a human character, or vice versa. Despite *Bystrouška*'s originality in this regard, criticisms at the time of the opera's premiere leveled at Janáček's treatment of the interaction between human and nonhuman worlds and characters, as well as numerous comparisons to contemporaneous works of other animal satire and fables (such as the stories of Rudyard Kipling or Edmund Rostand's 1910 play *Chantecler*), indicate that the reception of the opera was colored by the literary trends of the historical time and place.²⁶

Even in subsequent productions of the opera following its premiere, this hybrid of human and nonhuman worlds proved to be an issue for critics and directors alike. Ota Zítek, who directed the opera's 1924 premiere in Brno as well as various productions of the work up until 1947, felt the need to address this perceived crux at the outset of his final production of *Bystrouška*:

The first production was stylised. [Eduard] Milén worked out set designs and costumes that hinted at a stylisation with which Janáček and [I] were in complete agreement. After the performance, however, Dr. Vladimír Helfert correctly pointed out [...] that some sort of difference must be created between the animal world and human world: possibly that the animals should be separated from the humans in order that the audience could have a clearer sense of the action.²⁷

That this question of distinction between the human and nonhuman was of such central importance to so many betrays how pervasive humanist outlooks concerning other animals were in the minds of early-to-mid-twentieth-century audiences. While Janáček's libretto is admittedly cryptic at points, lacking in narrative exposition—he often omitted lines from Těsnohlídek's story that would have otherwise given important context—the discomfort felt by audiences as a

²⁶ Jennifer Sheppard, "How the *Vixen* Lost its Mores: Gesture and Music in Janáček's Animal Opera," *Cambridge Opera Journal* 22, no. 2 (2010): 147-174.

²⁷ Ota Zítek, "K nové inscenaci Lišky Bystroušky," *Svobodné noviny* (Prague), February 15, 1947.

result of being unable to clearly delineate human and nonhuman interactions could also speak to an underlying fear of the erasure of the human as sovereign over the rest of the animal kingdom.

Different productions of the opera have chosen to navigate the work's unique anthropomorphism in various ways. Walter Felsenstein opted to have the performers wear "realistic" costumes in his 1956 Berlin production, a decision Geoffrey Chew interprets as a move towards "minimizing anthropomorphism." On the other hand, versions such as Jonathan Miller's 1975 Glyndebourne production have chosen to clothe the characters in entirely human garb, resulting in little to no visual marking of the characters as "animals."²⁸ However, regardless of choices in costume design (an aesthetic space in which the nonhuman is arguably difficult to represent convincingly on stage), Janáček's libretto anthropomorphizes the animal cast (or perhaps more accurately, *zoomorphizes* the *human* cast) to different degrees at different times—his descriptions of the characters' behaviors shift constantly between the human and nonhuman. Interestingly, while Janáček alters the original tone and degree of explicit satire present in the Těsnohlídek story and Lolek drawings dramatically in places, this variability in the anthropomorphic qualities of the characters is consistent throughout the source material, originating in Lolek's cartoons. Chew, commenting on Lolek's progression of thirteen pictures in which the Vixen is shown evicting a Badger from its sett by urinating in it (a scene kept by Janáček almost in its entirety), remarks that

They alternate unstably between naturalistic observation and anthropomorphism. The first three pictures launch the narrative, with the fox and badger both reacting to a shower of rain—the badger emerging (picture 2), retreating (3), and thus drawing the attention of the fox to the sett. Next, the animals are shown with human attributes: the badger contentedly smokes a long pipe (4) and repels the intruder with a whip (5), and the fox creates a scene with melodramatic human gestures (6). Anthropomorphism is abandoned,

²⁸ Geoffrey Chew, "The Adventures of 'The Cunning Little Vixen': Leoš Janáček, Max Brod and Their Predecessors," *Austrian Studies* 17 (2009): 128.

with the fox spraying the sett with a few drops of urine (7), the badger reacting strongly (8), and the fox then fouling the sett with a deluge of urine (9-10), but it returns, with the badger (pipe in hand) spitting disgustedly (11), and leaving the sett with pipe and rolled-up mat (12), watched from a distance by the fox. Finally the fox is installed in the sett (13).²⁹

Though I question Chew's liberal use of "anthropomorphism" as a concept here, starting with his a priori assumption that "naturalistic observation" does not entail anthropomorphisms, Janáček's preservation of this "unstable alternation" between "the animal" as observed in nature and "the animal" as fictionally anthropomorphized forces the audience to switch their evaluative schema constantly in order to interpret the characters' actions. The blurring of lines between the human and nonhuman can be seen to occur at multiple levels; not only are the "human" and "animal" worlds not explicitly separated at the level of scene and plot (as discussed above), but the anthropomorphism of the nonhuman characters operates on a sliding scale, confounding what is really and truly "human."

Jennifer Sheppard has argued that by rejecting a satiric framing for the opera, Janáček instills a sort of "amorality" into the work:

[...] commentary from early critics hints at how *Bystrouška* bends the customary rules of beast fables and animal satire. Though the opera's animals are anthropomorphized, they do not always provide the moral or the satirical gloss which results in the expected critique of human folly. Janáček's opera—as Těsnohlídek's novella—also brings together both animal and human characters, breaking the convention that has animal fables and satires depict animals alone. The issues of the combined animal and human worlds and of Janáček's inconsistent use of the opera's animals as satiric devices thus complicate *Bystrouška*'s position relative to other contemporary animal satires, and thereby blur the opera's moral message.³⁰

While a discussion the opera's "moral message" is beyond the scope of this paper (for one, I would want to trouble Sheppard's prescription of "amorality"), I argue that a residual "comedic

²⁹ Chew, "The Adventures of 'The Cunning Little Vixen'," 118.

³⁰ Sheppard, "How the *Vixen* Lost its Mores," 153.

framing” adopted from the tradition of so-called “animal fable” is not as absent here as Sheppard contends. Even though Janáček may stray from the overtly satirical fare that was commonplace among “animal fables,” many of the opera’s scenes fall back on stereotypical interactions often presented as comical, such as the Finale to Act I, wherein the Vixen goes on a hen-killing spree as part of her escape from the Forester.

Act I Finale: A “Vixen” in the Henhouse

My intent here is not to provide an exhaustive musical analysis of this scene, but to draw attention to a few particular strategies Janáček employs in characterizing his animals. In doing so, I hope to highlight how these strategies are predicated upon certain attitudes held towards other species. Further, I contend the scene is notable in this regard for at least three reasons. First, Janáček confers a different degree of personhood upon the Cock and Hens than the Vixen through their vocal lines and sonic profiles. Second, Janáček’s textual characterization of the Vixen heavily relies on preconceived notions of “foxiness,” both drawn from “naturalistic” observation and from folkloric characterizations stemming from Aesop and later stories featuring Reynard. And third, the scene—and the opera as a whole—capitalizes on a conventional understanding that the presence of other animals in a musical work indexes non-seriousness, whimsicality, and childishness.

The scene plays out in much the same way as the Aesopian/Reynardian tradition of “fox stories” would have it: the Vixen, trapped in the Forester’s yard, attempts to persuade the Hens to rise up against the domineering oppressor Cock (“Hled’te, sestry, jakého máte vůdce! / Friends,

sisters, abolish the old order!”).³¹ This could be read simultaneously as an argument to rise up against patriarchal domination, as appealing to the “fellow woman,” and/or as a class revolt. When this attempt fails to convince the assembly, the Vixen feigns death in order to lure the Cock into reach, before proceeding to kill him and the (now panicked) Hens.

Throughout the scene, the Hens, bar the Cock’s primary mate, the crested hen Chocholka, are sung by chorus in tight rhythmic unison, construing the group as a monolithic assembly line of subordinates ready to churn out eggs. This is further and more explicitly accomplished through their simple vocal lines—of which there are only three—repeated at least twice by the chorus (“My pracujem, snášime. / “We work, we lay eggs.”; “Bez kohóta?” / “Without a rooster?”; “Vida!” / “You see!”). While Chocholka and the Cock enjoy a bit more variety, Janáček has the former deliver a portion of her lines as onomatopoeic imitations, fashioned after chicken calls. The first instance of these takes the form of a series of trills outlining a B-flat major triad; here “Trrp!” (roughly, “Suffer!”) functions as both a coherent linguistic utterance as well as a signifier for something like a chicken vocalization. After the Vixen’s deception is revealed however, Janáček opts to have Chocholka’s panicked cries come out as “kokokodáks” and “ko kos,” relinquishing any semantic content for fetishized “chicken” sounds (Ex. 1).³²

³¹ This and all subsequent English translations of Janáček’s libretto are from Soňa Vávrová’s 1990 translation for Supraphon Records. Soňa Vávrová, “Catalogue: Librettos for Download,” Supraphon, 1990, accessed October 12, 2020, <https://www.supraphon.com/catalogue/libretto>.

³² This co-opting of the perceived sonic characteristics of a communicative vocalization in order to signify an Other might be compared with how “mock” languages are used in instances of racist discourse. Elaine Chun describes how “Mock Asian,” which problematically imitates tonal languages such as Mandarin or Vietnamese, is often deployed xenophobically by a White hegemonic majority. Elaine Chun, “The Meaning of Ching-Chong: Language, Racism, and Response in New Media,” in *Raciolinguistics: How Language Shapes Our Ideas about Race*, eds. H. Samy Alim, Arnetha F. Ball, and John R. Rickford (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 81-96.

46 Più mosso. $\text{♩} = 160$

Chocholka (běhá jak pomatená). (Die Försterin, entsetzt, stürzt aus dem Haus)
Schopfhennie (rennt wie besessen hin und her) (pi. revírníková vyběhne zděšena)

Ch. Sch. Koko.ko-dák! Koko.ko-dák!
 Koko-ko-dák! Ko.ko-ko-dák!

Ob. Fl. 8.....

VI. Cl. Cor. #

Ch. Sch. Ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko,
 Ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko, ko-ko,

Cl. Vla. 8.....

Ex. 1. Chocholka's onomatopoeic vocal lines.

Significantly, neither the Vixen nor the Cock are profiled in the same way. Unlike Chocholka and the rest of the Hens, these two are never reduced to their typical sonic characteristics. In the case of the Cock, he resists the objectification that his feminine counterparts must undergo. The Vixen, however, directly confounds this reading along strictly gendered lines. Her status as the titular character seems to require that she not be simplified as sound qua sound, but—perhaps more significantly—it is also her status as a fox that, in practice, makes it difficult to do so. Unlike avian vocalizations (which Chocholka and the Hens approximate), vulpine vocalizations (barks, screams, yips) prove unwieldy to incorporate into a traditional concert setting. Further, in contrast to birds and other animals that often make musical appearances on stage, foxes have not historically been conceived of in the cultural imaginary via their sounds; when they are present, they are more often portrayed through the visual mode, often accompanied by behavioral stereotypes of “cleverness” and the like.

The sounds of the voice, particularly when heard by hegemonic ears as non-normative, are often co-opted in the service of exclusion and subjugation. In her explorations of how the voice served to constitute varying definitions of personhood in nineteenth-century Colombia, Ana María Ochoa reminds us that, “for Creoles and Europeans, sounding like animals was the sign of a lowly human condition, used for processes of racialization through a politics of representation.” She describes how, for Western travelers on the Magdalena River, “howls were used to understand the boundary or relation between the human and the nonhuman,” and were mobilized as “a fundamental means to distinguish between the human and nonhuman in order to ‘direct the human animal in its becoming man.’”³³ In the context of *Bystrouška*, we can see Janáček using this logic to, in effect, dehumanize the Hens by having them “sound like animals.” At the same time, he “humanizes” the Vixen by distancing her from any sounds a real fox might ostensibly make, thus affirming her personhood by containing her to the (human) operatic mode.³⁴

However, though the Vixen might remain *musically* proximate to the human here, Janáček’s reliance on hackneyed representations of the fox in this scene serves to throw her status as a “person” into question. Although *Bystrouška* doubtless builds on the “animal fable” folkloric tradition—for example, historian Charles Susskind observes a common thread of the “sly fox trope” between the opera and Aesop’s fables—Sheppard notes that

Czech critics of the early productions thought the kinship between Janáček’s vixen and her fabled cousin more removed. “Much to my surprise,” Doležil wrote, “the foremost

³³ Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 11-12, 5.

³⁴ Though I lack the room to discuss this here, this “humanizing” of the Vixen can be seen elsewhere in the opera; for example, the dream of her transformation into a maiden earlier in Act I, or when the Schoolmaster confuses a sunflower—behind which the Vixen is hidden—for his childhood beloved, Terynka, in Act II.

characteristic trait of her slyness, which operates so wittily both in our own and in foreign fables and stories, was not used very much in the anthropomorphization of this fox.” [...] Although in English titles Janáček’s little vixen is “cunning,” and in German she is *schlau* (shrewd), the Czech *bystrouškový* means sharp-eared. Těsnohlídek had actually called her *bystronožký* (fleet-footed), but the typesetter at the newspaper misread the word and from then on the vixen’s name became “sharp-ears.”³⁵

While it may be the case that the opera as a whole refrains from simply transplanting elements from the Vixen’s “fabled cousin,” the Act I Finale is certainly an exception. Much of this scene simply serves to reaffirm the stereotypical “fox in the henhouse” trope, playing off an observed tendency of many predators (red foxes included) to surplus kill when confronted with excess prey. Colloquially this is often called “henhouse syndrome,” and results in the predator killing more animals than they can eat. Often, they then cache their prey for later consumption, or abandon them if this is not practical.³⁶

Although this tendency is a survival mechanism, it has often been used as an excuse to vilify foxes who find their way into chicken coops. In an act of pure malice, the accounts go, the fox indiscriminately slaughters the entire brood, taking only one or two hens with them. Foxes are often characterized in this manner, depicted “as burglars and vermin, filthy intruders into a pristine ecology, representing an insidious threat waiting to exploit any defensive weakness.”³⁷ Putting aside for now the zoopolitics behind such a selective valuation of a species based on utility value (foxes are “vermin,” because they harm human property, in the form of chickens), one can see this line of thought play out in the stories of Reynard, for example, where the titular

³⁵ Sheppard, “How the *Vixen* Lost its Mores,” 56-7.

³⁶ Hans Kruuk, “Surplus killing by carnivores,” *Journal of Zoology* 166, no. 2 (1972): 233-244.

³⁷ Wallen, *Fox*, 35. Kate Stewart and Matthew Cole demonstrate examples of this rhetoric in their study of public newspaper discourse around foxes in the UK. Kate Stewart and Matthew Cole, “The Creation of a Killer Species: Cultural Rupture in Representations of ‘Urban Foxes’ in UK Newspapers,” in *Critical Animal and Media Studies: Communication for Nonhuman Animal Advocacy*, eds. Núria Almiron, Matthew Cole, and Carrie P. Freeman (London: Routledge, 2015), 124-137.

fox is more consistently self-serving and exploitative (particularly towards animals he might want to make a meal out of) than in his earlier Aesopian iterations.

In Janáček's version of this cliché, the action is portrayed as more comedic than malicious. Generally, the latter part of this scene is musically inflected so as to be lighthearted and funny, with rapidly ascending scalar runs and “frolicking” sixteenth-note figures in the strings to connote the Vixen's violent antics (coded as hilarity) on stage (Ex. 2). Though the nuances of timing and specific levels of comedy communicated vary by production, both Janáček's score and libretto unambiguously designate this scene as an upbeat, mirthful, and triumphant end to the first Act.

47

Füchslin.
Bystrouška.

23 *f* $\frac{4}{4}$
Cha, cha, cha, cha!
Ha - ha - ha - ha!

Pi. r.
Fr. F.

Ó - - - be - sti - o!
Du - - - Be - sti - e!

23
Vl. Vla.
Bcl. Fg.
Vl. Ob.
Cor. Vla.
Vl.
Fg.
Ve. Cb.

B.
Fü.

Cha, cha, cha, cha!
Ha - ha - ha - ha!

Pi. r.
Fr. F.

Ó - - - be - sti - o!
Du - - - Be - sti - e!

Vl. Ob.

Schopfhenne.
Chocholka.

Ex. 2. Ascending scalar passages followed by chromatic sixteenth-note “frolicking” motives.

Why is such blatant on-stage mass murder not only allowed, but joyously celebrated? To be blunt: how does it become possible that we, as audience members, laugh along as one character mercilessly kills an entire swath of others in the blink of an eye? Surely, if the scene involved human characters, and not chickens and foxes, its comedic tone would doubtless feel malapropos. What sorts of habits of mind have we cultivated that lead us to treat fictional subject matter involving other animals—and “animal opera” in particular—as a non-serious, fanciful diversion, or even as children’s fare? Initially marketed with the tagline, “It will be a dream, a fairytale that will warm your heart,” and often referred to as the composer’s “lightest” opera, *Bystrouška* seems to represent a broader trend in musical performances of the nonhuman that suggest other animals are “the sign of all that is taken not-very-seriously in contemporary culture; the sign of that which doesn’t really matter.”³⁸ These mental tendencies are likely in part due to a close association between “the animal” and “the child” in historical thought, in addition to a pervasive notion of “animal consciousness” predicated on Cartesian philosophies of mind.³⁹

Dispositionally and evolutionarily, the child is often located at the beginning of humankind (beside other animals, and without faculties of reason), and as a result must undergo an “ontogenetic recapitulation” in order to assume the status of full human personhood. Megan H. Glick links the increase in children’s literature featuring other animals as primary characters during the early twentieth century with evolutionary discourses informing a popular belief in the closeness of the child (or nonadult) and animal (or nonhuman). She tracks how this association was historically situated in the contexts of US imperialism and the rise of scouting and recreation

³⁸ Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), 174.

³⁹ On this scheme, only humans have minds/souls and thus consciousness; nonhuman animals are unconscious “automata” that cannot feel pain.

movements to demonstrate how the training of the nation's youth was "a matter of evolutionary progress, from child to adult, savage to civilized, animal to man."⁴⁰ In such discourses, not only do children benefit from proximity to other animals domestically, as in their oft-cited close relationships to companion species, but they also require an outlet for their primitive, "animal-like" behavioral tendencies.

While I do not suggest that Glick's analysis of American culture can properly account for contemporaneous views of the child-animal linkage in Europe, this perceived connection between "animality" and youth is reflected in the "family friendly" language of *Bystrouška's* promotional material, and likely plays a role in the opera's ubiquity as "children's programming," particularly in the US. Citing the work of Karen Sánchez-Eppler and James Kincaid, Glick describes how "narratives produced for children increasingly understood childhood as a special—even 'magical'—time, a temporality deeply imbricated with notions of fantasy and dependent upon highly variable worlds of individual imagination."⁴¹ If the magical and fantastical have served as key components of artistic products concerned with developing the child's imaginative capacities, then depictions of other animals in narrative art forms—so-called "animal opera" and much of the musical programming "for children" included—have served to provide the child with the exotic playthings necessary to "direct the human animal into its becoming-man," to again borrow Ludueña's words.⁴²

⁴⁰ Megan H. Glick, *Infrahumanisms: Science, Culture, and the Making of Modern Non/personhood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), 27.

⁴¹ Glick, *Infrahumanisms*, 34.

⁴² Ludueña, *La comunidad de los espectros*, 12-13.

Dramatic Entanglements

An expanded version of a “vulpine specific” study of *Bystrouška* could include a more thorough treatment of the fox’s significance for Janáček and the Czech audiences to whom the opera was shown. Though I have limited my discussion of *Bystrouška* here to simply spark deconstructive readings of species representation in traditional musical forms, there is much more to be said concerning the material conditions involved in the opera’s production. Among basic questions that pertain to the biopolitical histories of specific productions, for example (did costumes use real fur?), we might even look to denaturalize the ingrained ontological commitments that render theatrical portrayals of nonhumans a normal affair. How might we attend to the representative politics of “dressing up” as another animal on the musical stage? While operatic performances of the nonhuman can create a discursive space wherein a Deleuzoguattarian “becoming-animal” can be enacted, little study has been done on how such performances serve to reproduce and ossify hegemonic frameworks of human exceptionalism.⁴³

Just as Sianne Ngai argues the “minor” affect of “animatedness” has been historically mapped onto the racialized human body, I may also contend that many nonhuman bodies have been “animated” through media, artistic representation, and quotidian discourse in similar ways.⁴⁴ As scholars such as Ahuja, Mundy, Glick, and others have demonstrated, the construction of species discourses is inextricable from discourses around race, gender, sexuality, ability, and other such categories.⁴⁵ Hierarchical logics of race in particular often appeal to the

⁴³ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987).

⁴⁴ Sianne Ngai, “Animatedness,” in *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), 89-125.

⁴⁵ Neel Ahuja, “Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World,” *PMLA* 124, no. 2 (2009): 556-563; Rachel Mundy, *Animal Musicalities: Birds, Beasts, and Evolutionary Listening* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2018); Megan H. Glick, *Infrahumanisms: Science, Culture, and the Making of Modern Non/personhood* (Durham: Duke

notion that systems of racial subjugation are always-already inevitable, due to the fact that marginalized groups and individuals presumably possess essential “animalistic” qualities that the hegemonic majority lacks. Dehumanization—the forced deprivation of human subjectivity—becomes not only a tactic by which hegemony may reproduce itself, but a process that must be actively resisted by oppressed peoples. Under scrutiny however, this negatively valenced conceptualization of dehumanization operates under the key assumptions of human exceptionalism, predicated as it is on a subscription to “the human” as the preferred status to lose. Under oppressive regimes, animality thus becomes something to be rejected rather than celebrated; though this is a necessary step for those refused the right to full personhood, this rejection in fact reveals itself to be a deferral. The disavowal, “we are *not* animals, we are human beings,” only promises to reproduce injustices further down the line of imagined hierarchies if not adequately addressed within a broader ecology of multispecific relationality. However, it is important to keep in mind that the opposite is also true; to only engage with one axis of oppression (species) and not others (race, gender, sexuality, ability, etc.) simply rehearses the colonial conflation of marginalized identities with species membership.

In any case, as we have seen in Janáček’s differing treatment of the Vixen and the Hens, how we articulate species difference through our musical representations says a great deal about the cultural attitudes held toward those we decide to represent. Simply put, representations matter when it comes to the real-life treatment of other animals. What, then, makes for a “good” or “authentic” representation of a nonhuman Other, when—unlike with analogous human issues

University Press, 2018); Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012); Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

of race, gender, sexuality, or disability—no shared language can mediate discussions of authenticity? Of course, it matters not to a fox whether *Bystrouška* is performed with authentic “foxiness”—it matters insofar as these acts of zooësis can be demonstrated to affect the lived experiences of foxes (and other animals) in negative ways. By perpetuating a zoopolitics of selective valuation based on species membership (as Janacek’s compositional tendencies accomplish implicitly) and by coding “the animal” as frivolous and childish (and thus deserving of domination within anthropocentric frameworks), performances like *Bystrouška* ossify the pernicious structures of human exceptionalism that have contributed to the historical and ongoing subjugation of that-which-is-not-human.

To me, any responsible engagement with performances of nonhumans requires moving past “the animal” as essentialized in studies of representation to, even if—as in the case of Janáček’s opera—commitments to categorical animality ground the representation’s initial conditions. Specific approaches such as the analysis attempted here offer a heightened awareness of how internalized this categorical designation truly is, though it is equally important to recognize the ways in which species is itself a highly contested category as well. Additionally, as previously mentioned, a specific approach cannot operate with tunnel vision, particularly when representational strategies operate negatively (as with the Vixen’s ostensible lack of any identifiable vulpine sonority) or relationally (as when chickens are defined against foxes). If my current analysis of *Bystrouška* prioritizes discussions of musical representation over interspecific entanglements, in the section that follows I take material relationality—in the form of lived relations between species—as a starting point, moving from a fantastical forest to a corporeal one.

III. Pine Barrens Foxchasing as Acoustemological Practice

In her 1992 ethnography *Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens*, Mary Hufford frequently notes the centrality of listening to the participants' experience. Foxes are referred to as "conductors of canine symphonies" and hunting dogs' voices "animate landscape features saturated with personal memories and meanings." Hufford observes that, "listening to the music of the hounds, the hunters live through a vivid present together, immersed in the same flux of events in inner time." Moreover, she describes the members of the chase as "a community defined by the capacity of its members to hear hounds' voices as music."⁴⁶

Departing from traditional images of foxhunting embedded within the popular imaginary, Pine Barrens foxhunting is situated in stark contrast against its historical English ancestry. Unlike the decadent regality conducted on horseback characteristic of the blood sport's British origins, the Pine Barrens tradition is one practiced by a number of working-class communities in the Mid-Atlantic and Eastern United States more generally, with some regional variation.⁴⁷ In this version, pickup trucks replace horses, casual attire supplants scarlet coats, and the primary focus of the hunters is on the experience of *listening*.

[Foxhunters] park in long rows wherever the listening is good. [...] What the hunters are listening for is "music," uttered by hounds, each contributing its own "note" to the proceedings. In the hunters' parlance some hounds are "bass-noted," while others are "tenor-mouthed"; some hounds are soprano dogs, while others issue "horn chops," "double-yells," and "bugle notes." Like aficionados of other musical traditions, hunters make audiocassette recordings of foxchases, replete with interpretive voiceovers. "Ain't

⁴⁶ Mary Hufford, *Chaseworld: Foxhunting and Storytelling in New Jersey's Pine Barrens* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1992).

⁴⁷ "Hilltopping," "ridge-running," "forks-of-the-creek foxhunting," and "one-gallus (one suspender) foxhunting" are other traditional names for regional variants of this type of foxhunting, which has been practiced since the mid-twentieth century "from New England and the upper Midwest to the deep South." John Blan Van Urk, *The Story of American Foxhunting: From Challenge to Full Cry* (New York: Derrydale Press, 1941).

that pretty music?” comments [foxhunter] John Earlin, on a recording of his canine chorale. “You could just dance to it.”⁴⁸

This explicit linkage between the sounds of the chase and music is not simply a convenient, incidental one; as evidenced by descriptions like Earlin’s above, foxchases are conceived quite literally as musical texts. Instead of the ritualistic *jouissance* that coincides with the murder of a fox, the sonority of “running” (chasing) a fox serves as the centerpiece around which the hunt revolves. Importantly, murdering foxes is also a grave taboo in many American strains of foxhunting, and many hunters even take active steps towards the conservation and preservation of fox populations in and around their communities. It is thus more appropriate (and indeed, more in agreement with regional discourses) to call the Pine Barrens tradition “foxchasing” rather than “foxhunting,” given the distinctly different practices the two labels connote.

While Hufford does not formulate it as such, her project is very much an *acoustemological* one, given the primacy of sound and listening in her account of the Pine Barrens community. Coined by linguistic anthropologist and ethnomusicologist Steven Feld, the term acoustemology “conjoins ‘acoustics’ and ‘epistemology’ to theorize sound as a way of knowing,” and in doing so “inquires into what is knowable, and how it becomes known, through sounding and listening.”⁴⁹ Acoustemology prioritizes relationality in approaching contextual, situated knowledges and cosmologies, and insists that any “listening to histories of listening” must come with an attunement to how sounding (as a form of knowing) constitutes a contingent cohabitation with others, and operates within a vast array of entanglements with various agents, be they animal, environmental, technological, or otherwise.

⁴⁸ Foxhunter John Earlin’s comments are from an “undated self-made recording.” Hufford, *Chaseworld*, 5-6.

⁴⁹ Feld, “Acoustemology,” 12.

With the “goal” of Pine Barrens foxchasing being the acoustic impression of a given chase, hunters in the community are adept at listening both *acousmatically*, in aiming to identify origins and locations of the chase’s sounds, as well as *semantically*, in attempting to gain information about the chase from the sonic profiles of their canine packs.⁵⁰ Without the aid of visual cues, hunters can ascertain a fox’s pattern of escape by the sounds of their dogs, and are even able to identify the type of fox by the way it runs.⁵¹ As the hunters gather to follow the moving “acoustic bubble” sounded by their dogs, they “strive to achieve consensus over the exact location of the chase,” and, through verbal storytelling among one another, “bring the implied narrative to completion in human terms, giving form in language to the images of chase and landscape that condense out of the sound before their minds’ eyes.”⁵² Additionally, these acousmatic, anthropocentric listenings give attention not only to the animals directly involved in the chase, but also to the acoustic properties of the surrounding environment:

Landscape features are viewed in terms of how they affect the soundscape. Cedar swamps, coupled with the right air conditions, enhance the music. “some days in the cedar swamps,” said Norman [Taylor], “it’s just a ring... Like at night you go down and you holler “Yo!” and you hear it ring right down through the swamp. Well, that’s the way with them dogs. Every now and then you get runnin’ those right kinda nights and man, you’d be surprised. It just sounds like the whole swamp is ringin’.”⁵³

⁵⁰ Brian Kane, *Sound Unseen: Acoustic Sound in Theory and Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

⁵¹ Based on their normative escape routes and running tendencies, red and gray foxes allegedly offer radically different chases. Hufford, *Chaseworld*, 22.

⁵² Hufford 30.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 83.

In other words, environmental features come to have acoustic value when they amplify the sounds of foxhounds in pursuit of a fox. “Acoustically magnificent” features are ones that more easily enable hearing, whereas less desirable locations run the risk of “losing the music.”⁵⁴

These sounds are not bound to a single sensory modality either; as Hufford acutely notes, the actual space of a foxchase is not only constituted acoustically, but also *aromatically*.⁵⁵ The vocalizations of the dogs-in-pursuit sonify the scent trails left by the fox, which in turn are interpreted as data about the status of the chase by the listening hunters. As Hufford puts it:

Through the music of hounds, the Chaseworld emerges as a world apart from the Ordinary, whose spaces it claims for itself. Like pheromones, acoustic communication establishes territory, dominating spheres by flooding them with sound.⁵⁶

Hufford theorizes the foxchase as a constructed space that she calls the “Chaseworld,” which she defines as a space that is conjured by foxhunters and accessed through narrative storytelling, and that is separate from the “Ordinary,” or space of everyday life. However, here I am less concerned with Hufford’s “Chaseworld” framework than the knowledges produced and politics enacted by the listening practices of the subjects of her ethnography. Where Hufford construes the Chaseworld in opposition to the Ordinary as “an alternate reality replete with its own ‘metaphysical constraints,’” thereby partitioning off the space of the foxchase from the hunters’ quotidian day-to-day, I reconfigure the chase along relational, acoustemological lines, troubling such clean delineations in order to bring attention to the “extra-human” consequences

⁵⁴ Ibid., 31, 83.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 47.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 49, 116.

of the sport.⁵⁷ For the foxes that comprise the hunters' quarry as well as the companion dogs bred to pursue them, human distinctions between "sport" and "everyday life" do not obtain so easily.

The Selective Zoopolitics of the Chase

According to Hufford, there are strict expectations demanded of foxhounds (specifically Maryland foxhounds) that have been bred to chase (and not kill) foxes:

1. A foxhound must be "straight fox." That is, fox is the only quarry it will run.
2. A foxhound must "follow the line," which means the terrestrial trail. Following the airborne scent (that is, "winding") constitutes cheating.
3. A foxhound should always "tongue" (that is, vocalize) when it smells the fox, and only when it smells the fox. If a dog unknowingly fails to tongue in order to keep the trail to itself (a kind of hoarding), it is deemed dishonest. To tongue on the wrong quarry is considered "trashing." And to tongue with no scent at all is "babbling."
4. A foxhound must be a team player; it must "pack up" and "honor" the hound in the lead. It may not "steal" the trail from the leader, and, when its olfactory glands are resting, it must yield the trail to a hound with the scent.
5. Hounds must be evenly matched. No foxhound should be consistently in the lead or in the rear. Rather, they have to "take turns."⁵⁸

Additionally, foxhounds (at least in the Pine Barrens tradition) are bred based on factors of vocality, such as quality of "tone" or "notes." Over generations, physical features become linked with both behavioral patterns and vocal ability. For example, long ears come to signal the possibility of "heavier notes," and thus a better "voice" on the trail; whereas short ears and a flag tail might be associated with speed rather than vocality.⁵⁹ Further, hunters often attempt to form packs comprised of a "diversity of voices," and look to attain a "good" mix of different canine vocal types.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 7.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 106.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 107-08.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 111-112.

While the eugenic practice that is dog breeding deserves its own extended critique, I briefly highlight these standards here to demonstrate how foxchasing (as well as foxhunting) exhibits a selective zoopolitics of valuation, based on specifically situated frameworks of utility. In a zoopolitical sense, then, foxhounds achieve worth only through human measures of aesthetic and behavioral preference. Hunters value their dogs insofar as they can provide an acoustically optimal chase—any deviation from these stringent expectations renders a dog “undesirable” or “dishonest.” Of course, these zoopolitical demarcations do not stop at those considered companion species; though hunters interact most directly with their foxhounds, it is the foxes for which the dog breeds are named that remain at the center of the ritual practice. These pursued foxes are similarly subject to sets of standards on how they should or should not perform when chased. In order to realize an entertaining (again, “acoustically optimal”) chase, foxes must exhibit intelligence, gameness, and endurance, even as they are relentlessly tracked to exhaustion by the pack.⁶¹

Unsurprisingly for an event named a “foxchase,” foxes are an irreplaceable aspect of the sport, even if they seldom come into visual contact with the participants. Given foxes’ paramount role in the chase, hunters often take active measures to ensure their survival (after all, how can you chase foxes without any foxes?). Many foxhunters consider themselves amateur conservationists, setting out food within a fox’s feeding range to persuade individuals to remain in the area, destroying traps left by fur trappers, and, at least historically, even rescuing orphaned fox cubs, inoculating them against rabies and distemper, and placing them in care of feline wet nurses until they were old enough to be released.⁶²

⁶¹ Ibid., 73.

⁶² This lattermost practice of interspecific nursing is often called “putting them on a cat.” Ibid., 89.

If the well-being of foxes must be a priority of the chase's zoopolitical logics (even as they are only cared for to be terrorized by hunting dogs), then any animal that negatively impacts the chase must necessarily be excluded from any consideration of personhood. Deer, rabbits, raccoons, and possums, for example (in other words, anything "nonfoxy"), are essentialized as "trash quarry," as they distract foxhounds from their main objective.⁶³ Feral cats, which not only compete with foxes for food, but whose trails foxhounds often confuse with those of gray foxes, are often shot on sight by hunters. Environmentalists and animal-rights activists are also seen as lethal threats to the chase, and, while not subjected to such physical violences, are similarly excluded with hostility from the hunters' "political community of humans."⁶⁴

As the chase's selective zoopolitics signal, the hunters' attuned listening practices do not necessarily entail a *flat* attunement to all lives of those affected by the sport, particularly if they seem to interfere with the chase's acoustic fidelity. Those considered threatening, or even distracting to the chase are excluded from the chase's circle of moral consideration, often to destructive ends. As such we might consider the Pine Barrens practice of foxchasing to be a *violent acoustemology*; a relational listening-in and sounding-through that, while displaying certain sensitive ways of relating-to and -with those involved, cannot avoid operating through a violently anthropocentric calculus of terror and exclusion.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Ludueña, *La comunidad de los espectros*, 12-13.

Acoustemological Zooësis

*“He would let you run him,” Norman recalled. “He was a nice fox. He liked to run.”*⁶⁵

I conclude this section with a series of questions around this seemingly unstable tension between the reverence and sensitivity displayed for the foxes and the foundational violence that necessarily accompanies any practice of institutional sport hunting. First, I return to a question posed in the introduction of this paper: namely, what might be the implications of “giving voice” to those caught up in the violent human tradition of foxhunting, be they canine, human, or otherwise? By drawing attention to the act of “giving voice” to others, I mean to throw into relief actions that presume to speak-for those whose voices are denied or eclipsed by a zoopolitics of exclusion. Anthropomorphic storytelling such as Norman Taylor’s wistful recollection of a “good fox” (whom the hunters named “Fireball”) above is just one example of this, but perhaps most baldly betrays the particularly insidious set of principles on which sport hunting operates: a self-assuring conciliation that those hunted are complicit in—or even enjoy—the chase, and are not, in fact, violently coerced into the gamification of their fear and lives.

All types of hunting involve an intimate connection with the prey to some degree, and these are by no means straightforward sets of relations to untangle. José Ortega y Gasset describes this identificatory phenomenon as “a mystical union with the animal [...] that automatically leads the hunter to perceive the environment from the point of view of the prey, without abandoning [their] own point of view.”⁶⁶ Joseph de Maistre observed a similar move in ritual sacrifice, linking the violence involved not to dehumanization, but to

⁶⁵ Norman Taylor, personal interview, November 23, 1980, quoted in Hufford, 23.

⁶⁶ José Ortega y Gasset, *Meditations on Hunting* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 124.

anthropomorphization; those animals chosen as victims often seem to be, within their situated cultural contexts, “the most *human* in nature.”⁶⁷ Indeed, there is a distinct sense in which “animality” is inextricable from “humanness,” particularly when it comes to questions of human self-expression.⁶⁸ James Fernandez has written that

[...] in the growth of human identity, the inchoate pronouns of social life [...] gain identity by predicating some sign-image, some metaphor upon themselves. These pronouns must, in [G.H.] Mead’s terms, become objects to themselves, by taking the point of view of “the other,” before they can become subjects to themselves. This becoming an object, this taking the other, this predication upon the pronoun, is a process that has for millennia turned to the animal world.⁶⁹

In such accounts, other animals are necessary predicates to human identity, as the first “other.” Again, we are met with tensions—if animality (even in its essentialized and “otherized” form) is essential to humanness, why has “the animal,” to paraphrase Derrida, come to signify the ultimate category of alterity?⁷⁰

While satisfactory resolutions to these tensions remain elusive, a path forward is to attend more sensitively to our myriad voicings of other species, particularly voicings—like those articulated in and through ritualized foxchasing—we might not consider under such normative frameworks. It is useful to consider the foxchase explicitly as a form of zooësis, integrated as it is with practices of performance (storytelling) and the multi-specific social practice that is

⁶⁷ Joseph de Maistre, “Eclaircissement sur les sacrifices,” in *Les Soirees de Saint Petersburg*, Vol. 2 (Lyons, 1890), 341-42, quoted in René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred*, trans. Patrick Gregory (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977), 3.

⁶⁸ I use “animality” here as it has been historically conceived of as relating to “animal otherness,” or distinctly separate from “the human.” This conception of animality is predicated on a discrete category of “the animal,” propagated by and emergent from anthropocentric worldviews and institutions. Humans are, of course, consummate “animals” themselves, and so this sort of animality can only operate via a strategic occlusion of this fact.

⁶⁹ James Fernandez, *Persuasions and Performances: The Play of Tropes in Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 35.

⁷⁰ Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*.

hunting. Going further, apprehending foxchasing as a form of *acoustemological* zooësis allows us to better attend to its unexamined zoopolitical implications (importantly, a zoopolitics is already implicit in any act of zooësis). Even so, the voices present in these histories of listenings (to histories of listenings) are never ours alone—even the most seemingly lopsided semiosis is always informed and influenced by those who serve as the inspirations for these acts. However, though our performances of other forms of life—as *voicings*—are making-together-withs (what Donna Haraway calls sympoiesis), sensitive attunement to such voicings aims to mitigate the potential harm that might come with unexamined anthropomorphic naturalizations.⁷¹ Even if other animals do necessarily comprise the “inchoate pronouns of [human] social life,” the critical evaluation and navigation of our practices of acoustemological zooësis—relational, multi-/inter-species ontologies of sonic knowledge-production that implicate others through performance—promises to avoid excusing our insensitive use of nonhuman animality with this truism, even as human cultures are inextricably co-constructed upon allusions to, celebrations of, and assumptions about other species.

⁷¹ Donna J. Haraway, “Companions in Conversation,” in *Manifestly Haraway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

IV. Conclusion: Towards the “Material-Semiotic” Fox (or, The Fur Farm Rescue and the Internet Video)

It would be a mistake in a discussion concerned with practices of listening to foxes, both real and imagined, to not actually *hear* individual vulpine voices. I end this paper with Kevie, a red fox rescued from a fur farm that gained internet popularity in 2011 due to a viral YouTube video. Videos of rescue foxes have exploded in popularity in recent years, largely due to the proliferation of high-quality amateur smartphone videos uploaded to the internet by various nonhuman rescue sanctuaries. SaveAFox Rescue, a nonprofit fox sanctuary run by wildlife rehabilitator Mikayla Raines, has been a leading force in this trend (one of the channel’s most popular videos, [“The foxes that say HEHEHE”](#) has, at the time I write this, over 56 million total views).⁷² Though SaveAFox has been instrumental in educating viewers of the channel on the individual variability of fox behaviors and personalities (no doubt with the help of Finnegan, the extremely sociable fox that is featured most on the sanctuary’s social media), I give primary attention to Kevie here in order to showcase the origins of this genre of video, positioning her as a key figure in a genealogy of popular rescue fox media content. If Janáček’s opera and the stories of Pine Barrens’ hunters represent anthropomorphic translations of foxes and fox vocalities sonically (and epistemically) divorced from lived vulpine experience (even as they are intimately knotted within relational, multispecies practices), the rescue video becomes a means by which the sounds of foxes find purchase in popular consciousnesses to a degree unparalleled in Western histories of fox-human relations.

⁷² SaveAFox, “The foxes that say HEHEHE,” YouTube, May 5, 2020, Video, 1:19, https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=fQVhppRP4Wo&ab_channel=SaveAFox.

[“Kevie sings a pretty song”](#) (2011) features Kevie lying down on a carpeted floor, intermittently purring and chittering. Throughout the entirety of the 49-second video, she faces the camera while she vocalizes, occasionally lifting her head slightly to open her mouth. Between Kevie’s vocalizations, faint reply calls from another fox can be heard softly in the background. Although her calls are characteristic of those often used by red foxes to communicate with conspecifics, a vast array of user comments on the video seem to interpret Kevie’s vocals as “beautiful singing.” Aside from one astute user who writes, “Awww.. she’s asking for attention! That’s what the sound means, according to fox research,” many users remark on the songlike quality of her voice, often employing the infantilizing discursive styles typical of commentary on so-called “cute animal videos.” Comments range from compliments of Kevie’s voice and appearance (“That was the most beautiful song i ever heard.” —*SHAKEU WAKEU*; “Such a beautiful fox. :)” —*Autumn Rose*; “Awwwwww SOOO cute it purring, and it eyes are cute, and, and he [sic] Is SOOO FLUFFY!! X3 (my favorite animal is the fox)” —*Hnn nh*; “My god foxes are always so adorable and make such cute noises 😊” —*LightFurry19*), to remarks expressing disbelief that foxes are still subject to the violences of foxhunting and fur farming (“How can anyone wanna hunt these wonderful creatures.....” —*KL M*; “Ahhhhhh, such beauty, what an incredibly sweet sound she makes. I will never understand how anyone can be cruel to animals, I feel honoured to be on the same planet as them.” —*Ebenezer Marley*; “Unbelievable that some people are not able to love this wonderful animals ❤️🦊 —*fuchsfilm helmut sütsch*), to jokes likening the sounds she makes to the ringing and whirring of human mechanical devices (“You better pick that up, your fox is ringing.” —*Black Vulpine Fox*; “Fox not starting, Should’ve got the Car Fox. Sounds like a problem with the alternator.” —*L-1011 Widebody*; “I think your fox may have swallowed a telephone. XD <3” —*Kitten*). Other

comments indicate users' surprise at Kevie's "catlike" voice, despite her canine appearance ("A fox is like a cat and a dog fused together to make the perfect animal." —*The Chaos Dragoness*; "He [sic] almost purrrrrrrs like a cat at the end of the clip. Sweet!" —*Lydia Gaebe Bishop*; "they are like cat-dog seriously" —*don't like mangoes*).⁷³

Apart from highlighting the essentializing discursive strategies that are often used when humans converse about other animals ("foxes are *always* so adorable and make such cute noises"), comments such as these demonstrate the paradoxical nature of the othered vulpine voice. Just as Kevie's voice represents for some irrefutable evidence of her subjectivity, it is equally deployed by others in the service of objectification. References to Norwegian duo Ylvis' (considerably more) viral comedic music video, "The Fox (What Does The Fox Say?)" (2013), also appear in comments posted after its release, anachronistically construing Kevie's voice as the long-awaited answer to the song's titular question. Despite humans' eagerness to cash in on the exotic appeal of vulpine imagery, it remains clear that few have even a remote conception of what foxes actually sound like.

My point in highlighting Kevie's reception—and my point in writing this paper—is that dynamics of power always accompany invocations of the nonhuman voice. With red fox voices absent from popular imaginations of the species, there is a risk that anthropomorphic voicings, in all their endearments, come to give the impression that actual foxes are consigned to the realm of the *voiceless*. Here, voicelessness, or the absence of voice, is not to be confused with an actual inability to produce voice, be it vibrational or metaphorical. Rather, to be made voiceless is to be made vulnerable to encroachments on one's agency by others that perceive one as lacking the

⁷³ SpiritWhiteFox2, "Kevie sings a pretty song," YouTube, September 29, 2011, Video, 0:49, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=S7tThIC42xQ&ab_channel=SpiritWhiteFox2.

capacity to speak for oneself. As I have demonstrated through apprehensions of opera, foxhunting, and now the internet, this can occur across a wide variety of mediums—remember that voicing, as a form of zooësis that necessarily exists within acoustemological networks, has no bounds. Even certain nonhuman advocacy strategies cannot help but fall back on this power-play, with many campaigns choosing to portray other animals as helpless and voiceless in order to garner sympathy and inspire action on the part of would-be human “saviors.”⁷⁴ What such approaches to liberation miss (or at the very least, fail to convey to the general public) is that the voices of other animals are *always* sounding, and yet an insidious, purposeful tuning-out contributes to their erasure. A meaningful engagement with such critiques might necessitate a transposition of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s postcolonial question, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” to a slightly different register.⁷⁵

The very act of “giving voice,” in the context of nonhuman representation, is predicated on the idea that humans are the owners and sole possessors of voice. And with this realization comes a possible answer to why inquiries such as the one I have pursued here have yet to find widespread purchase in studies of music; the reason our cultural representations of other animals seem undeserving of or beneath critique is not due to an insurmountable inability to access something resembling “authentic” representation, but rather comes about from an anthropocentric gaze that views other animals as empty subjects, and thus requiring the help of an external voice to approach anything resembling coherence. “When critics reduce nonhuman

⁷⁴ *The Oxford English Dictionary* lists “advocacy” as stemming from the Latin “ad” (to) and “vocare” (to call), the latter of which is closely related to “vox,” or “vocis” (voice).

⁷⁵ Of course, such a transposition must tread carefully; to simply import specifically situated questions such as Spivak’s without tuning in to contextual difference is irresponsible at best, and irreparably violent at worst. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, “Can the Subaltern Speak?,” *Die Philosophin* 14, no. 27 (1988): 42-58.

characters to symbols,” Neel Ahuja writes, “they may foreclose transspecies relations underlying representation.”⁷⁶ This tendency is also historically embedded within physiological understandings of the nonhuman body and vocal apparatus; Aristotle in his *Politics* gives other animals *phōnē*, and this he only grants those “equipped with a specific physiological apparatus,” such as lungs or a pharynx. Those without can only manage *psophos*, or “sound,” instead of *dialektos* (speech), which remains in the domain of the *logos* (reason/language)-possessing human. In this scheme, *dialektos* must be formed by training, whereas *phōnē* is bestowed by nature (*phusei*).⁷⁷

Writing against these divisions of voice into discrete human-nonhuman categories (and similarly, against the reduction of voice to human language), this paper follows scholars like Ahuja and Tsing in stressing the importance of “ecologies of representation” that take “configurations of humans and nonhumans across a terrain” as entry points into interspecific questions.⁷⁸ Despite what the title of this closing section suggests, I share both Ahuja and Tsing’s concerns about the potential inefficacy of the “material-semiotic” as a mode of inquiry by which to approach the problems with which this paper engages. Notwithstanding the generative currency of the term, it risks reifying the very domains it seeks to collapse—a move that can prove lethal for those whose being-in-the-world relies on their entanglement. However, in expanding the acoustemological thinking developed here to encompass not only local webs of relations, but global networks of listening and voicing (as acoustemologies *within*

⁷⁶ In navigating the anthropocentric gaze, it becomes necessary to figure “the animal as viewer instead of viewed.” Ahuja, “Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World,” 559-560.

⁷⁷ Thorsten Fögen, “Animal Communication,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Animals in Classical Thought and Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁷⁸ Ahuja, 559; Tsing, Anna. *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 173.

acoustemologies *within* acoustemologies), there remains the possibility for us to traverse that hyphenated gap, perhaps allowing us to tune-in more responsibly to our nonhuman kin. What Kevie tells us, and what is echoed today by the foxes of SaveAFox, is that we must pay greater attention to their voices *as they sound them*, and not how they so often come to be mediated by all-too-eager human ears.

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