CREATURELY FORMS:

ENCOUNTERS WITH ANIMALITY IN W. G. SEBALD, J. M. COETZEE, AND MAHASWETA DEVI

Dominic Edward O'Key

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School of English

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is their own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

What role does literature play in mediating, contesting and reconfiguring the relations between humanity and animality? How do authors tell stories about human mastery over animals? And what capacity does literature have, both formally and thematically, to position the human with and alongside animality, rather than against it? In this thesis, I offer an answer to these questions by exploring the writing of three late-twentieth-century authors – W. G. Sebald, J. M. Coetzee, and Mahasweta Devi – who each developed a literary attentiveness towards the animal.

The burgeoning discipline of critical animal studies teaches us that literature plays an important role in dramatising the relations between the species. Elsewhere, theories of biopolitics, feminism and critical race studies reveal that the 'human' is discursively produced in contradistinction to what is deemed not-human, or animal. But until now, animal studies has tended to concentrate on the representation of animals; and biopolitics has tended to prioritise the human over the animal. This thesis makes an original contribution to knowledge by introducing the term *creaturely forms* in order to analyse how the representation of both human and nonhuman life is inextricable from questions of literary form, and how the politics of literature is connected to the question of who or what counts as 'human'. Informed by the recent re-emergence of the concept of the 'creaturely' in critical theory, this thesis argues that writers such as Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta develop creaturely forms: they reshape literary forms so as to accommodate animality, to unmake hegemonic modalities of subjectivity, and to question literature's role in reproducing the human over the animal; in doing so, these forms of writing affirm a less narrowly human, and hence more creaturely, form of life.

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Preface

In 1928, the German-Jewish thinker Walter Benjamin published *One-Way Street*, a kaleidoscopic text composed of sixty aphorisms on modernity, urbanisation, and Weimar-era economic misery. Among these fragments, Benjamin also wrote a number of pessimistic meditations on humanity's imperialist mastery over animals. In one such fragment, Benjamin reflects:

> In an aversion to animals the predominant feeling is fear of being recognised by them through contact. The horror that stirs deep in man is an obscure awareness that in him something lives so akin to the animal that it might be recognised. All disgust is originally disgust at touching. Even when the feeling is mastered, it is only by a drastic gesture that overleaps its mark: the nauseous is violently engulfed, eaten, while the zone of finest epidermal contact remains taboo. […] He may not deny his bestial affinity with the creature [*bestialische Verwandtschaft mit der Kreatur*], the invocation of which revolts him: he must make himself its master [*Herrn*].[1]

The modern human, represented here by the figure of 'man', is so repulsed by the animal other that he cannot simply ignore its presence. Rather than contemplating this 'obscure awareness' that he might be, deep down, an animal among other animals, a creature among other creatures, man is instead compelled to violently overcompensate. He abjects, eats and obliterates the animal, and he crowns himself its master. At the heart of man's anxious anthropocentrism is the threat of contact, of being recognised *by* the animal *as* an animal through 'epidermal contact' *with* the animal. And the title of this aphorism? Benjamin calls it 'Gloves' [*Handschuhe*], as if man's recognition of his own animality is so intolerable that this

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[1] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 50–51. Translation modified to reflect Benjamin's original phrasing in *Einbahnstrasse* (Berlin: Ernst Rowohlt, 1928), p. 14.

proximity becomes a matter of life and death. By donning gloves, gloves often made from animal body parts, man forecloses an encounter with 'the creature', forgets his own affinity and kinship with the animal, and thereby authorises his mastery over animality. Against this fantasy of exceptionalism, Benjamin writes elsewhere that the only way for man to remember a shared creatureliness between the species is to generate an 'attentiveness' towards 'all living creatures', a mode of concentration that includes animals 'as saints include them in their prayers'.[2]

This is a thesis about humans and other animals in late-twentieth-century literature. It begins with the following questions: what would it mean to take off these gloves? In what ways can the human pay more attention to its 'affinity with the creature', as Benjamin puts it? And what kinds of unexpected affects – such as melancholia, compassion, or love – can be discovered in an encounter with animality? To put this in the words of the Jamaican scholar and author Sylvia Wynter, whose writing shares Benjamin's desire to deconstruct the sovereignty of man: how to 'unsettle the coloniality of Being' and, in its place, envision 'new genres of the human' that are attentive towards the animal?[3] I will pursue these questions through literary analysis. I will ask: what role does literature play in mediating, contesting and reconfiguring the relations between humanity and animality? How do authors tell stories about human mastery over the animal? What capacity does literature have, both formally and thematically, to position the human with and alongside animality, rather than against it? Simply put, how can literature's attentiveness towards the lives of animals imagine different human-animal futures?

These questions are not limited to Benjamin's interwar milieu. For in the years following the Second World War, the modern mastery over and disregard for non-human life intensified. In the 1960s, the prospect of nuclear annihilation and the indiscriminate spraying of pesticides across the North American landscape led Rachel Carson to condemn American industry's catastrophic 'war against nature'.[4] Thirty years later, on the cusp of the new millennium, Jacques Derrida presented a ten-hour conference address that similarly rebuked Western modernity's ongoing 'war against the animal'. Famously inspired by a bathroom encounter with his pet cat, in which he was '*seen seen* by an animal', 'seen naked under the gaze of a cat', Derrida's 'The Animal That Therefore I Am' theorises the war against animals as

[2] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934*, ed. by Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 794–818 (p. 810).

[3] Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument', *CR*, 3 (2003), 257–337 (pp. 260, 331).

[4] Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1972), pp. 6–7.

an all-out assault against animal life.[5] Derrida traces the 'infinite violence' and 'boundless wrong' of this 'species war' back to longstanding theological notions of dominion and sacrifice, through to the emergence of Cartesian mechanical philosophy, to the Kantian and Enlightenment preoccupation with human dignity and rights, and through to the fact that numerous languages themselves collapse 'the infinite diversity' of species difference into 'the grand category of animal', a monolithic category against which the human defines itself. But Derrida also emphasises that the war against the animal accelerates in the final decades of the twentieth century. When mass extinction sits alongside mass over-production and consumption, the war against the animal enters a new conjuncture, what Derrida calls a 'critical phase'.[6]

My purpose in this thesis is to analyse how literature written during this 'critical phase' responds to and intervenes in the ongoing fallout of the war against animals. To do this, I will turn to a number of key texts by three authors – W. G. Sebald (1944–2001), J. M. Coetzee (1940–), and Mahasweta Devi (1926–2016) – whose writing became preoccupied with animality and nonhuman life throughout the final years of the twentieth century. When I began researching this thesis, I selected these three authors primarily because each of their literary projects can be said to confront modernity's domination of nonhuman life. Writing with an acute historical awareness that they stand on the threshold of a new millennium, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta are each alert to how nonhuman forms of life have been increasingly commodified and extinguished across modernity. But although I began by conceiving of this project as an analysis of how these three authors critique humanity's planetary domination (of how they each say 'no' to the war against the animal), I soon recognised that their projects also share two further characteristics which deepen and complicate their interest in nonhuman life. Firstly, their fiction is invested in 'animality' in a double sense: for them, animality not only refers to nonhuman animal species, but also implies the animality of the human subject, an animality which is fundamentally *shared* between species but is all too often projected and displaced onto marginalised (racialised and gendered) humans. Their fiction dramatises encounters with these two kinds of animality, and in doing so they deconstruct the exclusionary and limited category of the normative 'human', even compelling their readers to imagine how the 'human' might be liberated if it is conceived of as an animal. Secondly, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta also share a criticality about and reflexivity towards literature's own role in mediating the relations between humans and other animals. All three authors are differently vigilant about how literary forms contribute to the self-fashioning of human subjec-

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[5] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 13, 11.
[6] Ibid., pp. 101, 89, 59, 29.

tivity and exceptionalism. Because of this, the texts under discussion in this thesis present their own thematic and formal negotiation of literature's assumed 'humanist' tendencies. In other words, rather than using literature as a space to shore up the category of the human, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta all write texts which unsettle the human via encounters with animality.

This thesis offers a sustained investigation into how these aspects are intertwined. Throughout, my main proposition will be that literature – through its form and content – can be attentive towards animality. Attentiveness, deriving from the etymology 'to stretch', denotes here a form of textual stretching out towards the animal. And it is through this attentiveness towards a shared human and nonhuman animality, I argue, that literature can concomitantly defamiliarise anthropocentrism and imagine different kinds of human-animal relations. Across this thesis, I will be gathering these types of literary works together under the name of 'creaturely forms'. I use the pluralised term 'creaturely forms' as a way of making sense of how certain texts dramatise, and how certain literary strategies navigate, what Benjamin describes as a recognition of and 'affinity with the creature'. I will be arguing that creaturely forms are those forms of literature that can thematically and formally interrupt the war against the animal. Creaturely forms recognise the human's connections with and responsibilities to the nonhuman. They affirm, through their very writing, a less narrowly 'human' and hence more creaturely form of life. Across my three author-study chapters, in which I focus on key texts from their respective corpuses, I will uncover how each author uses and even reshapes literary forms in order to both encounter animality and create non-anthropocentric modalities of subjectivity.

Through this analysis, this thesis suggests that literature has an important role to play in reconsidering and rewriting the relationship between humanity and animality. This is of particular significance as I write today, at the beginning of 2019. Inside the academy, the interrelated problems of extinction, factory farming, global emissions and environmental burdens have become increasingly prominent concerns for humanities scholarship. Outside of the academy, two major reports were published during the writing of this introduction which stress how urgent it is to fundamentally transform the prevailing global systems and economies of environmental exploitation which structure the relationship between humans and other animals. In *Global Warming of 1.5ºC*, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) explains how the earth is quickly running out of room to meet the demands of contemporary economic growth and consumption. If capitalism as we know it continues, the IPCC suggest, then nonhuman animals,

their habitats and the world's poor will increasingly struggle to survive.[7] These warnings are underscored by the World Wide Fund for Nature's (WWF) biannual *Living Planet Report*, which reveals how the intensifying 'overexploitation of species' is creating 'unprecedented planetary change'. According to the WWF, sixty percent of the world's mammals, fish, birds and reptiles have been destroyed since 1970.[8] Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta bear witness to this overexploitation and exhaustion of the planet. But in doing so they also imagine different, less violent, human-animal futures.

So what is at stake in literature's rewriting of human-animal relations? And why do I use the word 'creaturely' to analyse works of literature that are attentive towards animality? To answer these questions, and to lay the theoretical and methodological groundwork for this study, I have decided to divide this introduction up into four smaller sections. In the first section, I explicate my critical vocabulary, including my keywords and formulations. I turn to scholarship conducted at the intersection of critical animal studies, posthumanism and postcolonial studies, and I explore how these kinds of analyses can help us understand the relations between humans and other animals. My second section turns to the politics of literature and literary form. Here, I suggest that literature is a crucial site of discursive meaning-making when it comes to what is and what is not defined as the human subject. To make this argument, I bring literary animal studies into conversation with Jacques Rancière's writings on the politics of literature and Giorgio Agamben's account of the anthropological machine. This second section reveals how literature always participates in the construction of what is and what is not perceived as human. This perspective is valuable because it not only allows us to think of literary forms as machines that (re-)produce the hegemonic, circumscribed concept of the human, but because it also compels us to identify those literary works that operate differently, by which I mean, those texts which interrupt the anthropological machine. As I have suggested, I will be calling these works creaturely forms. Creaturely forms are those works of literature that seem to *know* that aesthetic forms are potentially complicit with the war against the animal; creaturely forms *hesitate* when they encounter anthropocentric thinking; by doing so, creaturely forms develop new modes of literary attentiveness towards animal life. Subsequently, my third section offers a genealogical account of the keyword of this thesis: the creaturely. I trace how the term has transformed from a theological to a politico-ontological and then later posthumanist paradigm. In doing so, I present the creaturely as an important term for questioning the dominant forms of

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[7] Valérie Masson-Delmotte and others, eds., *Global Warming of 1.5°C: An IPCC Special Report* (Geneva: IPCC, 2018), pp. 315, 327.

[8] Monique Grooten and Rosamund E. A. Almond, eds., *Living Planet Report – 2018: Aiming Higher* (Gland: WWF, 2018), p. 6.

relations between human and nonhuman life. As I see it, the creaturely is generative because it imagines a shared space between the human and the nonhuman. This constructively links the human and the nonhuman via a shared creaturely animality and thereby unsettles the ways in which modernity casts animality as the human's other. Finally, I use this introduction's fourth section to more exhaustively account for my choice of writers. I point to some important similarities and differences between their three literary projects before then sketching out the overall structure of this thesis. I end by looking towards my conclusions: I outline my study's key contributions and discuss avenues for further research.

The War against the Animal

Derrida further elaborates on this 'critical phase' of the war against the animal in an interview with Elisabeth Roudinesco. On the one side, Derrida says, there is the accelerating pace of human mastery, represented by the 'industrial, scientific, technical violence' of animal production, slaughter and consumption, and scientific experimentation which uses animals as test subjects. He tentatively describes this 'purely instrumental, industrial, chemico-genetic treatment of living beings' as 'genocidal'.[9] But on the other side, Derrida hints at the emergence of different socio-political groupings and popular protest movements – including animal liberation activists, advocates for nonhuman personhood, environmental campaigners, and indigenous land sovereignty groups – who in Derrida's words 'rise up' and 'revolt' against the ongoing instrumentalisation of life.[10] Derrida is speaking in 1997, at the very same time that climate scientists were redoubling their efforts to analyse humanity's increasing domination of the earth's ecosystems,[11] and at the very same time that ecofeminists such as Val Plumwood and Carolyn Merchant were rebuking the 'western hyper-separation from nature' for creating a 'global ecological crisis'.[12] Speaking alongside these scientific, critical and activist countermovements to human mastery, Derrida writes that:

> To think the war we find ourselves waging is not only a duty, a responsibility,
> an obligation, it is also a necessity, a constraint that, like it or not, directly, or
> indirectly, no one can escape. Henceforth more than ever. And I say 'to think'

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[9] Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *For What Tomorrow…: A Dialogue*, trans. by Jeff Fox (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 64, 73.

[10] Ibid., pp. 64, 73, 67.

[11] Peter M. Vitousek, Harold A. Mooney, Jane Lubchenco, and Jerry M. Melillo, 'Human Domination of Earth's Ecosystems', *Science*, 277 (1997), 494–499 (p. 499).

[12] Val Plumwood, *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 51, 74; Carolyn Merchant, *Radical Ecology: The Search for a Livable World*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 17–18.

this war, because I believe it concerns what we call 'thinking.' The animal looks at us, and we are naked before it. Thinking perhaps begins there.[13]

For Derrida, 'the question of the animal' concerns both the treatment of animals themselves and the ecological repercussions of this treatment that will, 'like it or not', rebound onto humanity. But more than this, the war is also inescapable because it is, fundamentally, a war against ourselves: 'the violence inflicted on animals will not fail to have profound reverberations (conscious and unconscious) on the image humans have of themselves.'[14] Derrida is suggesting that the ongoing figuration of the 'animal' is inseparable from the equally ongoing constitution and negotiation of the 'ends of man', of precisely *who* is determined to be sufficiently or properly human, of 'a certain concept of the subject' whose humanisation is determined in opposition to 'all the living things that man does not recognise as his fellows'. This 'appropriation of man by man', which 'enclose[s] and circumscribe[s] the concept of the human', signals that the war against the animal is not simply a war against the nonhuman.[15] It is a war against *the* animal, against animality as such, against the animality that is internal to the human, and to the external animality that is cast as the human's other. This is why Derrida maintains that 'I do not believe that we can continue to treat animals as we do today […] The relations between humans and animals *must* change.'[16]

In the years surrounding Derrida's intervention, and increasingly so afterwards, the burgeoning academic field of critical animal studies has taken up this challenge to 'think' the war against the animal.[17] Emerging out of critical theory's ethical turn and the mainstreaming of animal rights discourse, learning from (eco-)feminist and postcolonial studies' critiques of the normative concept of 'man' as a rights-bearing and autonomous person, and taking up the posthumanist objective to interrogate 'that thing called "the human" with *greater* specificity, *greater* attention',[18] critical animal studies offers two key insights into the relations between humans and other animals: it deconstructs and denaturalises the instrumentalisation of animal life, while at the same time emphasising the urgency – politically, ethically and ecologically – of transforming the relations between different spe-

[13] Derrida, *The Animal*, p. 29.
[14] Derrida and Roudinesco, p. 64.
[15] Derrida, *The Animal*, pp. 29, 12, 88, 34, 105.
[16] Derrida and Roudinesco, pp. 73, 64. Derrida's emphasis.
[17] On this, see especially: Dinesh Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals* (Leiden: Brill, 2015), p. 3.
[18] Cary Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 120. Wolfe's emphasis.

cies.[19] That is, animal studies not only interrogates the ongoing construction of the human-animal dichotomy. It also imagines alternative, more affirmative ways of 'liv[ing] differently' with animals, as Matthew Calarco puts it.[20] Critical animal studies therefore looks towards a posthumanist horizon. But the term 'posthumanism' does not at all signal a desire to supersede or come after the human. Posthumanism is not post-humanism or trans-humanism, nor does is it wish away the gains of humanist thought. Rather, posthumanism as I understand it names a substantive and dialectical investigation of humanism's limits and paradoxes. Posthumanism names a fuller and more 'critical humanism', to use Edward Said's phrase.[21] It interrogates what humanism takes for granted, and in turn destabilises both the concept of the 'human' and the status of the 'animal' as its apparent opposite. Thus 'the real force of animal studies', according to Cary Wolfe, is that it 'fundamentally unsettles and reconfigures the question of the knowing subject and the disciplinary paradigms and procedures that take for granted its form and reproduce it.'[22] By dedicating thought towards the nonhuman, critical animal studies aims to transform the discursive (theoretical, methodological, ideological) and the material (political, social, institutional) practices which continually presume the fixity of a universal 'human', and thereby sanction what Derrida calls the 'non-criminal putting to death' of life defined as not fully human.[23]

This thesis also turns to critical animal studies because it proposes non-anthropocentric ways of seeing and living. By 'anthropocentrism', I mean a powerful and shapeshifting ideology of human-centredness (a 'fantasy of human exceptionalism', according to Donna Haraway)[24] that decouples humanity from nature and informs asymmetrical social relations between humans and other animals. Anthropocentrism has a long history. Gary Steiner reminds us that the 'long and complex historical turn against the notion of natural continuity' between humans and animals began with Greek philosophies of the soul and reason.[25] But it

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[19] Nik Taylor and Richard Twine, eds., 'Introduction: Locating the "Critical" in Critical Animal Studies', in *The Rise of Critical Animal Studies: From the Margins to the Centre* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 2.

[20] Matthew Calarco, *Thinking Through Animals: Identity, Difference, Indistinction* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), p. 3.

[21] Edward W. Said, *Humanism and Democratic Criticism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), p. 11.

[22] Wolfe, *What is Posthumanism?*, pp. xv, xxix. See also: Wolfe, 'Human, All Too Human: "Animal Studies" and the Humanities', *PMLA*, 124 (2009), 564–575 (p. 572).

[23] Derrida, '"Eating Well," or the Calculation of the Subject', in *Points…: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. by Elisabeth Weber, trans. by Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 255–287 (p. 278).

[24] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 11.

[25] Gary Steiner, *Anthropocentrism and its Discontents: The Moral Status of Animals in the History of Western Philosophy* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005), p. 52.

would be wrong to think of anthropocentrism as a singular or unchanging phenomenon. As the veterinary doctor turned philosopher Roberto Marchesini notes, there is 'no single form of anthropocentrism nor a homogeneity and solidity/coherence of the paradigm'.[26] If we are to account for epistemological, historical and geographical differences, then it would be more exact to speak of *anthropocentrisms* in the plural. Accordingly, this thesis concentrates on two particularly dominant or hegemonic forms of human domination that reach new heights of power and contradiction, and receive forceful new objections, in the late twentieth century: one, the commodification and exhaustion of nonhuman life for profit and consumption; two, the ongoing epistemic production and allocation of 'humanity', which is hierarchically constructed in opposition to other forms of life – both human and nonhuman – that are deemed 'animal'.

First, in the post-war world of globalising capital, anthropocentrism is an enabling fiction that continues to naturalise the exploitation and exhaustion of living beings for profit. The prevailing neoliberal economic common sense of the late twentieth century – which still persists today – revolved around the twin imperatives of the privatisation of the commons on the one side and short-term growth on the other. Because of this 'growthmania' or 'growth fetishism', fossil fuel extraction has continued apace, carbon emissions have continued to rise, and the industrialised agri- and aquaculture sectors have expanded dramatically.[27] Meat has moved from the periphery to the epicentre of global diets since the 1970s, and is disproportionately consumed and wasted by the world's richest humans. As a result, Tony Weis explains, 'in a mere half-century, from 1961 to 2010, the global population of slaughtered animals [has] leapt from roughly 8 to 64 billion'.[28] Industrialised farming practices not only raise and slaughter billions of animals each year, but their land- and resource-usage exacerbates deforestation and greenhouse-gas emissions.[29] This environmental burden is a major determinant of what has recently been termed the 'Sixth Extinction', an ongoing anthropogenic (human-created) mass extinction event, driven by growth, in which around a hundred species are lost each day.[30] Anthropocentrism in this first sense therefore denotes the profit-motive's continual creation of what Nicole Shukin calls 'animal capital', the homogenisation of flora and fauna and the 'carnal traffic of animal substances'. We

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[26] Roberto Marchesini, 'Zoomimesis', trans. by Jeffrey Bussolini, *Angelaki*, 21 (2016), 175–197 (p. 180).

[27] Herman Daly, 'Ecologies of Scale: Interview with Benjamin Kunkel', *New Left Review*, 109 (2018), 80–104 (p. 86); Clive Hamilton, *Growth Fetish* (Crows Nest: Allen and Unwin, 2003).

[28] Tony Weis, *The Ecological Hoofprint: The Global Burden of Industrial Livestock* (New York: Zed, 2013), pp. 1–2.

[29] Vaclav Smil, *Harvesting the Biosphere: What We Have Taken from Nature* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), p. 166.

[30] Elizabeth Kolbert, *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History* (New York: Henry Holt, 2014); Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (London: OR, 2016), p. 9.

live, Shukin writes, in a patently 'anthropocentric order of capitalism',[31] an economic system which requires nature to be viewed as a 'cheap' resource pool and free gift that can be extracted, produced, consumed and wasted with little consequence.[32]

Second, I also want to think of anthropocentrism as an ideological anxiety that disavows, immunises and securitises particular humans against an abjected other, whether that other is human or nonhuman. This is precisely what Benjamin is trying to articulate when he uses the metaphor of 'gloves', and it is what Derrida identifies when he speaks of the 'animal' as a word that men 'have given themselves in order to be identified, in order to be recognised, with a view to being what they say they are, namely, men, capable of replying and responding in the name of men.'[33] Thought of in this way, anthropocentrism becomes not simply a prejudicial and personalised ordering of the human above the nonhuman, but a mutable immunitary logic, institutionalised within legal and discursive frameworks, that consolidates narrow and exclusive kinds of humanity against other forms of life. Thinking about anthropocentrism in this way helps us make sense of how species difference is historically-determined as a site of ongoing sociocultural contestation, rather than a natural or essential given. According to Claire Jean Kim, species difference 'tends to be deeply naturalised, its constructedness unrecognised'.[34] But if Michel Foucault's work has long taught us that the concept of 'man is only a recent invention, a figure not yet two centuries old', as he writes in *The Order of Things* (1966),[35] then so too must we think of the human's others as perpetually being invented in opposition to the human. Thus, just like the assemblages of gender or race into discrete identities, so too is species a discursively produced field of difference, an essentialising category irreducible to biology alone, in which some lives are humanised and others animalised. Cary Wolfe calls this the 'humanist discourse of species', a discourse that ingrains hierarchies into the functioning of everyday life, 'available for use by some humans against other humans as well'.[36] More recently, Megan H. Glick's *Infrahumanisms* (2018) further deconstructs how biocultural discourses produce 'hierarchies of speciation' that 'shift according to time and place', with the categories of human and animal often

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[31] Nicole Shukin, *Animal Capital: Rendering Life in Biopolitical Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), pp. 7, 11.

[32] Raj Patel and Jason W. Moore, *A History of the World in Seven Cheap Things: A Guide to Capitalism, Nature, and the Future of the Planet* (London: Verso, 2017), p. 23.

[33] Derrida, *The Animal*, p. 32.

[34] Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species, and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 16.

[35] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. xxv.

[36] Wolfe, *Animal Rites: American Culture, the Discourse of Species and Posthumanist Theory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), p. 8.

being shaped in contestation with one another.[37] A critical animal studies perspective therefore enables us to see how anthropocentrism is a network of informal and institutionalised 'systems of power that are in the service of those who are considered by the dominant culture to be fully and properly human'.[38] Anthropocentrism names the construction of both a hierarchy between species *and* an exclusive humanity founded on a rejection of other forms of life.

Feminist and critical race scholars have long held that humanity is not a universally inhabited category. According to Sylvia Wynter, for example, the colonial construct of 'Man' 'overrepresents itself as if it were the human itself'.[39] Wynter capitalises 'Man' in order show how this identity comes to claim and signify humanity as such. The dominant and gendered concept of 'Man' shrinks what she calls the other 'genres' of living in the world, thus pushing out other humans from the orbit of humanity and foreclosing future ideas of ways to 'be' human. Not all humans can occupy the space of human subjectivity or personhood equally. Elsewhere, Judith Butler captures this sense of humanity as an exclusionary space when she writes that 'the human' is 'a differential norm', 'a value and a morphology that may be allocated and retracted, aggrandised, personified, degraded and disavowed, elevated and affirmed. The norm continues to produce the nearly impossible paradox of a human who is no human […] Wherever there is the human, there is the inhuman'.[40] For Butler, the term 'inhuman' refers to humans who at any one time have been perceived as not being fully human. While Sebald (chapter one) and Coetzee (chapter two) are concerned with the ways in which antisemitism and apartheid produce this figure of the inhuman, I will pay special attention to this figuration in my third chapter on Mahasweta Devi. Here, I explore how India's indigenous communities (adivasis) are denied personhood and equated with 'nature' by both colonial and postcolonial regimes of power.

Although the normative category of the human has already received rigorous critique, critical animal studies' analysis of anthropocentrism remains important because it reveals how enduring taxonomies of difference – such as species, race, and gender – are historically produced and connected to one another by dominant forms of knowledge production. Two key early texts that develop these arguments are Donna Haraway's *Primate Visions* (1989) and Carol J. Adams' *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990). First, Haraway's critique of primatology shows us how 'race as a natural-technical object of knowledge is fundamentally a category marking politi-

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[37] Megan H. Glick, *Infrahumanisms: Science, Culture, and the Making of Modern Non/Personhood* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 4, 9.

[38] Calarco, pp. 25–26.

[39] Wynter, p. 260.

[40] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p. 76.

cal power through location in "nature"'.[41] In other words, anthropocentrism's logics of speciation lift some into the orbit of humanity while locating racialised others in nature. Second, Adams' work brings second-wave radical feminism into conversation with animal liberation discourse in order to argue that patriarchal anthropocentrism creates a 'cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption, which links butchering and sexual violence'.[42] Gender and meat-eating are, for Adams, inextricable aspects of anthropocentrism.

In more recently published research, scholars working at the intersections of post-colonial studies, critical race studies, disability studies and ecocriticism have argued that the logic of anthropocentrism projects 'animality' onto subjugated human others who are defined by their corporeality. Claire Jean Kim's research on the colonial racialisation of native Americans and Chinese-Americans, for example, suggests that 'race is forged in the crucible of ideas about animality and nature'.[43] Kalpana Rahita Seshadri's research into the biopolitics of race and animality via logocentrism (the institutional privileging of speech, or language, as the marker of what is properly human) uncovers how 'the site of animalisation or brutalisation is primarily one where language as representation and legitimate speech becomes inaccessible.'[44] While Seshadri analyses how speech functions in discourses of racialisation and species-difference, Mel Y. Chen argues that anthropocentrism relentlessly creates 'animacy hierarchies' between so-called lively and lifeless matter: this includes not just racialised or gendered subjectivities, but also dis/abled ones too, those whose 'agency, awareness, mobility, and liveness' is constantly doubted.[45] These intersections between gender, disability and animality are interrogated further in Sunaura Taylor's *Beasts of Burden* (2016) and Lori Gruen and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey's edited collection *Animaladies* (2019).[46] In postcolonial literary studies, numerous scholars have articulated how anthropocentrism underpins coloniality, Eurocentrism and the exploitation of human and nonhuman life.[47] Finally, Billy-Ray Belcourt and Kim TallBear, writing from different indige-

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[41] Haraway, *Primate Visions: Gender, Race, and Nature in the World of Modern Science* (London: Routledge, 1989), p. 153.

[42] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Twentieth anniversary edn. (New York: Continuum, 2010), p. 47.

[43] Kim, p. 25.

[44] Kalpana Rahita Seshadri, *HumAnimal: Race, Law, Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 12, ix.

[45] Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), pp. 2, 5, 20.

[46] Sunaura Taylor, *Beasts of Burden: Animal and Disability Liberation* (New York: The New Press, 2016); Lori Gruen and Fiona Probyn-Rapsey, eds., *Animaladies: Gender, Animals, and Madness* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019).

[47] See: Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 5; Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Handley, eds.,

nous standpoints, call on critical animal studies to analyse anthropocentrism as the 'anchor of speciesism, capitalism, *and* settler colonialism',[48] and to learn from indigenous knowledge about 'the interrelatedness of all things'.[49]

Elsewhere, interventions from critical race scholars have clarified how anthropocentrism defines humanity against black and animal life, thereby producing racialisation via human-animal hierarchies. Achille Mbembe argues that the trope of animality became a signature 'meta-text' of colonial anti-black racism, which literally and symbolically imagined colonised peoples as a nonhuman species: 'discourse on Africa is almost always deployed in the framework (or on the fringes) of a meta-text about the *animal*—to be exact, about the *beast*', Mbembe writes. For him, colonialism is ultimately 'carniverous' in that it takes 'killing a human being and killing an animal [to] proceed from the same logic.'[50] Like Mbembe, Che Gossett suggests that 'the colonial racialisation of blackness has figured and functioned as the animalisation and bestialisation of blackness.'[51] Frank Wilderson III analyses – through a reading of J. M. Coetzee's essay collection *White Writing* (1988) – how European settlers perceived southern Africa's indigenous KhoiSan communities as an 'anthropological void'.[52] In *Habeas Viscus* (2014), Alexander Weheliye builds on the work of Hortense Spillers and Sylvia Wynter in order to recalibrate biopolitical theory with racialisation. Weheliye outlines how race is 'a conglomerate of sociopolitical relations that discipline humanity into full humans, not-quite-humans, and nonhumans'.[53] Most recently, Bénédicte Boisseron's *Afro-Dog* (2018) interrogates how 'the history of the animal and the black in the black Atlantic is *connected*' because anthropocentrism 'compulsively conjures up black-

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Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Pablo Upamanyu Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[48] Billy-Ray Belcourt, 'Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects: (Re)Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought', *Societies*, 5 (2015), 1–11 (p. 4) <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc5010001>.

[49] Kim TallBear, 'Beyond the Life/Not-Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking, and the New Materialisms', in *Cryopolitics: Frozen Life in a Melting World*, ed. by Joann Radin and Emma Kowal (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), pp. 179–202 (p. 180).

[50] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), pp. 1, 24–28, 236.

[51] Che Gossett, 'Blackness, Animality, and the Unsovereign', *Verso*, September 28 2015 <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2228-che-gossett-blackness-animality-and-the-unsovereign> [Accessed 10/08/2018].

[52] Frank Wilderson III, 'Gramci's Black Marx: Whither the Slave in Civil Society?', *Social Identities*, 9 (2003), 225–240 (p. 235); see: J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing: On the Culture of Letters in South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), p. 15.

[53] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 3.

ness and animality together to measure the value of existence'.[54] Importantly, these arguments rarely leverage human suffering in order to substantiate the case for animal liberation, nor do they simply compare or analogise human and non-human oppressions. In fact, not all of these writers are interested in advocating for an inter-species solidarity with nonhumans. Because of colonialism's profound yoking of blackness and animality, these critics are, by and large, more concerned with demanding the recognition of their own humanity than discussing a shared animality. But precisely because their work disentangles the historical relationship between racialisation and animalisation, each of these writers arrives at the idea that the discourse of species – the human-animal dichotomy – is conjoined with other modalities of human oppression.[55] Because of this, I think of anthropocentrism as a form of colonial and patriarchal domination over other lives considered to be inhuman or nonhuman; and I propose creaturely forms as a literary response to these hierarchies. I provide this brief literature review in order to show the diverse approaches to and theorisations of anthropocentrism's projection of animality onto human others, and to situate my own research within an emerging body of literature which interrogates the production of difference and power.

The texts under discussion in this thesis all tell stories about the scale and weight of these two forms of anthropocentrism, as well as how these dominant anthropocentrisms rebound onto human and nonhuman lives across different areas of the world. For at one level, this thesis analyses how Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta each bear witness to anthropocentrism's reification and exploitation of nonhuman life. In chapters one and two, for example, my close readings reveal how Sebald and Coetzee lament the historically escalating over-production of animal flesh, what has recently been termed the 'meatification' of modernity.[56] And in my third chapter, I contend that Mahasweta portrays India's development agenda as an ecological crisis that obliterates nonhuman habitats. At another level, this thesis is also concerned with how Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta suggest connections between human and nonhuman suffering. Sebald's and Coetzee's fictions provocatively imply that the Nazi genocide of Jewish life can be thought alongside the industrialised slaughter of animals. And Mahasweta's writing considers how post-colonial governmentality forces India's indigenous peoples to compete with elephants for scarce resources. In 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' (1989), Mahasweta also takes seriously the notion that India's adivasis are 'endangered', but at the very same time attempts to combat the ideological conceptualisation of adi-

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[54] Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and the Animal Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. xx. Boisseron's emphasis.

[55] Zakiyyah Iman Jackson, 'Animal: New Directions in the Theorization of Race and Posthumanism', *Feminist Studies*, 39 (2013), 669–685 (p. 674).

[56] Weis, 'Towards 120 Billion: Dietary Change and Animal Lives', *Radical Philosophy*, 199 (2016), 8–13 (p. 8).

vasis as being inhuman eco-savages who are harmoniously in sync with nature. In many ways, then, all three writers risk conflating human and nonhuman oppressions. But I argue that they take this risk in order to unearth deep grammars of anthropocentrism that sanction the destruction of human and nonhuman life. At a third level, I also aim to chart how Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta dramatise encounters with animality that suggest less destructive ways in which humans and animals might yet live with and alongside one another. Despite writing from and within different locations, histories and epistemes, the authors under discussion in this thesis write key scenes in which their characters and narrators are compelled to become more attentive towards animals. I will argue that in these scenes of slow, careful, and deliberate attention or stretching out towards nonhuman lives, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta imagine new, non-anthropocentric genres of being human. Finally, my chapters also ask how these three authors consider the practice of writing itself to be connected to the reproduction or deconstruction of anthropocentrism. The way that their texts turn away from or reimagine particular literary forms is indicative of and indeed an important function of their wider challenge to the anthropocentric war against the animal.

Literature: Anthropological Machine or Creaturely Form?

So what role does literature play in the war against the animal? The discipline of literary animal studies argues that literature registers and refracts the relations between humans and animals. From Margot Norris's *Beasts of the Modern Imagination* (1985) and Marion Scholtmeijer's *Animal Victims in Modern Fiction* (1993), all the way to more recent publications such as Mario Ortiz Robles' *Literature and Animal Studies* (2016) and Catherine Parry's *Other Animals in Twenty-First Century Fiction* (2017), literary animal studies teaches us how to recognise the ubiquity of nonhuman animals in literature and to analyse different authorial approaches to portraying nonhumans. In recent years, critics have turned to the interrelation of representation and narrative strategies. John Simons' *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (2002), for example, concludes that the many tropes, images and figures of the nonhuman animal across literary forms all serve to define the human against the nonhuman. In *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (2008), Philip Armstrong traces how representations of animals change concomitantly with the historical and geographical transformations of novelistic forms. And in *Animal Stories* (2011), Susan McHugh argues that animal-centred or animal-narrated stories are pivotal sites in the ongoing ideological production of species difference.[57] In an agenda-setting review essay that asks 'What Kind of Liter-

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[57] John Simons, *Animal Rights and the Politics of Literary Representation* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), pp. 87, 176; Philip Armstrong, *What Animals Mean in the Fiction of Modernity* (London:

ary Animal Studies Do We Want, or Need?', Robert McKay encapsulates literary animal studies' scope when he writes that its scholars 'conscientiously attend to the representational complexity of cultural imaginings of animals' lives and deaths, and of the manifold encounters with humans that often mark the passage from one to the other.'[58] Literary animal studies refuses to read literary animals as mere metaphors for a given text's other human characters. Instead, its critics articulate how literary representations of animals are complex formal instantiations of the way humans think about and live alongside animals.

While literary animal studies focuses predominantly on the 'representational problems of animals', the field has been less concentrated in its analysis of the politics of literature itself.[59] Although critics have given a clear account of the many 'demands animals place on literary representation', as Mario Ortiz Robles puts it,[60] they have only rarely examined how these demands are interlinked with literary forms themselves. One of the key contributions I make in this thesis is to develop the idea that literary forms are politically involved in the construction and deconstruction of anthropocentrism. I build on literary animal studies' methods for interpreting the relationship between literature and anthropocentrism by focusing not just on how different works of literature can represent animals. I will argue that literary forms participate discursively in the war against animals, variously enabling and disabling a creaturely encounter between humans and animality. In other words, although literature has the potential to function as an *anthropological machine*, a discursive apparatus that symbolically consolidates hegemonic anthropocentrisms, and biopolitically decides between the human and the animal, literature can also be a *creaturely form* – a form of writing that suspends anthropocentrism's violent decision between humanity and animality. Throughout this thesis, my case studies indicate that literature has the potential to 'think the war we find ourselves waging', to quote Derrida again.

In this section, I will think through the politics of literature by asking: how does literature intervene in the question of the animal? My understanding of literature's politics derives from a reading of Jacques Rancière's work on the politics of literature and the regime of art in modernity. For Rancière, the politics of literature does not necessarily correspond with the politics of individual authors. Instead, Rancière argues that literature 'does politics' simply by being literature. Literature has a fundamental stake in the political insofar as it both shares-out and divides-

Routledge, 2008); Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating across Species Lines* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

[58] Robert McKay, 'What Kind of Literary Animal Studies Do We Want, or Need?', *MFS*, 60 (2014), 636–644 (p. 637).

[59] McHugh, 'Literary Animal Agents', *PMLA*, 124 (2009), 487–495 (p. 491).

[60] Mario Ortiz Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies* (London: Routledge, 2016), p. xi.

up what is sensible, sayable, or perceptible. He theorises this through the concept of *'le partage du sensible'*, a phrase often translated as the distribution or partition of the sensible. The 'distribution of the sensible' means that literature is political because it is always participating in what is taken to be politically 'sensible' or intelligible. Each sentence, each chapter, each and every work of literature is political because its formal articulation reconfigures what counts politically. This is important because, in contradistinction to what Rancière calls the classical Aristotelian dictum that great art imitates great men, the modern phenomenon of literature abandons this ancient and hierarchical mimesis. Literature instead carries 'new objects and subjects onto the common stage. It makes visible what was invisible, it makes audible as speaking beings those who were previously heard as noisy animals.'[61]

When Rancière discusses literature as a regime of visibility, he is talking about specific forms of writing that begin to circulate in Europe around the turn of the nineteenth century. His points of reference are Madame de Staël, Flaubert, Balzac, and Victor Hugo. When he discusses literature's 'noisy animals', then, he is referring to none other than the working class, the proletarian labourers who turned to the written word in order to form new political communities for organising towards revolution. Rancière thus thinks of literature to be a democratic horizon for class consciousness, a horizon for the ongoing 'configuration of a specific form of community' and 'constructi[on] of a common world', in which 'certain objects are posited as shared and certain subjects regarded as capable of designating these objects and of arguing about them.'[62] Each work of literature thus transforms our sense of what we consider to be politically considerable. Like Mikhail Bakhtin's notions of heteroglossia and polyphony, then, Rancière sees literature as calling forth a new democratic chorus of human voices, 'the consciousness of real people'.[63] While his Marxist contemporaries Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar argue that the emergence of literature announces a restrictive 'bourgeois cultural revolution',[64] Rancière affirms that literature is an apparatus, a logic and *dispositif* that recognises types of subjectivity which were never before politically counted. For him, literature expands the archive of who is understood to be human.

Rancière's arguments are instructive for understanding how literature is political regardless of its political commitments. But in order to avoid any idealism, it is

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[61] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, trans. by Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 3–5.

[62] Ibid.

[63] Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. by Michael Holquist, trans. by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), p. 292.

[64] Pierre Macherey and Etienne Balibar, 'Literature as an Ideological Form: Some Marxist Propositions', *Oxford Literary Review*, 3 (1978), 4–12 (p. 6).

necessary to stress the relative *ambivalence* of this position. Literature might well be a profoundly democratic form in that it opens up new ways of writing, reading and responding to the world, as Rancière suggests. But this does not necessarily mean that a given text's redistribution of the sensible is necessarily on the side of democracy, let alone on the side of the animal. While some literary works may well expand the borders of the political, others might contract the political and retain a narrower focus on culturally dominant forms of life. Think, for example, of the prototypical British realist novel. Literary critics have long argued that the early British novel invented a particularly narrow kind of autonomous, liberal personhood. Ian Watt's foundational *The Rise of the Novel* (1957) details how the novel form erupts at the very moment in which eighteenth-century England crystallised its notion of autonomous individualism by assimilating Lockean and Cartesian philosophies of the individual's sensory perception alongside high capitalism, the marketplace, and empire.[65] And in Nancy Armstrong's more recent work *How Novels Think* (2005), she argues that 'the history of the novel and the history of the modern subject are, quite literally, one and the same.' For Armstrong, though, the early novel not only fabricates particular ideas about a 'universal' human subject. It thereafter actively guards this rhetorical figuration of the human as if it were the only type of humanity, 'invalidat[ing] competing notions of the subject' in the process.[66] Alternatively, perhaps we could take the *Bildungsroman* as another example, a genre that cooperates with 'the Enlightenment project to modernise, normalise, and civilise' the human subject, as Joseph Slaughter teaches us. Because the *Bildungsroman* sought to announce 'humankind's coming of age – the *Bildung* of the species', it concomitantly defines its notion of 'the human' against other colonised humans and animals – those deemed inhuman and nonhuman – who cannot be 'civilised'.[67] These kinds of novels are biopolitical instruments that carefully calculate and police *who* or *what* is counted in the orbit of personhood, interpellating some as subjects while deterring or detaining other forms of life. Indeed, Amitav Ghosh's recent lectures on literature and climate change propose that the novel form itself is anthropocentric because its historical emergence dovetails with modernity's disenchantment and reification of nature: 'it was in exactly the period in which human activity was changing the earth's atmosphere that the literary imagination became radically centred on the human'.[68] The novel form is thus founded,

[65] Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding* (London: Penguin, 1968), pp. 17–18, 62.
[66] Nancy Armstrong, *How Novels Think: The Limits of Individualism from 1719–1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p. 3.
[67] Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), pp. 5, 107.
[68] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), pp. 7, 5, 66.

for Ghosh, on a suppression of and alienation from animality, in which the human represses the possibility of its own animality.

We might call these kinds of texts 'anthropological machines'. I take this term from Giorgio Agamben, who describes the anthropological machine as a contraption of biopower that creates and polices a border between 'human' and 'animal' life. In *The Open: Man and Animal* (2002), Agamben writes that the anthropological machine is an apparatus or *dispositif*, 'a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human'. The anthropological machine is a tool for anthropogenesis: it archives – records *and* produces – a particular idea of what the human is. He emphasises that the anthropological machine is 'not an event that has been completed once and for all', but 'an occurrence that is always under way […] every time and in each individual decides between the human and the animal'. Agamben traces two iterations of the anthropological machine: an ancient machine, which *humanises the animal*, and a modern iteration, which *animalises the human*. He argues that 'Both machines are able to function only by establishing a zone of indifference at their centres [...] – a *bare life*.' If for the ancients 'the slave, the barbarian, and the foreigner' are all 'figures of an animal in human form', then in the post-Darwinian world the modern anthropological machine 'isolat[es] the nonhuman within the human', turning some humans into 'the animal separated within the human body itself', the inhuman. Thus the modern anthropological machine marks a rift between human and animality; it continually 'decides upon and recomposes the conflict between man and animal', generating the contours of what can be politically counted as human through the concomitant 'suspension and capture of animal life'.[69] For Agamben, the anthropological machine is the ground of politics. Sovereignty itself derives from a fundamental decision about what can be counted as human, and what can therefore be discounted as animal. Following Hannah Arendt, Agamben considers the refugee as an exemplary figure produced by the modern anthropological machine: detained in camps and stripped of citizenship, the refugee is confined within a material as well as an ontological no-man's-land.[70] But this theorisation has received robust criticisms. For there is a tendency within Agamben's thought, critics argue, to both fetishise bare life and ignore race, colonialism, and slavery. By overlooking blackness in particular – with slavery standing as the 'unthought' of dominant biopolitical theory, according to Fred Moten – Agamben's notion of the anthropological machine risks duplicating the violence it wishes to deconstruct. Even so, these critiques do not wish to abandon a biopolitical analysis altogether. Instead, by opening Agamben's

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[69] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), pp. 26, 79, 37, 75, 80. Agamben's emphasis.

[70] Agamben, 'We Refugees', trans. by Michael Rocke, *Symposium*, 49 (1995), 114–119 (p. 117).

thought to the specificity of race, we can reach a more nuanced understanding of how the anthropological machine yokes animality and racialisation.[71]

How can we bring the politics of literature into conversation with the anthropological machine? Let me return to Rancière in order to intentionally stretch his claims. Rancière is not asking whether the working class possess the capacity for speech. Rather, he is hypothesising that the working class have been deliberately rendered invisible and inaudible. For him, literature presents a new aesthetic opportunity for their *humanisation*. In all of this it is clear that Rancière is not invested in animal ethics. But if we read his metaphor literally, it is as if Rancière is suggesting that the question of the species boundary is not an ahistorical given, but is continually being produced and negotiated by each work of literature's partition of the sensible. Reading Rancière in this way allows us to hypothesise that literary works are always already navigating the relationship between species. Literature participates in the distribution and separation of humanity and animality; it has a stake in the ongoing sociocultural partition of the species boundary.

By bringing Rancière and Agamben together, I contend that literature's redistribution of the sensible continually decides between the supposed binary of humanity and animality, between hegemonic anthropocentrisms and other forms of living. That is, certain forms of literature can be read as being complicit with the modern anthropological machine. Some literary works might function as cogwheels within the anthropological machine's discursive partition of the human and the animal. In other words, if literary forms can function as 'machines for producing […] centred subjects', as Fredric Jameson writes of the *Bildungsroman*, they risk narrowing down the genres of the human, and thereby defining an idea of the human against those other beings – whether inhuman or nonhuman – who are not determined to be sufficiently human.[72] This gives us a new way of approaching literature as 'a means of communicating ideology', 'an ideological construct itself', and a means of 'resist[ing] ideology', as Susan Lanser writes in her development of a feminist narratology.[73] In effect, then, each and every work of literature, each and every form, is faced with a decision about whether it will uphold the anthropological machine. Across this thesis, I contend that creaturely forms are those works of lit-

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[71] On this, see: Sibylle Fischer, 'Haiti: Fantasies of Bare Life', *Small Axe*, 23 (2007), 1–15 (p. 8); Frank B. Wilderson III, *Red, White & Black: Cinema and the Structure of U. S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 35–36; Fred Moten, *The Universal Machine* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 52, 64, 42; Weheliye, pp. 38, 82.

[72] Fredric Jameson, 'On Literary and Cultural Import-Substitution in the Third World: The Case of the Testimonio', in G. M. Gugelberger, ed., *The Real Thing: Testimonial Discourse and Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), pp. 172–191 (p. 182).

[73] Susan Lanser, *The Narrative Act: Point of View in Prose Fiction* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981), pp. 100–101.

erature that do not want to decide between the human and the animal. They instead want to occupy the space between the human and the animal, a liminal space that I will refer to as the creaturely. I will argue that, by rejecting the anthropological machine's decisionist logic, authors generate new aesthetic repertoires for representing human-animal living. Creaturely forms are works that attempt to tell a different story about humans and other animals. To rework Walter Benjamin's phrase, if the human is travelling on the locomotive of anthropocentrism, then creaturely forms reach for the emergency brake.[74] Creaturely forms want to halt or jam the anthropological machine.

Although this thesis focuses on and is historically contingent upon texts published at the end of the twentieth century, my arguments can be productively brought to bear on other historical innovations in literary aesthetics. Margot Norris, Carrie Rohman, Virginia Richter and Derek Ryan have all demonstrated how modernist literature in particular expresses a profound 'species anxiety'[75] as writers witnessed the aftermath of evolutionary theory, the peak of British imperialist rule, and the emergence of psychoanalytic thought. After Darwin's 'catastrophic blow to human privilege vis-à-vis the species question' especially, Rohman writes, modernist forms emerged as a 'privileged site for the discursive consideration of animality'.[76] For Ryan, modernist aesthetics – exemplified by authors such as D. H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf – strive for a nonanthropocentric ethical encounter with animality.[77] And Norris suggests that there is a latent 'biocentric' tradition within modernist aesthetics that tries – but, for her, mostly fails – to leave anthropocentrism behind. 'Biocentric modernism' is Norris's name for a kind of aesthetics that is less a representation of and more an animalised 'discharge of energy and power'. Within this tradition only Franz Kafka is said to articulate a 'negative side of narration' in which he writes not *like* an animal but *as* an animal, with his animality speaking.[78] Indeed, it was Walter Benjamin who wrote that Kafka's writing is particularly 'attentive' towards animality.[79]

I build on these investigations into modernist literary posthumanisms by interrogating how late-twentieth-century literature (written in the wake of the Second

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[74] Walter Benjamin, *Selected Writings, vol. 4 1938–1940*, ed. by Eiland and Jennings (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), p. 402.

[75] Virginia Richter, *Literature After Darwin: Human Beasts in Western Fiction, 1859–1939* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2011), p. 8.

[76] Carrie Rohman, *Stalking the Subject: Modernism and the Animal* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 1, 27.

[77] Derek Ryan, 'Following Snakes and Moths: Modernist Ethics and Posthumanism', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 61 (2015), 287–304 (p. 298).

[78] Margot Norris, *Beasts of the Modern Imagination: Darwin, Nietzsche, Kafka, Ernst and Lawrence* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), pp. 1, 12, 133.

[79] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p. 810.

World War, anticolonial struggle, the popularisation of ecological thought, and the rise and consolidation of neoliberal orthodoxies) correspondingly undoes literature's anthropocentrism. The authors under discussion in this thesis all use literary forms to divest literature from its possible anthropocentrisms, to subvert the novel form from within, and to adopt more creaturely forms of writing and living. Indeed, this thesis focuses on three authors who have been labelled as late modernists. Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta have not only acknowledged significant literary debts to modernist forebears (from Kafka to Conrad to the writers of the Bengal Renaissance), but their texts all display numerous modes of formal experimentation that are inseparable from a thematic preoccupation with the onrush of an increasingly late modernity. As I hope to show, these authors' formal experimentations are tied to their preoccupation with animality. I will argue that, in some works, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta test out whether novelistic forms can suspend the anthropological machine. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2001), Coetzee's *Disgrace* (1999) and Mahasweta's story 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' (1989) work through the relationship between dramatic plotting, human development, and anthropocentrism. In other more experimental works such as Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995), Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals* (first delivered as lectures in 1997, published as two short narratives in 1999, and later re-published in 2003 as the metafictional novel *Elizabeth Costello*), and Mahasweta's short stories, each author draws from other, sometimes minor genres and forms in order to stage different kinds of narrative encounters with animality. Sebald's use of images throughout his texts on the one side, and Coetzee's recourse to metafictional narrative strategies on the other, are crucial for considering how literature grapples with anthropocentrism. Mahasweta's work is also noteworthy here because of the ways in which she uses anthropomorphic representation, free indirect discourse, and the episodic intensity of the short story form in order to problematise the anthropocentrism of what she calls 'modern man'. Ultimately, these are three authors who subvert literature from within, adopting literary forms in order to tell different stories about humanity's relationship with other animals. In other words, if I have been thinking of literature as an apparatus, as a technology of visibility that has historically fictionalised a narrow idea of the human, then these writers attempt to give literature what Agamben would call a 'new use'.[80] They transform literature into a form of writing more attentive towards animality – a creaturely form. But what thus far remains unexplained in this introduction is the question of why I am using the word "creaturely". This will be my task now.

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[80] Agamben, *Profanations*, trans. by Jeff Fort (New York: Zone, 2007), p. 86.

The Vicissitudes of the Creaturely: A Partial Genealogy

The creaturely has a complex genealogy. The term derives from the late Latinate neologism *creatura*, from the verb *creare*, meaning 'to create'. Because of its *-ura* suffix, Julia Lupton explains, *creatura* implies 'a thing always in the process of undergoing creation; the creature is actively passive or, better, *passionate*, perpetually becoming created, subject to transformation at the behest of the arbitrary commands of an Other.'[81] In contemporary usage we might think of the words culture, nature, figure, or sculpture – phenomena that are always being shaped and reshaped, always becoming. In its adjectival form, the creaturely [*kreatürlich* in German] has itself been significantly reshaped over the past centuries. Beatrice Hanssen reveals how the word first denotes the idea of a created world; in the late Middle Ages, the creaturely becomes synonymous with the German *Geschöpf*, meaning a created being, or, a part of God's creation; and it is used in this context up until the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, when it eventually drops out of common usage after the popularisation of the more secularised concept of 'nature'.[82]

The creaturely returns in the twentieth century's interwar period as the keyword of a German-Jewish intellectual project. In 1926, the Jewish poet and philosopher Martin Buber published the inaugural issue of a short-lived interdenominational and socialist journal, *Die Kreatur* (1926–1929). Writing alongside his co-editors Viktor von Weizsäcker (a Protestant psychiatrist) and Joseph Wittig (a Catholic theologian) in the journal's opening editorial, Buber insists on a new 'dialogue' [*das Gespräch*] between their three faiths, a dialogue founded on their 'common concern for the creature' [*gemeinsame Sorge um die Kreatur*]. 'This journal', he adds, 'will speak of the world – of all beings, of all things, of all events of our contemporary world – in a way that reveals its creaturely nature.'[83] Buber thus draws on the creaturely in order to foster a Christian-Jewish exchange pointed towards the shared political horizon of socialism. But it is Walter Benjamin – another of *Die Kreatur's* contributors – who loads creatureliness with more and more meanings. In Benjamin's breathless essay-report on his 1926 visit to the capital of the Soviet Union, 'Moscow', submitted for publication in *Die Kreatur's* second issue, he

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[81] Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Creature Caliban', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 1–23 (p. 1). Lupton's emphasis.

[82] Beatrice Hanssen, *Walter Benjamin's Other History: Of Stones, Animals, Human Beings, and Angels* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), pp. 103–104.

[83] Martin Buber, Viktor von Weizsäcker, Joseph Wittig, 'Vorwort', *Die Kreatur*, 1 (1926), pp. 1–2. My translation. For more on *Die Kreatur*, see: Elizabeth Petuchowski, '*Die Kreatur*, an Interdenominational Journal, and Martin Buber's Strange Use of the Term "Reality" ("Wirklichkeit")', *Deutsche Vierteljahrsschrift für Literaturwissenschaft und Geistesgeschichte*, 69 (1995), 766–787; Daniel Weidner, '"Going together without coming together": "Die Kreatur" (1926–1929) and Why We Should Read German Jewish Journals Differently', *Naharaim*, 10 (2016), 103–126.

makes no explicit mention of the creaturely. But in a letter sent to Buber in 1927, Benjamin defends his essay's inclusion in the journal on the grounds that it 'will be devoid of all theory. This, I hope, is precisely what will enable me to give voice to the creaturely [*das Kreaturliche*]'. In order to 'give voice' to the creaturely, he writes, one must go about 'grasping and preserving this very new, strange language which loudly resounds through the acoustical mask of an environment that has been utterly transformed.'[84] Here, Benjamin imagines the creaturely as signifying both the transformation of life into a new language *and* his own translation of this language into human expression. He strives to capture this in both the form and content of his 'Moscow' essay. One exemplary sentence, which pairs revolutionary fervour with a rapid, repetitive literary style, reads: 'Each thought, each day, each life lies here as on a laboratory table […] No organism, no organisation, can escape this process.'[85] In 1927, then, the *Kreaturliche* comes to name the 'new, strange language' of life as it is transformed by the accelerating pace of Bolshevism. But this creaturely language can only be heard, and can only be given voice to, by an openness and receptivity which is 'devoid of all theory'. Benjamin will later call this mode of receptivity attentiveness.

But Benjamin's contributions to *Die Kreatur* mark just one instance of a longstanding critical preoccupation with the creaturely. In fact, Benjamin's critics have revealed how the term constantly mutates throughout his work. Across two and a half decades of writing, from his early studies of German tragic drama and the 'language of man' to his essays on Franz Kafka, Karl Kraus, and the storyteller, Benjamin theorises an idiosyncratic and polyvalent conceptualisation of the creaturely. He often positions the term at the 'curious intersection of theology and materialism',[86] Andrew Benjamin writes, between Jewish Gnosticism and Marxist dialectics. At the same time, the term comes to describe the postlapsarian condition, sovereign power in epic theatre, the melancholia of nature, and secularisation's 'reduction of the human being to the creaturely state'.[87] Benjamin's theological register casts the creaturely as another name for human finitude and lack, thus disputing both the 'dominant bourgeois rhetoric of individual creativity and […] the

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[84] Walter Benjamin quoted in Nahum N. Glatzer and Paul Mendes-Flohr, eds., *The Letters of Martin Buber: A Life in Dialogue*, trans. by Richard and Clara Winston and Harry Zohn (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996), p. 350.

[85] Walter Benjamin, 'Moscow', trans. by Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 1, 1927–1930*, ed. by Michael W. Jennings, Howard Eiland and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 22–46 (p. 28).

[86] Andrew Benjamin, *Walter Benjamin and History* (London: Bloomsbury, 2005), p. 109.

[87] Sigrid Weigel, *Walter Benjamin: Images, the Creaturely, and the Holy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 12.

communist rhetoric of a promethean collective creativity'.[88] But he never loses sight of leftist politics either. In his writings on surrealism, Benjamin envisions a creaturely politics borne out of an engagement with Marxism. He conceptualises this politics, albeit elliptically, as 'anthropological materialism', an aggregate of 'political materialism and physical creatureliness' which re-centres corporeality in the name of 'dialectical justice'.[89]

For the purposes of this thesis, in which I explore late-twentieth-century literature's encounters with animality, I am especially interested in how Benjamin's creaturely politics implies a critique of and transition away from anthropocentrism. For as Beatrice Hanssen demonstrates in her exhaustive study *Walter Benjamin's Other History* (1989), Benjamin draws on the creaturely as part of an 'all-inclusive turn toward nature' in which he interrogates 'the status and predominance of the human subject', developing 'a renewed attention to what traditionally was considered to be less than human'. Hanssen uncovers how Benjamin conjured the creaturely as a 'de-limiting force'. His attention to the nonhuman – animals, stones, and angels – exposes the assumed borders of the human (its *delimitations*) while also destabilising or exceeding these borders (to *de-limit* them). The creaturely thus suggests a new politics that escapes from 'the confines of the merely human'.[90] In other words, as we saw at the start of this introduction with *One-Way Street*, the creaturely names an attempt to think humanity's affinity *with* rather than mastery *over* the creature.[91] To activate this cross-species alliance, Benjamin writes, we must loosen the trappings of theoretical instrumentalisation and, instead, pay attention to the nonhuman. *Attention* is the operative word here. As Benjamin writes of Kafka, 'Even if Kafka did not pray […] he still possessed in the highest degree what Malebranche called "the natural prayer of the soul": attentiveness [*Aufmerksamkeit*]. And in this attentiveness he included all creatures'.[92] Here, Benjamin invokes the creaturely as an ontological, political, theological and formal problematic. The creaturely names an encounter with animality, but it also names a form of uncompromising attentiveness which is prompted by this encounter with animality. This attentiveness not only reinscribes the theological into the animal, but it simultaneously reimagines the human in the image of the animal, as a creature among other creatures. At its heart, then, Benjamin's conceptual-

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[88] Rainer Nägele, 'Dialectical Materialism Between Brecht and the Frankfurt School', in *The Cambridge Companion to Walter Benjamin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 152–176 (p. 160).

[89] Walter Benjamin, 'Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia', trans. by Edmund Jephcott, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 1*, pp. 207–221 (p. 217).

[90] Hanssen, pp. 104, 107, 6.

[91] Walter Benjamin, *Einbahnstrasse*, p. 14.

[92] Walter Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka', p. 810.

isation of the creaturely orients humans and nonhumans toward a world beyond anthropocentric mastery.

In the past two decades, as academic discourses have increasingly foregrounded the question of 'life' – from biopolitics to new materialism, from indigenous to disability studies, from the environmental to the medical humanities – there is an increasing emphasis placed on the practices of 'attentiveness'. In the developing field of multispecies studies and ethnography, for instance, scholars underline – albeit without referencing Benjamin – how important it is to 'cultivat[e] new modes of attentiveness' towards nature and develop embodied modes of engagement.[93] Concomitant with this movement, numerous other critics have returned to Benjamin's work on the creaturely. On the one side, Eric Santner invokes the creaturely as a biopolitical exposure to modern governmentality which is specific to human life. On the other, Anat Pick mobilises the creaturely as a posthumanist signifier of vulnerability which is shared across the species barrier. Santner and Pick utilise much of the same critical vocabulary. They both share an intellectual debt to Benjamin and the German-Jewish tradition. They ask the same fundamental question: *who* or *what* is exposed to the traumatic dimension of political power? And they both use the creaturely as a way of generating a *negative relationality*, a universalism based on lack and vulnerability. But they nevertheless reach antithetical conclusions. For Santner, the creaturely alludes to the uniqueness of human life; for Pick, it connotes a politics of life without anthropocentrism. This shows us that, today, while the creaturely has re-emerged as a paradigmatic figure in contemporary thought, it also stands as a volatile and contested keyword in the ongoing tug of war between humanism and posthumanism.

On the one side, Santner's political-theological project – *On Creaturely Life* (2006), *The Royal Remains* (2011), and *The Weight of all Flesh* (2015) – argues that the creaturely 'pertains not primarily to a sense of a shared animality or a shared animal suffering but to a biopolitical animation that distinguishes the human from the animal'.[94] 'Human beings', Santner argues, are so uniquely beholden to the biopolitical machinations of sovereignty that they are *'more creaturely* than other creatures by virtue of an excess that is produced in the space of the political and that, paradoxically, accounts for their "humanity".' Santner's project therefore constructs a pessimistic anthropology in which creatureliness refers to a 'specifically human way of finding oneself caught in the midst of antagonisms in and of the

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[93] Thom Van Dooren, Eben Kirksey, and Ursula Münster, 'Multispecies Studies: Cultivating Arts of Attentiveness', *Environmental Humanities*, 8 (2016), 1–23 (p. 16).

[94] Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life*: *Rilke, Benjamin, Sebald* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), p. 39.

political field'.[95] In his more recent work, Santner develops a 'science of the flesh' which sharpens his sense of the creaturely as an 'ontological vulnerability […] that permeates human being'. For it is not that the human subject is transcendentally homeless in modernity, as György Lukács would have it; and it is not that modernity reminds us of the '"flesh-and-blood" of our existence as animals'. Instead, Santner posits that the human is supplemented in modernity with a 'surplus of "flesh"'.[96] The human has an excess of spectral fleshy matter, their 'subject-matter', which unstably enjoins the somatic to the normative, the psychic to the political.[97] At its best, Santner's work provides a matrix for analysing the human's psychological investment in the project of modernity. And I agree with him that by levelling out the differences between humans and other animals into a flat ontology, à la Bruno Latour or Jane Bennett, we risk overlooking how power is distributed unevenly across the species barrier. But for a project that is so invested in critiquing the power of the sovereign decision, Santner ultimately ends up making his own sovereign claim: the modern human is that thing that has more to lose than the animal. This notion – described as an act of 'species aristocratism' – not only crowns the human as the king of the planet, but also neglects how human sovereignty affects nonhuman life.[98] Here, then, I follow Jacques Derrida's late lectures on sovereignty, in which he asks us to be suspicious of those arguments that claim to know what is 'proper to man', of what is properly human.[99] Ultimately, Santner de-animalises the human, encourages human exceptionalism, forgets the relations between humans and other animals, and thereby reproduces the very logic of sovereignty they wish to question.[100]

On the other side, Anat Pick's *Creaturely Poetics* (2011) – published in the same year as *The Royal Remains* – argues that the creaturely signifies the flesh in its most purely corporeal rather than spectral forms. By focusing on corporeal vulnerabil-

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[95] Idid., pp. 26, xix. Santner's emphasis.

[96] Santner, *The Royal Remains: The People's Two Bodies and the Endgames of Sovereignty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), pp. 5–6, 74.

[97] Santner, *The Weight of All Flesh: On the Subject-Matter of Political Economy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p. 43.

[98] Diego Rossello, 'All in the (Human) Family? Species Aristocratism in the Return of Human Dignity', *Political Theory*, 45 (2016), 749–771 (p. 750).

[99] Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume 1*, ed. by Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet and Ginette Michaud, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 179.

[100] Moten also criticises Santner because what his account 'eschews, in the interest of a kind of transhistorical appeal to the history of the state of emergency, is the no less problematic history of the regular situation that remains unthought or relegated to the outskirts.' Just like Agamben, Santner's biopolitics leaves racialisation unthought. Moten even suggests that Santner's work contributes to a 'violent project of saving European man'. He thus writes: 'what distinguishes the black radical tradition […] from the German-Jewish tradition of the discourse of "creaturely life" is a refusal of the inaugural force of sovereign power': Moten, pp. 52, 64, 42.

ity, and putting this in conversation with an analysis of fragility and finitude (two terms inherited from Simone Weil's theological writings), Pick argues that creatureliness is a shared condition and 'permanent but permeable threshold'. For her, creatureliness denotes less the name for what it means to be human, but what it means to be 'first and foremost a living body – material, temporal, and vulnerable.' Humans and nonhumans are both creatures. The term also designates a *standpoint*, a position 'oriented toward vulnerability as a universal mode of exposure'. Pick consequently imagines the creaturely as a gesture of contraction that involves 'making ourselves "less human", as it were, whilst seeking to grant animals a share in our world of subjectivity'.[101] As 'primarily the condition of exposure and finitude that affects all living bodies whatever they are', Pick ultimately gestures towards an ethics beyond the human.[102] At the same time, the creaturely is 'not only posthumanist and postanthropocentric, but also […] postsecular'; the creaturely opens out onto 'a religious vocabulary of the creation and created' and consequently attempts 'a rapprochement between the material and the sacred'.[103] *Creaturely Poetics* thus sustains Benjamin's concomitant materialism and messianism, while also foregrounding the creaturely as a symbol of human-animal relationality.

As I write today, a decade after Santner's and Pick's interventions, the creaturely stands as a polysemous and capacious keyword of contemporary scholarship. Indeed, during the researching and writing of this thesis, a steady stream of academic and creative publications – all to a greater or lesser extent influenced by Benjamin, Santner and Pick – have bolstered the creaturely's re-popularisation. There is, then, a burgeoning field of creaturely studies which I am contributing towards with this thesis, and I cite a small spread of these articles, monographs, edited collections and literary magazines in the footnote below.[104] As something of a testa-

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[101] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), pp. 5–6, 17.

[102] Pick, 'Interview with Anat Pick', *Columbia University Press Blog*, 19 July 2011 <http://www.cupblog.org/2011/07/19/interview-with-anat-pick-author-of-creaturely-poetics/> [Accessed 25/05/2018].

[103] Pick, *Creaturely Poetics*, pp. 17–18.

[104] For literary studies, see: David Herman, ed., *Creatural Fictions: Human-Animal Relationships in Twentieth and Twenty-First Century Literature* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016); Pieter Vermeulen and Virginia Richter, 'Introduction: Creaturely Constellations', *European Journal of English Studies*, 19 (2015), 1–9; Tobias Menely, *The Animal Claim: Sensibility and the Creaturely Voice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Joseph Anderton, *Beckett's Creatures: Art of Failure After the Holocaust* (London: Bloomsbury, 2016). For theological readings of the creaturely, see: Stephen D. Moore, ed., *Divinanimality: Animal Theory, Creaturely Theology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014); Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough, eds., *Creaturely Theology: On Gods, Humans and Other Animals* (London: SCM Press, 2009). For a new conception of the human as a 'biocultural creature', see: Samantha Frost, *Biocultural Creatures: Toward a New Theory of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). For creative publications on the creature-

ment to the re-emergence of the creaturely as a current keyword, Donna Haraway tells us in *When Species Meet* (2008) and *Staying with the Trouble* (2016) that her deployment of the term 'critters' is directly set against the 'semiotic barnacle' of the term 'creature'. For Haraway, critter is preferable to creature because it is not 'tainted' by the theological register of 'creation'. The creature, just like a barnacle, must be 'scraped off'.[105] There will be a number of occasions throughout this thesis in which I turn to Haraway's work. Drawing on Haraway's scholarship – especially her critical vocabulary, as well as her concentration on the permeability and contact-zones of the species border – will allow me to reflect on and complicate how literature formulates human-nonhuman encounters. But unlike Haraway, my thesis does not intend to scrape off the creaturely. Instead, I set out to *stay with the trouble*, as Haraway herself would put it, of a term that has become paradigmatic for contemporary scholarship. Put differently, while Haraway ditches the creaturely because it carries the baggage of humanism, I understand this baggage to be what makes my case studies so complex and so in need of critical analysis. I will demonstrate throughout this thesis that literature does not ever fully subdue, leave behind, or transcend the 'human', nor do my texts ever fully imagine a world without anthropocentrism. Instead, creaturely forms dramatise a dialectical tension between a drive or willingness to destabilise anthropocentrism on the one hand and an awareness of the hegemonic stranglehold of anthropocentrism on the other, while at the same time pushing up at the very limitations of this deconstructive gesture altogether. Across my three case studies, there will be numerous moments in which Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta appear to push up against the very boundaries of literary form in their pursuit of an affinity between humanity and animality. These limits produce failures, ambivalences and contradictions, but I will argue across this thesis that these problems, dramatised by fiction, illuminate our understanding of our capacity to think differently about human-animal relations.

Two recent publications in literary studies have already begun analysing the tensions between literary form and the creaturely. In *Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel* (2015), Pieter Vermeulen argues that contemporary Anglophone fiction, cognisant of the novel's apparent obsolescence in the twenty-first century, 'dramatise[s] the end of the novel in order to reimagine the politics and ethics of form'.[106] By combining Santner's notion of creaturely life with Erich Auerbach's

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ly, see: Lachlan Gell, Harry Glass, Ezekiel Morgan, eds., *Pollen*, '#002: Creaturely Life' <http://pollenmagazine.com/002/>.

[105] Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 330 fn. 33; *Staying with the Trouble* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p. 169 fn. 1.

[106] Pieter Vermeulen, *Contemporary Literature and the End of the Novel: Creature, Affect, Form* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2015), p. 2

writings on creatural realism,[107] Vermeulen proposes that the human characters who populate contemporary fiction experience a '*non-non-human* life', a residually human life that is (de-)animated by weakness, dysphoria, awkwardness, suffering, even farcicality. For Vermeulen, this is formally mirrored by the weakness, awkwardness and farcicality of the novel form itself in the twenty-first century.[108] While Vermeulen is indebted to Santner, Hilary Thompson's *Novel Creatures* (2018) takes a more Benjaminian approach in order to explore how contemporary 'Anglophone literature's creaturely imagination' transformed after 9/11. Thompson hypothesises that 9/11 is a threshold for the creaturely: before it, numerous works of fiction espouse a posthuman ethics of creatureliness, by which she means 'a form of connection, community, and enhanced cognition'. After it, fiction contracts and closes its ranks around a privileged human subject who deems themselves newly vulnerable to 'the threats of large arbitrary forces'.[109]

While Vermeulen and Thompson hinge their analysis on twenty-first-century American novels, this thesis looks to a corpus of texts that were written on the cusp of the contemporary period by authors writing outside of the USA. By turning to late-twentieth-century works written from within Britain (Sebald), South Africa and Australia (Coetzee), and India (Mahasweta), I will conduct a broader analysis of how creaturely forms are differently articulated in texts that emerge from both shared and distinct literary traditions and positions. I will reveal how these late-twentieth-century texts anticipate the tensions between literary form and the forms of life that Vermeulen and Thompson claim to be particular to contemporary literature. And by turning away from the USA, that country which still represents itself as the capital of the literary and political world, I will also build the argument that the creaturely is more fitted to postcolonial studies than it is to the category of contemporary literature. One of my main contentions throughout this thesis will be that the term helps us make sense of the interrelation between coloniality and anthropocentrism as two modes of thought that wage a war against forms of life deemed inhuman or nonhuman. Because postcolonial literature is alert to this interrelation, its texts routinely engage with animality as a shared zone of proximity between the human and nonhuman. Undergirding my case studies is the governing idea that my texts are postcolonial. While Coetzee and Mahasweta need no introduction as postcolonial writers, Sebald's texts can also be read as postcolonial. Even if his writing is not always sensitive enough to racial politics, his narrators are uniquely situated within a late-twentieth-century European milieu gripped by what Paul Gilroy famously termed 'postcolonial mel-

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[107] Erich Auerbach, *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature*, trans. by Willard Trask (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), p. 246.

[108] Vermeulen, *Contemporary Literature*, pp. 152, 11. Vermeulen's emphasis.

[109] Hilary Thompson, *Novel Creatures: Animal Life and the New Millennium* (London: Routledge, 2018), pp. 7, 14, 4–5.

ancholia'.[110] My readings of Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta suggest that creaturely forms offer what we might call a decolonisation of culturally dominant ways of life: they deconstruct the colonial regime of anthropocentrism.

When researching this thesis, I realised that the recent swell of academic publications on the creaturely had neglected a key juncture in the concept's genealogy. By wedding themselves only to Benjamin's writing, and a somewhat narrow reading of Benjamin at that, Santner, Pick, Vermeulen and Thompson – indeed all of the texts we might collect together under the umbrella of creaturely studies – all look past how the term was taken up by the first generation of the Frankfurt School.[111] In the years following the Second World War, the Frankfurt School turned to the creaturely in order to reflect on humanity's intensifying domination over animality. The Frankfurt School retain Benjamin's preoccupation with redemption, but they also supplement his work by thinking through how modernity's escalating catastrophes – ultimately symbolised, for them, by the fascist genocide of Jewish life – are related to humanity's mastery over animality. This is one reason why staying with the trouble of the creaturely is vital. By returning to the Frankfurt School's theorisation of the creaturely, we discover an early analysis of how species, race and gender are connected concerns. This proves particularly useful for comprehending the stakes of writers whose works refuse to reproduce anthropocentrism.

The Frankfurt School embraced the category of the creaturely in order to redeem humanity from modernity's twinned dominations of humanity *and* nature. This is most consistently demonstrated in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947), in which Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer hypothesise that Western modernity's promise of emancipation was nothing other than a new form of totalitarian domination. In the introduction, Adorno and Horkheimer reflect that the key intention of their project was to 'gain greater understanding of the intertwinement of rationality and social reality, as well as of the intertwinement, inseparable from the former, of nature and the mastery of nature.' For them, modernity is predicated on a perpetual disarticulation of humanity's relationship with nature, 'a denial of nature in human beings' which calls itself rational and presents itself as reasonable,

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[110] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

[111] It is important to note that Paul Celan also took up the creaturely in his poems, and in his famous 1960 'Meridian' address. For more on this, see: Paul Celan, *The Meridian: Final Version-Drafts-Materials*, ed. by Bernhard Böschenstein and Heino Schmull, trans. by Pierre Joris (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), pp. 9–10, 79, 174, 192. See also: Natalie Lozinski-Veach, 'Embodied Nothings: Paul Celan's Creaturely Inclinations', *MLN*, 131 (2016), 791–816.

but is actually based on a reification and domination of life.[112] Sometimes, Horkheimer and Adorno present this domination dialectically, acknowledging the complicated gains and losses of Enlightenment. Here is one example: 'We owe the serum which the doctor administers to the sick child to the attack on defenceless creatures'. Mostly, however, they are much more polemical about the 'perfected exploitation of the animal world today'. They write: 'the systematic domination over nature has been assured more and more decisively'; 'humans have not only overtaken their immediate predecessors but have eradicated them more thoroughly than almost any other recent species'; the 'real history of the human species' is that they are 'instruments of organisation'; 'The tall giraffe and the wise elephant […] They are being eradicated entirely'.[113] This is why Fredric Jameson writes that 'it has not often been noticed that, if virtually alone among the Western Marxists', the Frankfurt School 'can be counted among the philosophical ancestors of the ecology movement [and] animal rights.'[114] For them, the mastery [*Herrschaft*] of nature is – as Derrida puts it – 'an act of war and a gesture of hate, an animosity'.[115]

Importantly, Adorno and Horkheimer also suggest that the domination of non-human nature is inseparable from the domination of other humans who are perceived as less than human, or inhuman. They even suggest that human domination derives from the domination of nature: 'What human beings seek to learn from nature is how to use it to dominate wholly both it and human beings. Nothing else counts.'[116] In 'Man and Animal' [*Mensch und Tier*], appended as draft material to *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, they write that instrumental reason concomitantly targets human and nonhuman alike: 'mass industry and mass culture have learned to prepare the bodies of breeding bulls and humans according to scientific methods'.[117] They also write that the domination of nature produces more specific forms of political domination, namely gendered and racialised violence, in which humans become defined by a corporeal and biological animality. On gender, Horkheimer and Adorno affirm that 'To dominate nature boundlessly, to turn the cosmos into an endless hunting ground, has been the dream of millennia. It shaped the idea of man in a male society. It was the purpose of reason, on which man prided himself'. Thus in the patriarchal division of labour, women are cast –

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[112] Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. by Gunzelin Schmid Noerr, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2002), pp. xviii, 43.

[113] Ibid., pp. 204, 185, 184, 186, 209.

[114] Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno or the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 96.

[115] Derrida, *The Animal*, p. 100.

[116] Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 2.

[117] Ibid., p. 208. All further quotations from 'Man and Animal' in this paragraph are from pp. 206–210.

in essentialist terms – as 'an embodiment of biological function, an image of nature'. On race, they argue that the 'caricature of the Jew' relies on a related logic of biological reductionism: 'When domination of nature is the true goal, biological inferiority remains the ultimate stigma, the weakness imprinted by nature, the mark which invites violence'. And it is the 'fascist colossus' who, for Adorno and Horkheimer, most dramatically 'conceives of animals only as a means of humiliating humans'. The fascist's 'pious love of animals, nature, and children is the lust of the hunter. The idle stroking of the children's hair and animal pelts signifies: this hand can destroy'. Horkheimer and Adorno therefore articulate how 'domination's bloody purposes' constructs nonhumans *and* certain humans as raw 'material' for exploitation.[118] Put in today's register, this reified reduction to materiality – a thingification, objectification, and dehumanisation – renders lives 'killable'[119] and therefore not 'grievable'.[120]

And yet, although Horkheimer and Adorno tell us that they are stuck within the 'quagmire' of anthropocentric modernity, they also hold out 'hope for better conditions' in which humanity might find 'solidarity with creaturely life'. Indeed, they want to discover a kind of interspecies compassion [*Mitleid*] which embraces 'the infinite patience, the tender, never-extinguished impulse of creaturely life toward expression and light'.[121] James F. Dorahy shows how *Dialectic of Enlightenment's* creaturely vocabulary is related to an 'inverse theology',[122] a kind of postsecular materialist critique of modernity which challenges modernity by contemplating all forms of life from what Adorno later calls 'the standpoint of redemption'.[123] From this redemptive position, Horkheimer and Adorno conclude their notes on 'Man and Animal' by arguing that 'what threatens the prevailing praxis [is] the remembrance of nature.'[124] In other words, 'solidarity with creaturely life' entails a remembrance [*Eingedenken*] of human animality [*Naturhaftigkeit*].[125] Echoing Benjamin's 'Gloves', *Dialectic of Enlightenment* posits that humanity will find hope in the double negative: a repudiation of its repudiation of animality. If racism and sexism are conjoined with the domination of nature, then racism and sexism must be unlearnt with anthropocentrism. Horkheimer and Adorno capture

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[118] Ibid., pp. 206–210.

[119] Haraway, *When Species Meet*, p. 78.

[120] Butler, *Frames of War*, p. 15.

[121] Ibid., pp. 186–187, 208.

[122] James F. Dorahy, 'Mimesis, Critique, Redemption: Creaturely Life in and Beyond *Dialectic of Enlightenment*', *Colloquy*, 27 (2014), 89–103 (p. 94).

[123] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), p. 247.

[124] Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 212.

[125] Adorno quoted in Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Verso, 2014), p. 103.

this idea in their essay on anti-Semitism, in which they argue that racism is a 'false projection' of animality:

> By conquering the sickness of the mind which flourishes on the rich soil of self-assertion unhampered by reflection, humanity would cease to be the universal antirace and become the species which, as nature, is more than mere nature, in that it is aware of its own image. The individual and social emancipation from domination is the countermovement to false projection, and no longer would Jews seek, by resembling it, to appease the evil senselessly visited on them as on all the persecuted, whether animals or human being.[126]

Adorno and Horkheimer argue that anthropocentric modernity turns hegemonic humanity into the 'universal antirace'. But this need not continue. For if the dominant human were to ditch its 'false projection' of animality onto others and regains its capacity for 'reflection', then it would consequently 'appease the evil senselessly visited' on other humans and other animals. Adorno carries this notion over into *Negative Dialectics* (1966), in which he argues that the imperialist subject rages against and devours the other, whether dehumanised humans or nonhuman animals.[127] A non-imperialist subject, Adorno writes, would relinquish any claims to mastery over the other and, in turn, 'love what is alien and different'. Creaturely reconciliation would thus refuse 'the philosophical imperialism of annexing the alien. Instead, its happiness would lie in the fact that the alien, in the proximity it is granted, remains what is distant and different'.[128] In sum, Adorno and Horkheimer envision the creaturely as a category of redemption which unites humans and nonhumans in their difference. As Adorno writes in *Minima Moralia* (1951), the creaturely names a future 'possibility of reconciliation' between the human and its animal others.[129]

By ending this section with the Frankfurt School, I hope to have foregrounded both the stakes of my inquiry and the import of the creaturely. First, Horkheimer and Adorno's critique of instrumental reason uncovers how the domination of nonhuman nature is inextricable from the domination of other humans who are considered to be less than human. The creaturely therefore provides an analytical angle for approaching the instrumentalisation of life in modernity. The term links humanity and animality together in order to contest modernity's violence against dehumanised humans and nonhuman animals. Thus, second, Horkheimer and

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[126] Horkheimer and Adorno, p. 165.

[127] Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (London: Routledge, 1973), p. 22. For more on *Negative Dialectics*, see: John Caruana's illuminating reading in 'Mourning and Mimesis: The Freudian Ethics of Adorno', *Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis*, 4 (1996), 89–108.

[128] Idid., pp. 172, 191.

[129] Adorno, *Minima Moralia*, p. 116.

Adorno construct the creaturely as a concept which turns our attention to modalities of thought and ways of living which *remember* animality. They see the creaturely as not just a name for abjected, killable, or bare life, but also as a name which gestures to a reconciliatory horizon. These two senses of the creaturely will be crucial for my project's reading of Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta, even if I do not refer directly to the Frankfurt School in all three of my chapters. Across the pages of this thesis, I analyse how literature pays attention to forms of life deemed 'creaturely' by anthropocentric thought. But at the same time I will also use the creaturely in order to read how literary texts dramatise moments of remembrance, reflection and self-relinquishment in which the possibility of reconciliation is glimpsed. It is creaturely form, I will argue, that strives for this possibility of reconciliation.

Encounters with Animality: Sebald, Coetzee, Mahasweta

This introduction has sought to establish the rationale and research background of this study. I have located, defined and analysed the keywords and ideas that will re-appear in later chapters, and I have situated my research within the theoretical and methodological concerns of critical animal studies, while also showing how this discipline intersects with postcolonial studies, critical race studies, and biopolitics. Throughout, I have argued that creaturely forms are those literary forms that attempt to find ways out of anthropocentrism. In the three chapters that follow, I stage inquiries into the relationship between literary forms and the writing of encounters with animality. These case studies reveal how literature contests the anthropological machine while also imagining new creaturely forms of life that are more attentive to human and nonhuman animality.

I have attempted at various junctures across this introduction to indicate why I have selected W. G. Sebald, J. M. Coetzee and Mahasweta Devi as my primary authors. I suggested that Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta all turn to the figure of the animal during what Derrida calls the 'critical phase' of the 'war against the animal', in the years leading up to and surrounding the millennium. I indicated that each author's work articulates how modernity's domination of human life is tangled up with the domination of nonhuman life. I proposed that each author stages encounters with animality that disrupt anthropocentrism. And I have indicated that their fiction's postcolonial perspectives is vital for the kinds of analysis I seek to perform across this thesis. But there are two more reasons why I have chosen these authors. First, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta all share what I will call, fol-

lowing Eric Hobsbawm, a certain *'fin-de-siècle* gloom'.[130] I quote Hobsbawm here because his idea of the 'Short Twentieth Century', a century running from the outbreak of the First World War to the fall of the Berlin Wall, neatly captures how the 1980s and 1990s cultural imaginary saw itself as being located somewhere between the ending of a century of turmoil and the beginning of an uncertain future. Despite writing from different locations, and despite engaging with different literary traditions, all three writers under consideration in this thesis use their works to reflect – however directly or indirectly – on some of the major global catastrophes and upheavals of the Short Twentieth Century, including the Holocaust, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, anti-colonial struggle and the end of empire, the unfinished transition away from South African apartheid, the collective anxiety of Cold War nuclear apocalypse, the agro-industrial privatisation of the commons and the so-called Green Revolution in India, the Indian State of Emergency, and the global turn towards neoliberal economic rationality. And it is through these reflections that each author develops a highly critical attitude towards the fiction of capitalist modernity's progress. Sebald's and Mahasweta's texts are especially interested in the *longue durée* of human and natural history, and even in a deeper, planetary temporality which unsettles the fixity of the human species. All three authors bear witness to the human and nonhuman victims, or, put differently, the 'vanquished' of modernity.[131] In doing so, they each provocatively connect human and nonhuman oppressions together. Indeed, it might even be suggested that Sebald, Coetzee, and Mahasweta arrive at the animal *through* an understanding of other forms of violence and power in which subjugated humans are treated 'like' animals. This is a risky move, and all three writers have been accused of eliding the differences between human and nonhuman life, of depicting instances of human oppression as being analogous with animal suffering, and of sometimes forgetting human suffering as they focus their attention on nonhuman animals. But this thesis contends that the kinds of uncomfortable connections that Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta make between humans and nonhuman are necessary if we are to more fully comprehend the scale of the war against the animal, deconstruct the colonial hierarchising of life, and consequently interrupt anthropocentrism.

I have also chosen these authors because they use contrasting thematic and formal means to communicate this *fin-de-siècle* gloom, and they achieve different ends by doing so. In order for me to establish how each author's work compares, I will use the final pages of this introduction to map out the structure and particular argu-

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[130] Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), p. 6.

[131] I take this phrase from Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History'. See: *Selected Writings, vol. 4 1938–1940*, p. 406.

ments of this thesis, and thereafter to gesture towards my conclusions. But before doing so I want to frame these authors' projects as articulating three valences of the creaturely. In the chapters that follow I will suggest that Sebald's writing expresses a form of *creaturely melancholia*; Coetzee's work gets us into all sorts of *creaturely trouble*; and Mahasweta formulates *creaturely commitments*. That is, Sebald's texts melancholically bear witness to modernity's ongoing war against the animal. In a world which forgets nonhuman death, Sebald's narrators pay attention to and remember vanished animal life. But one of the limitations of Sebald's literary project is that his writing is too invested in a melancholic gaze which passively looks on as nonhumans are obliterated. I therefore turn to Coetzee's texts because they are more 'hands-on': they depict direct encounters with animals and confrontations with anthropocentrism. Coetzee stages the trouble of caring for animals in a world that does not care, and how caring for animals also gets you into trouble. Because of this, Coetzee's fiction routinely explores moments of failure and ambivalences surrounding his characters' embrace of animal ethics. Finally, Mahasweta's work is in many ways just as melancholic as Sebald's and just as troublesome as Coetzee's, but – importantly – her writing holds onto a more propositional politics which pushes beyond Sebald's gloomy ethos and Coetzee's emphasis on failure. Mahasweta's work arrives at its encounters with animal life via an explicitly political commitment towards those humans who are dispossessed and impoverished by postcolonial India's development programmes. Mahasweta's work even calls for a kind of multispecies love that would not just negate anthropocentrism, but would construct new horizons of creaturely life.

Sebald's, Coetzee's and Mahasweta's literary projects have already generated a considerable amount of critical conversations. This thesis builds on these ongoing debates by focusing on how their writing – both formally and thematically – interrupts the anthropological machine's relegation of animality. In my first chapter, 'W. G. Sebald's Connections: Creaturely Melancholia in *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*', I examine how Sebald's prose witnesses the innumerable ways in which modernity simultaneously eliminates and exhibits, destroys and preserves, creaturely life. To do this, I focus my analysis on Sebald's poetics of connection, that is, his texts' formal and thematic preoccupation with the connections between dates, spaces, and life forms. While critics have long paid attention to Sebald's poetics of connection, my chapter yields another interpretation by focusing on the ways in which his narrators encounter animals and animality. Focusing in particular on the English-language translations of *The Rings of Saturn* (1995) and *Austerlitz* (2001), but also consulting the original German-language editions when pertinent, I argue that Sebald's work combines first-person narrative perspectives, melancholy standpoints, hypotaxis and parataxis, and ambiguously indexical in-text images which all work to connect the human with the animal. I argue, in sum, that

through his autodiegetic narrators' intellectual and physical wanderings, Sebald's work develops a poetics of connection which, in both content and form, attempts to re-member a connection between the human and the animal. 'Attempt' is the keyword here, as I will show throughout the chapter that Sebald's wish to reconnect the human and the nonhuman, to counteract the disappearance of animal life in the late twentieth century, is always in tension with his narrator's overwhelming melancholia and resignation.

My second chapter turns to the South African-born and Nobel Prize-winning author J. M. Coetzee. An Australian citizen since 2006, Coetzee is renowned for his involvement with a number of Australian and US animal advocacy organisations. Coetzee is perhaps also the most popular author in the burgeoning literary animal studies canon, and my second chapter – 'J. M. Coetzee's Deformations: Creaturely Trouble in *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*' – discusses his public and literary turn towards animal rights and vegetarianism in the years surrounding the millennium. The two texts I discuss most closely in this thesis, *Disgrace* (1999) and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003), have received constant critical attention since their publication. I shed new light on these novels by conceiving of them together as a concomitant and coincident textual experiments in which Coetzee grapples with the difficulty of writing from a creaturely perspective. I argue that, in *Disgrace*, Coetzee asks how far the realist novel can accommodate animality into its tightly-plotted logics, and in *Elizabeth Costello*, he asks whether metafiction's deconstruction of plot allows a different approach to writing about animals. I suggest that in both of these works Coetzee uses the figure of the animal in order to deform the novel and the human. But in doing so his texts find themselves in different kinds of trouble: *Disgrace* ends in a moment of troublesome ambiguity in which the novel appears to have reached a formal limit; in *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee constantly foregrounds Costello's troubles – rather than successes – when articulating her concern for animals. Coetzee therefore develops an aesthetics of failure which testifies to the weight of anthropocentrism as it bears down on language's ability to express a commitment towards animality.

My third chapter turns to Mahasweta Devi, whose writing is well known for its activist commitment to low-caste and adivasi life. In this chapter, 'Mahasweta Devi's Double Task: Creaturely Commitments in *Imaginary Maps* and Beyond', I suggest that critics have downplayed the extent to which her writing stages a tension between a political and institutional commitment to adivasi communities and a more ecologically-oriented anti-capitalism that exceeds constitutional politics. By focusing on a number of Mahasweta's short stories collected within English-language publications such as *Imaginary Maps* (1995) and *Bitter Soil* (1998), I reveal how her texts depict Indian postcolonial developmentality as an anthropocentric

force. Working with these translations of Mahasweta's work, I argue that she assigns her texts a double task: first, they stage a formal and thematic resistance to the doctrine of development (as both a material-economic regime and a powerful ideology of progress); second, they look towards a future-oriented political commitment and form of love which would ally itself to both adivasi and nonhuman lives. I contend that although Mahasweta's literary advocacy has been questioned for speaking for and over adivasis, her propositional form of love nevertheless attempts to foster a planetary politics, founded on difference, that no longer endangers human and nonhuman life. I argue, simply, that Mahasweta's politics is also an eco-politics, and that her writing takes the creaturely in new directions. While she shares aspects of Sebald's melancholy and Coetzee's aesthetics of failure, her texts ultimately take a more political stand in favour of creaturely life.

Ultimately, this project interrogates how three authors differently register, negotiate, contest and rewrite the relations between the human and animality at the end of the twentieth-century. By reading Sebald's, Coetzee's and Mahasweta's texts as creaturely forms, I offer insights into how literature discursively participates and intervenes in the animal question while also interrogating how literature calls on us to rethink our own relations with animality. When these texts are at their weakest – when they reach formal limitations or thematic contradictions, for example – they are still important because they make sensible, or perceptible, the intractability of anthropocentrisms, thereby offering forceful accounts of modernity's relegation and obliteration of animality. But when they are at their strongest, creaturely forms imagine new ways of resisting and new ways of living with and alongside animality. Accordingly, I will use the conclusion of this thesis to address and compare the relative gains and limitations of Sebald's, Coetzee's and Mahasweta's literary projects. I will reflect on the achievements and drawbacks of this thesis, concentrating in particular on the differences between Sebald's melancholia, Coetzee's trouble, and Mahasweta's commitments. I will also determine what has been left unsaid, unasked, and unanswered by my authors, by my interlocutors, and by my own practices of reading. Only this will allow me to reflect on the persistence of anthropocentric modes of thought, and to understand what questions I need to ask next about the role literature has to play in transforming our relationship with animality.

Chapter One—W. G. Sebald's Connections: Creaturely Melancholia in *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*

Introduction: After Nature, Creaturely Melancholia

Right across W. G. Sebald's literary project, from his essays to his fiction, Sebald's writing is animated by a thematics and a poetics of connection which conceives of the world and its history as contingent, interlinked, and interpenetrated. 'I have slowly learned to grasp how everything is connected across space and time', Sebald writes: 'dates of birth with dates of death, happiness with misfortune, natural history with the history of our industries, that of *Heimat* with that of exile.'[1] In fictional works such as *Vertigo* (1990) and *The Emigrants* (1992), Sebald's unnamed narrators constantly draw attention to their propensity to make 'connections between events that lay far apart but which seemed to me to be of the same order'.[2] And in his final novel, *Austerlitz* (2001), Sebald creates an eponymous character who possesses the very methodological preoccupations of Sebald's own poetics: Austerlitz forms 'perfectly balanced sentences out of whatever occurred to him', connecting histories together in 'a kind of historical metaphysic, bringing remembered events back to life'.[3] At the same time, Sebald's work itself formally takes shape *because of* these connections. His writing is motivated by what he calls an 'aesthetic sense' of 'making in prose a decent pattern out of what comes your way'.[4] Sebald's texts create patterns of historical events, intertextual markers, extended digressions and grainy photographs and newspaper clippings. Sebald connects together these multimodal literary forms by the event of narration, which, at a sentence-by-sentence level, mobilises tangential and peripatetic narrative techniques in order to build a hyper-connected textual world. Put simply,

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[1] W. G. Sebald, *A Place in the Country*, trans. by Jo Catling (London: Penguin, 2014), p. 149.

[2] Sebald, *Vertigo*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 94.

[3] Sebald, *Austerlitz*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2002), p. 14. All further references to this edition will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[4] Sebald and Gordon Turner, 'Introduction and Translation of an Interview given by Max Sebald', *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, ed. by Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 21–29 (p. 24).

then, 'connection' names both *what* Sebald's fiction thematises as well as *how* his texts operate formally.

This chapter will suggest that Sebald's preoccupation with connection is creature-ly. Over the last two decades of scholarship on Sebald's work, numerous critics have recognised the central importance of this poetics of connection. In 2003, just two years on from Sebald's sudden death, Mark McCulloh described connection as the 'guiding principle' of his literary project. For Sebald, 'everything belongs together somehow, everything is interrelated by some secret orderliness'. Lynn Wolff asserts that connection is 'the underlying force of Sebald's fictional and in part scholarly writing'. And Timothy Bewes stresses this even more directly: 'the question of connection, the problem of connection, might be said to be the central preoccupation' of Sebald's fiction.[5] Critics have long argued that Sebald's poetics of connection derives from his engagement with Claude Lévi-Strauss's semiotic concept of bricolage,[6] Walter Benjamin's dialectics of the constellation and the montage,[7] and the intellectual development of concepts such as affinity, network, surrealism and segue.[8] In interviews, Sebald suggests that his poetics of connec-tion bears an aesthetic resemblance to both a spider spinning webs and a dog fol-lowing its nose: 'If you look at a dog following the advice of his nose, he traverses a patch of land in a completely unplottable manner. And he invariably finds what he's looking for […] I've learned from [dogs] how to do this.'[9]

In this chapter, I develop another approach as I contend that Sebald's poetics of connection bears witness to the reorganisation of life in modernity and, in turn, creates affinities between the human and other animals. I will argue that Sebald's

[5] Mark R. McCulloh, *Understanding W. G. Sebald* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), pp. 63, 22; Lynn L. Wolff, *W. G. Sebald's Hybrid Poetics: Literature as Historiography* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), p. 81; Timothy Bewes, 'Against Exemplarity: W. G. Sebald and the Problem of Connection', *Contemporary Literature*, 55 (2014), 1–31 (p. 3).

[6] See: Stephan Seitz, *Geschichte als* bricolage: *W. G. Sebald und die Poetik des Bastelns* (Göttingen: V&R, 2011); Sigrid Löffler, '"Wildes Denken": Gespräch mit W. G. Sebald', in *W. G. Sebald*, ed. by Franz Loquai (Eggingen: Isele, 1997), pp. 135–137.

[7] See: Jessica Dubow, 'Case Interrupted: Benjamin, Sebald, and the Dialectical Image', *Critical Inquiry*, 33 (2007), 820–836; Judith Ryan, 'Fulgurations: Sebald and Surrealism', *The Germanic Review*, 82 (2007), 227–249.

[8] See: Sara Friedrichsmeyer, 'Sebald's Elective and Other Affinities', in *Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, pp. 77–89; Anne Fuchs, 'Zur Ästhetik der Vernetzung in W. G. Sebalds *Austerlitz*', in *Netzwerke: Ästhetiken und Techniken der Vernetzung 1800–1900–2000*, ed. by Hartmut Boehme, Jürgen Barkhoff and Jeanne Riou (Vienna: Böhlau, 2004), pp. 261–278; Richard T. Gray, 'Se-bald's Segues: Performing Narrative Contingency in *The Rings of Saturn*', *The Germanic Review*, 84 (2009), 26–58.

[9] Joseph Cuomo, 'A Conversation with W. G. Sebald', in *The Emergence of Memory: Conversations with W. G. Sebald*, ed. by Lynne Sharon Schwartz (New York: Seven Stories, 2007), pp. 93–117 (p. 94); for Sebald's comments on the similarities between spiders and his poetics of connection, see: Arthur Lubow, 'Crossing Boundaries', in *The Emergence of Memory*, pp. 159–173 (p. 159).

texts, set within a fragmented late twentieth-century world, struggle to melancholically remember and reconnect – that is, to *re-member* – the at best threadbare and at worst severed links between the human and the nonhuman. Across Sebald's texts, animals are almost always running scared, encaged in zoo exhibitions, archived as taxidermy specimens in the draws of country houses, or over-fished and over-consumed to the point of extinction. When encountering these animals, usually via an exchange of gazes, Sebald's characters identify with and see themselves as being connected to them. In this chapter, then, I show how Sebald's poetics of connection interrupts modernity's dualistic separation of the human from animality. I will make this argument by exploring Sebald's writing of animal encounters in his final two fictional works, *The Rings of Saturn* (1995) and *Austerlitz* (2001). Focusing especially on his use of first-person narration, hypotaxis and parataxis, and ambiguously indexical in-text images, my close readings reveal how Sebald's writing seeks to suspend the anthropological machine of modernity. Under my reading, these two texts offer what I will call, following Sebald's own formulation, an *attempt at restitution* between the species. His autodiegetic narrators, unlike those found in J. M. Coetzee's and Mahasweta Devi's writing, tirelessly pursue these creaturely connections between the human and the nonhuman.

But what, if anything, is at risk in these creaturely connections? What might be some of the formal limits of Sebald's re-membering of the human and the nonhuman? Do Sebald's texts, by endlessly connecting humans and nonhumans, risk conceiving of everything as 'vibrant matter' that can be collapsed into a single horizontal plane?[10] And to what extent do his narrators simply project their own melancholic alienation onto the nonhuman animal? This chapter interrogates how Sebald's creaturely form is weighed down by internal contradictions. For although Sebald presents his literary project as an attempt at restitution, his self-proclaimed critical intervention into modernity is repeatedly undermined by his texts' own reliance on passivity, resignation, and stasis. Ultimately, then, my readings of *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* aim to demonstrate how there is a central tension in Sebald's writing between the activity of restitution and the passivity of melancholia. On the one hand, his poetics of connection strives for restitution between the species. But on the other, his pervasive melancholic ethos merely bears witness to rather than militates against modernity's erasure of life, even presenting human history as a continuous and unalterable catastrophe. Sebald's creaturely form emerges out of the contradictions of these two competing impulses as an 'actively passive' mode of writing, to quote Julia Lupton's etymological analysis of the creaturely.[11] While his animal encounters seek to re-member a lost animality, they end

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[10] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 10.
[11] Julia Reinhard Lupton, 'Creature Caliban', *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 51 (2000), 1–23 (p. 1).

up dramatising without ever overcoming modernity as an anthropological machine.

In this introduction, I wish to unpack three key propositions which will underlie this chapter's analysis. First, I explain how Sebald conceives of his literary project as an attempt at restitution. He imagines his fiction as an ethico-aesthetic form of restitution which attempts to remember the forgotten and re-member the lost. Second, I argue that Sebald's project develops a form of creaturely melancholia which undercuts his own drive to re-member. Third, I demonstrate how the present tense scenarios of Sebald's texts, as well as the different historical pasts that his narrators ruminate over, are all contained within a disenchanted modernity that is situated in a world 'after nature'. Finally, by folding these three propositions together, I hypothesise that Sebald's literary project attempts to melancholically bear witness to modernity's separation of 'humanity' from 'nature'. Thus while Sebald's writing pushes beyond a straightforward memorialisation of damaged life in modernity, I argue that it does not fully realise its stated re-membering of humanity and animality. Instead, what emerges out of these contradictions is the unfinished *struggle* to salvage or reconstruct a lost animality. In other words, Sebald's creaturely form offers an important but limited melancholic struggle against the tides of anthropocentrism.

I begin with '*Zerstreute Reminiszenzen*', or 'Scattered Memories', a public address Sebald delivered at the opening of the *Literaturhaus Stuttgart* just a few weeks before his death. In a speech that combines childhood recollections with reflections on Stuttgart's history, Sebald ultimately arrives at a direct question: 'what is literature good for?' His answers, however tentative, are clear. 'Perhaps only to help us remember', he writes, adding that 'There are many forms of writing; only in literature, however, can there be an attempt at restitution [*ein Versuch der Restitution*]'.[12] Preoccupied with the question of 'what the function, value or responsibility of literature might be at the dawn of a millennium haunted by the catastrophic legacy of the recent past',[13] Sebald makes a case for literature as a provisional site of compensation or solace. In doing so, he affirms that his own literary 'method of procedure' is a process of 'linking together apparently disparate things'. Sebald thinks of his connected literary form as a kind of associative memory-work which uncov-

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[12] First published as 'Zerstreute Reminiszenzen: Gedanken zur Eröffnung eines Stuttgarter Hauses', *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, 18 November 2001. My quotations derive from a republished version of the speech: Sebald, 'An Attempt at Restitution', in *Campo Santo*, trans. by Anthea Bell (London: Penguin, 2006), pp. 206–215 (p. 215).

[13] Jeannette Baxter, Valerie Henitiuk, and Ben Hutchinson, eds., 'Introduction: "A Quoi Bon la Littérature?"', in *A Literature of Restitution: Critical Essays on W. G. Sebald* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 1–12 (p. 1).

ers the 'invisible connections that determine our lives'.[14] In *Austerlitz*, published in the same year, he describes this memory-work with the neologism '*Erinnerungs-fähigkeit*', humanity's recollective faculty or capacity to remember, which is being slowly eroded by modernity.[15] By remembering these connections, and reconnecting these 'scattered memories', Sebald even positions his fiction as a tentative ethico-aesthetic form of justice [*Gerechtigkeitssinn*].[16]

If Sebald conceives of his literary project as a provisional form of address that attempts to redress histories of violence, then who does his fiction address? Who or what is this attempt at restitution aimed at? Sebald's readers will know that his literary project circles around the Holocaust as a kind of absent centre, a historical whirlpool that he often approaches only 'obliquely, tangentially, by reference rather than by direct confrontation'.[17] Such is the case in '*Zerstreute Reminiszenzen*'. The word 'restitution' carries a specific historical and juridical weight associated with the Holocaust, implying the return of goods to the victims.[18] But at the same time, Sebald turns to ongoing displacements in Sudan, Kosovo, Eritrea and Afghanistan, as well as implying a vaster historical temporality of violence and restitution; Sebald addresses an open-ended and indeterminate community of the vanquished, 'those to whom the greatest injustice was done'.[19] One of my central contentions throughout this chapter will be that this community of the vanquished includes animals. Sebald, who lived as a vegetarian for ethical and not dietary reasons,[20] repeatedly uses his literary project to question how modernity expropriates and instrumentalises nonhuman nature.

Importantly, Sebald's connective work is written under the melancholic sign of Saturn. At one level, Sebald's writing taps into a classical sense of *acedia*, a mood of scholarly wisdom and astrological sadness without a cause, a feeling of seasonal planetary imbalance and sickness of the soul. At another, his work echoes the Freudian theorisation of melancholia as a sorrowful and pathological obsession

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[14] Sebald, 'Attempt', pp. 214–215, 210.

[15] Sebald, *Austerltiz. Roman* (München: Carl Hanser, 2001), p. 404.

[16] Sebald, '*Auf ungeheuer dünnem Eis': Gespräche 1971 bis 2001*, ed. by Torsten Hoffmann (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 2011), p. 46.

[17] Michael Silverblatt, 'A Poem of an Invisible Subject [Interview]', in *Emergence of Memory*, pp. 77–86 (p. 80).

[18] Ruth Franklin, *A Thousand Darknesses: Lies and Truth in Holocaust Fiction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 194.

[19] Sebald, 'Attempt', p. 215.

[20] To my knowledge, Uwe Schütte is the only critic whose work acknowledges Sebald's vegetarianism. See: *W. G. Sebald: Einführung in Leben und Werk* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 2011), p. 200. Schütte confirmed in private email correspondence with me that Sebald conceived of his vegetarianism as an ethical rather than dietary stance against the slaughter of animals.

with lost objects. Sebald himself refused to see his melancholic gaze as an inhibiting or despairing compulsion, maintaining that his texts' melancholia offers 'a form of resistance' rather than a 'nostalgic perspective': 'In the description of the disaster lies the possibility of overcoming it', Sebald writes.[21] Susan Sontag shared this view, famously describing Sebald as a 'militant elegist'.[22] Critics have long shown that Sebald's understanding of the positive valences of melancholia derives from his reading of Walter Benjamin's 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' (1940), in which Benjamin developed a politically-attuned melancholic disposition which, by self-consciously fixating on the past, construct a remembrance of the vanquished which would redeem the present.[23] But while Sebald identifies himself within this tradition of leftist politics, positioning himself as a critical historian like Benjamin, the truth is that his melancholia is weaker, more resigned, and less dialectical than Benjamin's. Crucially, Sebald's tendency to view history as one continual catastrophe, a 'long account of calamities', as his narrator puts it in *The Rings of Saturn*,[24] might even reproduce the passive, discouraged and 'negativistic quiet' that Benjamin critiqued in his famous essay on left-wing melancholia.[25] Sebald thus risks attenuating the utopian impulse of Benjamin's thought, acquiescing to modernity as an 'infinite repetition of destruction',[26] adopting a kind of weak masculine malaise, and portraying humanity as an irredeemable species. Indeed, this is what J. M. Coetzee – whose writing I will turn to in chapter two – identifies as a common thread linking all of Sebald's narrators: their lives are 'defined by a hard-to-articulate sense that they do not belong in the world, that perhaps human beings in general do not belong here.'[27]

What, then, does Sebald's melancholia accomplish? Although his stated attempt at restitution is necessarily limited by his melancholic passivity, his melancholia still offers readers a powerful remembrance of animality which remains attentive to the ways in which modernity extinguishes forms of life. Sebald's writing is poised somewhere between what Nietzsche would call the critical and the antiquarian standpoints, that is, between a political judgement on and an archivist preserva-

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[21] Sebald and Turner, p. 24.

[22] Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (New York: Picador, 2003), p. 89.

[23] McCulloh, 'Introduction: Two Languages, Two Audiences: The Tandem Literary Oeuvres of W. G. Sebald', in *Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, pp. 7–20 (p. 8).

[24] Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn*, trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 295. All further references to this edition will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[25] Walter Benjamin, 'Left-Wing Melancholy', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934*, ed. by Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 423–427 (p. 425).

[26] David Kaufmann, 'Angels Visit the Scene of Disgrace: Melancholy and Trauma from Sebald to Benjamin and Back', *Cultural Critique*, 70 (2008), 94–119 (p. 112).

[27] J. M. Coetzee, *Inner Workings: Literary Essays 2000–2005* (London: Penguin, 2007), p. 145.

tion of the historical archive.[28] Sebald's poetics of connection retrieves nonhuman animals from the archives of history, re-presenting their suffering in the present tense and generating a *longue durée* perspective on modernity's alienation of humanity and animality. In this sense, Sebald's texts echo Benjamin's early writings on the phenomenon of creaturely melancholia in the German mourning play: with its 'downward gaze' 'immerse[d] in the life of creaturely things', Benjamin writes, creaturely melancholia is a 'contemplative impulse' and 'tenacious self-absorption' that 'embraces dead objects […] in order to redeem them'.[29] Sebald's creaturely form, then, marks an imperfect attempt 'to rescue something out of that stream of history that keeps rushing past'.[30]

My third proposition is that Sebald's literary project is situated 'after nature'. Sebald is preoccupied with the separation of the human from the nonhuman cultural-temporal horizon of modernity. As J. J. Long demonstrates, the 'individual topoi' of Sebald's texts – the Holocaust, trauma and memory, melancholia, photography, travel and *flânerie*, intertextuality and *Heimat* – are not exhaustive concerns, but are 'epiphenomena of a much wider "meta-problem" […] That is the problem of modernity.' Long defines modernity as 'the seismic social, economic, political and cultural transformations that took place in European societies from the eighteenth-century onwards.' Modernity is 'Enlightenment thought, the Industrial Revolution and the French Revolution.' For Long, then, each of Sebald's texts poses a unique formal response to both the traumas of the Holocaust and to the problems of modernity.[31] This has major consequences for how we interpret Sebald's literary project. For although it is certainly the case that Sebald's work interrogates 'what it means to be human after the Holocaust', as Mary Cosgrove puts it, his project of restitution is also focused on remembering histories that stretch far beyond the Holocaust.[32] Modernity and the Holocaust are not mutually exclusive concerns, but are interlinked. Thus for Sebald, the Holocaust demands an assessment of modernity, it 'tests' modernity, as Zygmunt Bauman would say.[33] Long's analysis is instructive, but he does not substantively theorise humanity's relationship with (its own) nature, given that for him 'nature' is merely one problem contained within the meta-problem of modernity. This chapter will show that Se-

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[28] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Untimely Meditations*, ed. by Daniel Breazeale, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 72.

[29] Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, trans. by John Osborne (London: Verso, 2009), pp. 157, 150, 146.

[30] Sebald and Turner, pp. 21–29 (p. 24).

[31] J. J. Long, *W. G. Sebald: Image, Archive, Modernity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), pp. 1–2, 171.

[32] Mary Cosgrove, 'W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', in *The Novel in German Since 1990*, ed. by Stuart Taberner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 195–211 (p. 200).

[33] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), p. 6.

bald's writing dramatises how the question of nature is *synonymous with*, rather than submerged under, the question of modernity. Sebald's texts imagine nature and modernity as co-constituting one another, even though modernity presents itself as having transcended nature, and I will later turn to concepts such as 'natural-history' in order to explicate this dialectical relationship between nature and history. Long also has a narrower understanding of modernity than Sebald's work indicates. By proposing that the upheavals of the eighteenth century mark the beginning of modernity, Long occludes the ways in which Sebald's literary-historical perspective extends back over a *longue durée* of modernity, traceable to the early modern period and the long sixteenth century. In order to give a fuller account of Sebald's temporal scope, then, I will explore how his texts ruminate over significant moments of fissuring – such as Descartes's mechanistic philosophy of life – in which humans disconnect themselves from the natural world.

Considering the need to more precisely conceptualise Sebald's writing of humanity and nature in modernity, it is apposite to turn to his first creative publication, appropriately titled *After Nature* (1988; *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht*). *After Nature* is a triptych prose poem which spans five centuries: it begins in the sixteenth century with the life of the Renaissance painter Matthias Grünewald, proceeds in its second section to describe the expeditions of eighteenth-century naturalist Georg Wilhelm Steller, and concludes with the voice of an autobiographical 'I' in the late twentieth century, who describes the 'silent catastrophe' of coming of age in the years immediately after the Second World War. All three sections of the poem are preoccupied with the shifting relationship between humanity and nature in modernity, and how this engenders nature's deterioration. For much of the poem, Sebald mobilises these motifs of entropy, depicting a world in which nature deteriorates into 'a state | of pure dementia'; 'life diminishes, | everything declines'.[34] But *After Nature's* representation of decaying nature is irreducible to a purely organic form of entropy. Sebald's melancholic language instead imagines how natural decay is *anthropogenically produced*. The slaughter of peasants, the felling of forests, and the forced enclosures of the commons in the sixteenth century; the taxonomic, anatomical and cartographic logics of the Enlightenment, and its attendant colonial enslavement and expropriation of Africa, its peoples and its nonhumans; and the systematic destruction of cities during the Second World War – Sebald connects all of these together into a narrative poem that charts the symbolic severing of humanity's relationality with nature. But *After Nature* is not a didactic work. It stands more as a mournful witness to, rather than a judgement on, these interlinked historical events. In witnessing this history, one of the poem's principal effects is to estrange the human subject. At one point, Sebald writes that 'An animal | is a human, in deep | mourning shrouded' ['*Ein Tier | ist der Mensch,*

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[34] Sebald, *After Nature*, trans. by Michael Hamburger (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 88, 50, 63.

in tiefe | Trauer gehüllt'].[35] As the 'human' becomes the object, rather than the subject, of the sentence, Sebald defamiliarises humanity. But at the same time, by approximating the animal to a mournful human, Sebald draws attention to the sadness of nonhumans in modernity.

Michael Hulse's English translation renders the poem's title as *After Nature*. But the phrasing of Sebald's original German evokes a more complex picture. This is because "*nach*" means *after, from,* and *drawn from* (as in 'representing'). The phrase *Nach der Natur* expresses how modernity concomitantly comes 'from' and 'after' nature, marking what Marx called capitalist modernity's 'dissolution of the relation to the earth',[36] and thus signalling the dawn of 'a geological period when nature has come to an end'.[37] Published just one year before Bill McKibben's foundational climate change manifesto, *The End of Nature* (1990), *After Nature* shares McKibben's critique of modernity: that it breaks away from nature at the very moment at which it begins irrevocably altering nature.[38] Sebald's texts therefore understand modernity's 'progress' to be predicated on a symbolic transcendence from *and* a material connection with nature. Modernity artificially cleaves the human and the nonhuman, simultaneously separating and connecting them. Put differently, then, Sebald's project is situated within – and perhaps even anticipates the theorisation of – the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene and its variant concepts such as the Capitalocene are, to be sure, heavily debated. But at heart these terms help us make sense of how the Earth enters a new geological epoch as a result of industrialised and capitalist activities.[39] Sebald compels us to think of what is at stake in modernity's acceleration of planetary change.

By situating his literary project 'after nature', I want to suggest that Sebald develops a kind of nature writing fitted to representing a world that comes 'after' nature. Sebald's literary project develops a creaturely melancholia which laments the erasure of nature in modernity and subsequently attempts to re-connect the human to animality. This is why my sense of Sebald's creaturely form differs from that developed by Eric Santner's *On Creaturely Life* (2006), which I analysed in my introduction. I share Santner's insistence that Sebald's work captures the 'historical violence and the structural dislocations generated by capitalist modernity', just as I share his argument that Sebald's work testifies to 'a traumatic dimension of

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[35] Sebald, *Nach der Natur: Ein Elementargedicht* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1995), pp. 48–49. My translation.
[36] Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, trans. by Martin Nicolaus (New York: Vintage, 1973), p. 497.
[37] Rob Burns and Wilfried van der Will, 'The Calamitous Perspective of Modernity: Sebald's Negative Ontology', *Journal of European Studies*, 41 (2011), 341–358 (p. 342).
[38] Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (London: Viking, 1990), p. 60.
[39] Jamie Lorimer, 'The Anthropo-scene: A Guide for the Perplexed', *Social Studies of Science*, 47 (2017), 117–142 (p. 117).

political power and social bonds whose structures have undergone radical trans-formations in modernity.'[40] However, as I argued in this thesis's introduction, the very German-Jewish tradition that Santner draws on is much more variegated in its definitions of the creaturely, and indeed much more preoccupied with the non-human, than Santner suggests. Against Santner's claim that only humans are crea-tures, my chapter suggests that Sebald's work positions humanity *within* nature, even at the very moment that modernity defines itself against the nonhuman. Se-bald's creatureliness thus strives to recouple life forms, rather than holding them apart.

This chapter builds on a handful of critical essays on how Sebald's writing exhibits a concern 'for life in all forms'.[41] Anne Fuchs argues that Sebald's fiction develops 'a distinctly ecological perspective which highlights the historical acceleration of the destruction of nature', thus contesting the 'disastrously anthropocentric world-view of the modern era'.[42] Elsewhere, Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa ranks Se-bald's texts as being among 'the most species-rich biotopes [in] contemporary German-language literature', positing that Sebald's project 'aims to correct a con-cept of history which completely neglects the fate of animals.'[43] Yet I push beyond this scholarship in two key ways. First, I suggest that Sebald uses literary form to connect the human to nature. I therefore introduce a *formal* claim to what was pre-viously only a *thematic* one. Second, I analyse the ways in which Sebald evokes and directly invokes critiques of modernity's disarticulation of the human from nature. From *The Rings of Saturn's* echoes of Adorno's natural-history dialectic to *Austerlitz's* disguised quoting of John Berger's writing on the animal's disappear-ance in modernity, Sebald engages with and even lifts material from other writers whose work thinks the war against animals. Sebald is thus as much a collector and magpie-like figure as his narrators: he collects ideas from elsewhere and re-presents them in new ways. This chapter analyses to what ends Sebald collects together these critiques of progress.

To do this, I work mostly with the English-language translations of Sebald's work. But I will also turn to his original German in order to tease out some of the linguis-tic and syntactic specificities of his poetics which escape their English translations.

[40] Eric Santner, *On Creaturely Life: Benjamin, Rilke, Sebald* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2006), pp. xviii, 12. Santner's emphasis.
[41] Wolff, *Hybrid Poetics*, p. 5.
[42] Anne Fuchs, 'W. G. Sebald's Painters: The Function of Fine Art in his Prose Works', *Modern Language Review*, 101 (2006), 167–83 (p. 173); Fuchs, 'Ein Hauptkapital der Geschichte der Un-terwerfung', in *W. G. Sebald and the Writing of History*, ed. by Anne Fuchs and J. J. Long (Würz-burg: Königshausen and Neumann, 2007), pp. 121–138 (p. 122).
[43] Hans-Walter Schmidt-Hannisa, 'Aberration of a Species: On the Relationship Between Man and Beast in W. G. Sebald's Work', in *Sebald and the Writing of History*, pp. 31–43 (pp. 32–33).

It is well known that Sebald worked closely with his translators, regularly altering, rewriting and questioning their choices. This is especially true for Michael Hulse's translation of *The Rings of Saturn* and Anthea Bell's translation of *Austerlitz*, the latter of which was published simultaneously in both languages. Owing to the closeness between Sebald and his English translators, as well as the relative coherency between his original and translated texts, his writing has been described as being 'born translated'. According to Rebecca Walkowitz, translation is not incidental or secondary to Sebald's project. Rather, *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* were 'written for translation from the start', aiding their favourable reception and rapid incorporation into the Anglophone literary canon.[44] And yet, it would be unwise to lose sight of Sebald's German. As Lynn Wolff reminds us, his recourse to specialised vocabulary, compound nouns and subordinated clauses are never fully reducible to their translations.[45] In turn, this chapter's close readings suggest that we can deepen our understanding of Sebald's poetics – and his writing of animality – through comparative analysis.

I first explore *The Rings of Saturn*. I analyse Sebald's debilitated and hospitalised autodiegetic narrator, and how his particular experience of *Unglück* (accident, exposure, catastrophe, and melancholia) ends up leading to a narrative rejection of Cartesian dualism's anthropocentric instrumentalisation of life. Next, I interrogate *The Rings of Saturn's* 'natural history of the herring' section, which explores the history of over-fishing in the North Sea. I demonstrate how Sebald's writing on herring evokes an Adornian notion of *Naturgeschichte*, or natural-history, which understands nature and history as being co-produced, which is to say, contingent on one another. While this critical notion of natural-history promises to radically unsettle any separation between the human and the nonhuman, I will also demonstrate how Sebald risks flattening out this dialectical position. Focusing on Sebald's incorporation of black-and-white images, and one particular instance in which he appears to conflate Jewish deaths in the Holocaust with the killing of herring, I interrogate how Sebald's poetics of connection risks overlooking the differences between vanquished humans and nonhumans. The second half of my chapter moves from *The Rings of Saturn* to *Austerlitz*, paying attention to Sebald's critical attitude toward zoological gardens and the practices of collecting nonhuman specimens. I argue, first, that Sebald's final novel stages obstructed, oblique and partial encounters between humans and animals in order to critique modernity's architectural separation of life forms. *Austerlitz's* speakers routinely find themselves locking eyes with, identifying with, and sometimes even over-

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[44] Rebecca L. Walkowitz, *Born Translated: The Contemporary Novel in an Age of World Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 3.

[45] Wolff, 'The "Solitary Mallard": On Sebald and Translation', *Journal of European Studies*, 41 (2011), 323–340 (p. 328).

identifying with encaged animals in zoological gardens. In these scenes, Sebald repurposes key claims from John Berger's 1977 essay 'Why Look at Animals?', and in doing so has his narrators imagine modernity as a 'false world' that is not unlike the zoological garden itself. Thus, *Austerlitz* sees modernity as zooscape, a world which holds captive animality. Finally, I end this chapter by discussing how *Austerlitz's* connective grammar generates an archival perspective which counteracts aspects of the novel form's mechanistic anthropocentrism. Sebald utilises lists, hypotaxis and parataxis so as to slow down modernity's accelerating anthropocentrism. I claim that *Austerlitz's* long sentences and slow temporality are key components of his creaturely form which promise to interrupt the novel as an anthropological machine, but also risk leaving history preserved as it is. Thus although my analysis of Sebald's creaturely form concentrates specifically on his encounters with animals, I see these moments as speaking to more broader, underlying formal tendencies of Sebald's entire project.

The Rings of Saturn: *Unglück*, Accident and Exposure

Subtitled in the original German-language edition *An English Pilgrimage* [*Eine englische Wallfahrt*], *The Rings of Saturn* is a mosaic of fiction, memoir, essay and travelogue, revolving around an unnamed narrator's analeptic recollections of a walking tour around the rural Suffolk coastline in August of 1992. For much of the book, Sebald's narrator conveys how East Anglia and its coastline were fundamental to Britain's modernisation and imperial history. But the book's melancholic tone, which builds a narrative of entropy rather than progress, reveals how such modernisation has left Suffolk utterly dilapidated, enduring the repercussions of deindustrialisation and deforestation. The 'pilgrimage' of *The Rings of Saturn's* (henceforth, *Rings*) subtitle thus connotes a secularised and orbiting psychogeographic journey through the landscapes of a country – perhaps even a planet, Sebald suggests – locked in a spiral of decline. This first section focuses on how *Rings's* narrator is preoccupied with piecing together what he describes as history's 'traces of destruction, reaching far back into the past' (p. 3). I argue that Sebald's narrator does not just observe but *embodies* these traces of destruction. Sebald's narrator ultimately becomes *sensitive to* the vulnerability of lost objects. By analysing *Rings's* autodiegetic but effacing narrative style, its temporal framings, and the novel's pervasive mood of *Unglück*, I explore how Sebald's poetics of connection, far from simply adopting a dispassionate and systemic perspective on history, attempts to embed the narrator within the world. Sebald's narrator thus becomes creaturely insofar as he identifies himself with forms of life that have been destroyed by modernity.

For a writer whose work is preoccupied with the hauntings and memories of these 'traces of destruction', there are only a few moments throughout Sebald's literary project in which his protagonists look proleptically towards the future. One such moment is dramatised in *Rings*. Having made his way from Brundall to Lowestoft to Dunwich, Sebald's narrator arrives at the Orfordness peninsula, a shingle-formation ex-Anglo-American weapons-testing site that now lies abandoned. Ferried across by boat, the narrator notices the overgrown yellowing grass, the stillness of the air, and the heaps of scrap metal and defunct machinery scattered across the ground. His narrator recalls:

> It was as if I were passing through an undiscovered country. I had not a single thought in my head. With each step that I took, the emptiness within and the emptiness without grew ever greater and the silence more profound […] The closer I came to these ruins, the more any notion of a mysterious isle of the dead receded, and the more I imagined myself amidst the remains of our own civilisation after its extinction in some future catastrophe […] Where and in what time I truly was that day at Orfordness I cannot say, even now as I write these words. (pp. 234–237)

Struck by the stillness and emptiness of this abandoned island, and connecting this to the island's dormant military technologies, Sebald's narrator momentarily leaves behind his preoccupation with the past, the 'isle of the dead'. With the rhetorical formulation 'as if', Sebald's narrator becomes a 'future reader',[46] pitching himself anachronically into a time-space that goes well beyond the point of writing, and even beyond writing as such, to a time *after* the extinction of the human species. The narrator is no longer in the present, but is walking around amidst archival deposits of human history. Sebald's description of Orfordness thus extrapolates the present conditions of 'progress' towards their logical conclusion: 'future catastrophe'. For this reason, scholars have begun to read *Rings* as anticipating discourses such as climate change and the Anthropocene. Roseanne Kennedy argues that *Rings* has a posthumanist sensibility that retains an 'awareness of the linked histories of globalisation and the Anthropocene'. For Kennedy, Sebald's posthumanism 'decentres the human by gesturing towards a species view that imagines the human, like other species, as facing possible extinction.'[47] Jason Groves similarly suggests that *Rings* adopts a planetary perspective, arguing that

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[46] Pieter Vermeulen, 'Future Readers: Narrating the Human in the Anthropocene', *Textual Practice*, 31 (2017), 867–885 (p. 872).

[47] Roseanne Kennedy, 'Humanity's Footprint: Reading *Rings of Saturn* and *Palestinian Walks* in an Anthropocene Era', *Biography*, 35 (2012), 170–189 (pp. 180, 172).

Sebald 'explores a postnatural world of anthropogenic climate change, biological invasion, and mass extinction.'[48]

But what is equally important about Sebald's description of Orfordness is that the narrator's *Endzeit* fantasy is interrupted by a startled hare that rushes out from among the weeds:

> I was frightened almost to death when a hare that had been hiding in the tufts of grass by the wayside started up, right at my feet, and shot off down the rough track before darting sideways, this way, then that, into the field. It must have been cowering there as I approached, heart pounding as it waited, until it was almost too late to get away with its life. In that very fraction of a second when its paralysed state turned into panic and flight, its fear cut through me. I still see what occurred in that one tremulous instant with an undiminished clarity. I see the edge of the grey tarmac and every individual blade of grass, I see the hare leaping out of its hiding-place, with its ears laid back and a curiously human expression on its face that was rigid with terror and strangely divided; and in its eyes, turning to look back as it fled and almost popping out of its head with fright, I see myself, become one with it. (pp. 234–235)

Composed out of clauses that rhythmically mimic the 'this way, then that' of the hare's darting movement, Sebald's description returns us to the present moment and, with this, to an encounter between two species. Although the narrator keeps a distance from the hare – reinforced by his repeated insistence on 'I see' – he nevertheless finds that the hare's fear reaches and 'cut[s] through' him. Indeed, the hare's 'terror' and 'fright' are so palpable that the narrator begins to view himself from the hare's frightened eyes. The hare's face starts to emit a 'curiously human expression', and the narrator subsequently 'become[s] one with it', entering a more creaturely zone in which human and nonhuman are connected as 'one'.

Sebald extends this theme of being vulnerable to the nonhuman throughout *Rings*. But this motif does not always rest on imputing animals with human qualities. In the scene which immediately precedes the one at Orfordness, Sebald's narrator is pummelled by a sandstorm: 'suddenly, in the space of a few minutes, the sky darkened and the wind came up, blowing the dust across the arid land in sinister spirals' (p. 228). In the sandstorm's wake, the narrator is left breathless and covered in dust, reflecting on how humans are situated and embedded within the environment: 'A deathly silence prevailed. There was not a breath, not a birdsong to be heard, not a rustle, nothing' (p. 229). Sebald identifies this nothingness, a star-

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[48] Jason Groves, 'Writing After Nature: A Sebaldian Ecopoetics', in *German Ecocriticism in the Anthropocene*, ed. by Caroline Schaumann and Heather I. Sullivan (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 267–292 (pp. 269, 277).

tled response to the sudden change in weather, as being shared between human, bird, and wider environment. Elsewhere, Sebald adopts a geological perspective when he observes that humanity's 'spread over the earth was fuelled by reducing the higher species of vegetation to charcoal, by incessantly burning whatever would burn'. 'Human civilisation', the narrator remarks, 'has been no more than a strange luminescence growing more intense by the hour' (p. 170). For Sebald, modernity's progress is nature's decline.

Rings makes mutual exposure into a key motif, positioning its first-person narrator as a sort of vulnerable receptacle who is thematically and formally open to the world around him. Sebald's narrators have already received much critical attention. Some critics argue that Sebald employs a 'subtle art of transition' in which digression, associative thinking, free indirect discourse and double- or triple-mediated prose (the 'periscopic' style that Sebald attributes to Thomas Bernhard) all allow Sebald to move between different voices, places and spaces.[49] These modernist literary practices make up what Walkowitz calls Sebald's 'vertiginous style',[50] in which his narrators at once 'stand on the brink, apart, examining and depicting scenes of uncertain reality', while at the very same time becoming too close to and hence overwhelmed by the very things they describe.[51] In *Rings* especially, the narrator occupies a position that Stephen Clingman calls the 'metonymic-I', an 'I' formed 'at the point of connection'.[52] In other words, Sebald's poetics of connection is not just developed syntactically, but also by the specific grammatical writing of his first-person narrator, who acts as the connecting force of the text itself, a paradoxically all-controlling yet self-eliding and impersonal figure whose physical and mental wanderings determine the pathways that the work takes. Sebald thus places immense significance on his narrator's encounters and conversations (the vast majority of which are, it must be said, with other men, and women remain notably spectral throughout Sebald's literary project), which serve as catalysts for the narrative's digressive and essayistic drive. On first sight, *Rings's* narrative appears to adopt a dispassionate and diagnostic stance; it appears to adopt a distanced vantage point that reads the world from above. But on closer reading, this hyper-connected and free-associative narration also resists the false objectivity of the view from nowhere, insisting that to 'see everything from above' is a 'falsification of perspective' (p. 125). Helen Finch's work on Sebald's bachelors has demonstrated how *Rings's* critique of false perspectives generates a queer potenti-

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[49] Gray, 'Segues', p. 54; on Sebald's debt to Bernhard, see his interview with Martin Doerry and Volker Hage, '"Ich fürchte das Melodramatische"', *Der Spiegel*, 12 March 2001, 228–234 (p. 233).

[50] Walkowitz, *Cosmopolitan Style: Modernism Beyond the Nation* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 155.

[51] McCulloh, *Understanding*, p. 21.

[52] Stephen Clingman, *The Grammar of Identity: Transnational Fiction and the Nature of the Boundary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 184.

ality that undermines the 'sovereign gaze of the writing subject'.[53] Richard Gray argues that Sebald's first-person narrators develop an 'ecological sensibility' that decentres the human.[54] I add to these analyses by suggesting that *Rings's* poetics of connection also undermines disinterested omniscience by embedding its narrator within the world as a creature among other creatures, open to encounters with other animals.

This sense of creaturely vulnerability is established from *Rings's* very first pages. The novel's long opening paragraph reveals that the book's plot is inseparable from his narrator's hospitalisation. *Rings* thus begins from the point of an accident, 'a fissure that has since riven my life' (p. 18), which renders the narrator exposed. Sebald's first sentence depicts the narrator as being vulnerable to cosmic planetary shifts: 'In August 1992, when the dog days were drawing to an end, I set off to walk the county of Suffolk, in the hope of dispelling the emptiness that takes hold of me whenever I have completed a long stint of work' (p. 3). The significance of these uncontrollable planetary forces is also introduced in the book's epigraph, which quotes the *Brockhaus Encyclopaedia's* explanation that Saturn's rings 'are fragments of a former moon that was too close to the planet and was destroyed by its tidal effect'. In *Rings's* opening, Sebald's narrator becomes preoccupied with the 'paralysing horror' that had accompanied his confrontation of the county's 'traces of destruction, reaching far back into the past'. He remarks that 'Perhaps it was because of this that, a year to the day after I began my tour, I was taken into hospital in Norwich in a state of almost total immobility. It was then that I began in my thoughts to write these pages' (pp. 3–4). The walking tour germinates until its memory erupts, spilling over into a debilitating psychosomatic accident. The text that we hold in our hands begins from the point of this accident. It is a text written from the perspective of a subject whose own subjectivity has been uprooted, generated by the sudden cessation of physical movement. Because of this, *Rings's* critics have positioned Sebald's narrator as 'a self, losing itself, becom[ing] an other'.[55] I add to this the idea that Sebald's narrator is becoming a creature, more aware of his proximity with animality.

To help articulate the significance of the narrator's accident, hospitalisation, and new creaturely perspective, I want to briefly combine two ways of conceptualising the accident as a phenomenon: first, the concept of *Unglück*; second, Catherine Malabou's work on the ontology of the accident. *Unglück* is a useful term because of

[53] Helen Finch, *Sebald's Bachelors: Queer Resistance and the Unconforming Life* (Abingdon: Legenda, 2013), p. 6.

[54] Gray, 'Writing at the Roche Limit: Order and Entropy in W. G. Sebald's *Die Ringe des Saturn'*, *German Quarterly*, 83 (2010), 38–57 (pp. 41, 47).

[55] Bianca Theisen, 'A Natural History of Destruction: W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn'*, *MLN*, 121 (2006), 563–581 (p. 573).

its descriptive capaciousness; it suggests a range of negative affects and afflictions, including bad luck, accident, melancholia, and catastrophe. *Unglück* is also one of Sebald's keywords. In his essay collection *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* (1985), Sebald reveals his debt to Austrian literature's preoccupation with misfortune and unhappiness. *Die Beschreibung des Unglücks* can be translated as the description of catastrophe, misfortune, depression, or disaster, and in Sebald's wider literary project accidents are routinely imagined *as* catastrophes. So, what happens if we put this semantic looseness into conversation with Malabou's 'ontology of the accident', a theory at the intersection of neuroscience and psychoanalysis, which suggests that the 'destructive plasticity' of sudden accidental events produces an irreversible fracturing of subjectivity? Sometimes, Malabou writes, 'as a result of serious trauma, or sometimes for no reason at all, the path splits and a new, unprecedented persona comes to live with the former person, and eventually takes up all the room'.[56] For Malabou, accidents can produce a bifurcation of subjectivity in which a new self emerges, a self which is non-identical to its former self. This demands that we rethink subjectivity as discontinuous and vulnerable.

By combining these together, I suggest that Sebald's narrator discovers in his own accident, or *Unglück*, a shared corporeal vulnerability with the very forms of life and death that he encountered on his walking tour. He imagines his state of 'total immobility' as a negative potentiality, a generative rewiring of subjectivity which rethinks humanity not as disconnected from but connected with other creatures. In his hospital bed, the narrator recalls that 'I became aware again of my own body', recovering an attentiveness towards his own body's creaturely vulnerability, its animality (p. 18). Later on, Sebald will describe this ontology as being a 'prone body' (p. 79). In other words, *Unglück* functions in *Rings* as a way to productively reengage with the body. But as a result, the categories of human and nonhuman suddenly become blurred. The two nurses who tend to Sebald's narrator are heard as making a peculiar 'fluting sound', 'a kind of warbling such as comes from the throats of birds' (p. 18). And the narrator himself is no longer properly human, but has becomes a creature like 'poor Gregor Samsa' in Franz Kafka's *The Metamorphosis* (1915). Like Kafka's human-beetle metamorphosis, *Rings's* narrator assumes 'the tortured posture of a creature that has raised itself erect for the first time' (p. 5). Sebald's intertextual characterisations portray his narrator as tortured creature rather than an autonomous human, ironically inverting the upright evolutionary notion of hominisation.

This new engagement with the body is integral to the ways in which *Rings* resists the persistence of anthropocentrism. A few pages on from the narrator's renewed

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[56] Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. by Carolyn Shread (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 1.

recognition of his own vulnerability, he reflects on the Scientific Revolution, the 'undaunted investigative zeal of the new sciences' (p. 12), and the ceremonial spectacle of dissection in the seventeenth century anatomy theatre. By pushing back against 'the archaic ritual of dismembering a corpse' (p. 12), *Rings* deploys a common critical manoeuvre in the critique of anthropocentrism, namely: a critique of René Descartes's mechanistic philosophy, which ushered in what Silvia Federici calls 'an ontological divide between a purely mental and a purely physical domain'. For Federici and others, Cartesianism reifies a 'new concept of the person', no longer a human animal but a human machine with the potential for work. Federici shows us that 'the anatomy theatre discloses to the public eye a disenchanted, desecrated body […] To the eye of the anatomist, the body is a factory'.[57]

Fig. 1 – *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 16.

Sebald's narrator casts Cartesianism as an emblem of a distinctly modern *Unglück* or catastrophe – 'one of the principal chapters of the history of subjection' (p. 13) – which de-animates and instrumentalises human bodies. Sebald's narrator imagines the anatomy theatre as a stage on which the human body is abstracted into a machine. He cautions against the Cartesian dogma that 'one should disregard the flesh, which is beyond our comprehension, and attend to the machine within, to what can fully be understood, be made wholly useful for work, and, in the event of any fault, either repaired or discarded' (p. 13). Against this 'Cartesian rigidity' (p. 17), Sebald's narrator claims Rembrandt's *The Anatomy Lesson of Dr Nicolaes Tulp* (1632) [Fig. 1] as an aesthetic critique of the anatomy theatre's disenchanted optics. It is, according to Sebald's narrator, an intentionally 'crass misrepresentation' which refuses to accept the body as machine. While the painting's surgeons famously disregard the corpse in favour of the anatomical atlas, thus reducing the human being to a diagram and schematic plan (p. 13), the corpse itself has a 'peculiar' and 'grotesquely out of proportion' hand, 'anatomically the wrong way

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[57] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), pp. 138, 133, 139.

round' (p. 16). 'It seems inconceivable that we are faced here with an unfortunate blunder. Rather, I believe that there was deliberate intent behind this flaw in the composition.' Sebald's narrator thus re-members the dissected body on the table: the 'unshapely hand' in fact 'signifies the violence that has been done to Aris Kindt' (p. 17). Later, Sebald's narrator traces how mechanical philosophy is newly articulated in the industrial age. He laments the 'peculiar symbiosis' of worker and machine in the Industrial Revolution: 'a great number of people […] spent their lives with their wretched bodies strapped to looms made of wooden frames and rails, hung with weights, and reminiscent of instruments of torture or cages' (p. 282). *Rings* therefore contests the rationalisation of the body to capital and the dualistic divide of mind over body.

Rings's anti-Cartesian tendencies have already garnered considerable scholarly attention, but these existing analyses often limit their understanding of Cartesianism to the instrumentalisation of the *human* body.[58] By focusing solely on how Sebald reanimates the de-animated human person, critics have overlooked how *Rings* complicates Cartesianism's de-animation of animality, whether human or nonhuman. Think, for example, of the Orfordness hare described above. The frightened hare bears little resemblance to the Cartesian *bête machine*, and is anthropomorphically identified *with* the human insofar as the narrator remarks on its 'curiously human expression'. Think too of the moment in which Sebald's narrator climbs into a field of dozing pigs, and softly tickles a pig behind the ear:

> I climbed over the wire and approached one of the ponderous, immobile, sleeping animals. As I bent towards it, it opened a small eye fringed with light lashes and gave me an enquiring look. I ran my hand across its dusty back, and it trembled at this unwonted touch [*unter der ungewohnten Berührung erschauernden Rücken*]; I stroked its snout and face, and chucked it in the hollow behind one ear, till at length it sighed like one enduring endless suffering. When I stood up, it closed its eye once more with an expression of profound submissiveness. (p. 66)[59]

Sebald's literary project is well known for its reliance on seeing rather than touching. His melancholic narrators look, but rarely touch, their objects. There are also curious moments in which Sebald recoils from proximity and contact, associating touch with a kind of animalistic excess. When stumbling upon a couple making

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[58] See: Gray, 'Sebald's Segues', p. 26; Kennedy, p. 178; Monica Kaup, 'The Neobaroque in W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*', *Contemporary Literature*, 54 (2013), 683–719 (p. 683); Long, p. 135; Torleif Persson, 'Impersonal Style and the Form of Experience in W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*', *Studies in the Novel*, 48 (2016), 205–222 (p. 218).

[59] Sebald, *Die Ringe des Saturn: Eine Englische Wallfahrt* (Frankfurt am Main: Eichborn, 1995), p. 87.

love on a Suffolk beach, for example, *Rings's* narrator appears frightened by an explicit encounter with gender and sexuality: he describes their bodies combining as 'like some great mollusc washed ashore'. The simile is soon dropped, and the couple shapeshift into 'a many limbed, two-headed monster […] the last of a prodigious species' (p. 68). These instances of looking and repulsion make Sebald's seemingly innocuous human-pig encounter all the more striking, however limited and minor it may be. For here, Sebald's narrator momentarily reconnects in a small but significant way with a different species. Michael Hulse's translation of *ungewohnten* as 'unwonted' serves as a neat inversion of its homonym, unwanted, implying an unfamiliar but by no means unwelcome contact. If Cartesian anthropocentrism deadens animal vitality, then in this scene Sebald presents nonhuman animals as being alive to the touch of human others.

The above passage ends with Sebald's narrator recalling the Biblical teachings of his youth, in particular the Gospel of Mark and the healing of the Gadarene Demoniac. When Jesus exorcises a man of his 'unclean spirits', the spirits parasitically implant themselves into a herd of swine: 'And the swine, some two thousand according to the evangelist, plunged down a steep slope and drowned in the sea' (p. 67). Sebald reflects on the story: 'was this parable made up […], I wondered, to explain the supposed uncleanliness of swine; which would imply that human reasoning, diseased as it is, needs to seize on some other [*einer anderen*] kind that it can take to be inferior and thus deserving of annihilation?' (p. 67).[60] This critique of 'diseased' human reason has profound consequences in a book which variously explores the enduring repercussions of Cartesian mechanical philosophy and, as I demonstrate below, the over-fishing of North Sea herring. Reason, for Sebald's narrator, is often synonymous with anthropocentrisms which sanction the 'annihilation' of supposedly 'inferior' forms of life. Against such anthropocentric thinking, in which nonhuman nature is 'rendered […] effectively dead, inert, and manipulable' by the industrialising world,[61] Sebald's narrator includes pigs in his attempt at restitution. He rewrites the parable from the standpoint of the pigs, inverting the Biblical dominion of human over nonhuman which Derrida saw as an ur-site of the war against animals. *Rings* thus demonstrates a critical awareness of modernity's disconnection of the human from nature, and at the same time offers fleeting encounters with other species.

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[60] Ibid., p. 88.

[61] Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York: HarperOne, 1990), p. 214.

From Natural History to natural-history

[I]t would be up to thought to see all nature, and whatever would
install itself as such, as history, and all history as nature.[62]

—Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*

Writing in 1982, in an article on Alexander Kluge and the horror of total war, Sebald asks whether 'the catastrophes which develop, so to speak, in our hands and seem to break out suddenly are a kind of experiment, anticipating the point at which we shall drop out of what we have thought for so long to be our autonomous history [*autonomen Geschichte*] and back down into the history of nature?'[63] For Sebald, humanity is not removed from nature. Rather, humanity's supposedly autonomous history is merely 'what we have thought for so long'. It is what humanity has told itself, not what is actually the case, a misplaced ideological presupposition which may one day precipitate the very catastrophes which threaten to 'break out suddenly', propelling humanity 'back down into the history of nature'. Sebald therefore imagines humanity as being poised *between* history and natural history (the essay is titled *Zwischen Geschichte und Naturgeschichte*), with modernity's practices of mastery and progress collapsing in on themselves. Sebald further examines what it means to live between history and natural history in *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (1999), published in English as *On the Natural History of Destruction* (2003), as well as in a posthumously published interview with Uwe Pralle. Here, when Pralle asks Sebald about the methodology and thematic concerns behind *Rings*, Sebald replies that the book is intended to act as an extended description of 'the aberration of a species' [*Aberration einer Species*]:

> One can […] go outward in concentric circles, and the inner circles always determine the outer ones. That means: one can contemplate one's own mental health, how this is determined by one's own family history, how this is in turn determined by the history of the petit bourgeoisie in twenties and thirties Germany, how this is defined by the economic conditions of these years, how these economic conditions have evolved out of the history of industrialisation in Germany and Europe – and so on until the circles of natural history and the history of the human species collide [*wo die Naturgeschichte und die Geschichte der menschlichen Species ineinander changieren*].[64]

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[62] Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. by E. B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1973), p. 359.

[63] Sebald, 'Between History and Natural History: On the Literature Description of Total Destruction', in *Campo Santo*, pp. 65–95 (p. 67); *Luftkrieg und Literatur* (Munich: Carl Hanser, 1999), pp. 72–73.

[64] Sebald, 'Mit einem kleinen Strandspaten: Abschied von Deutschland nehmen', *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 22 December 2001, p. 16. My translation.

In this hyper-connected system, where 'one's mental health' is ultimately inter-linked with 'the history of industrialisation', Sebald arrives at the assertion that human history and natural history are co-determined. Thus, despite his invocation of those two specific concepts – natural history on the one side, human history on the other – Sebald positions these histories as inseparable, irreducible, and inter-connected.

It is this connectedness between human and natural history that I want to explore in the following section. Throughout *Rings*, Sebald's narrator meditates on how modernity uses, abuses, and then discards nonhuman animals. Over twenty pages of the text are dedicated to silkworm moths, for example. Sebald's narrator traces five centuries of sericulture, remarking on how the silkworm might once have lived 'open, left to its own devices, until man, having discovered its usefulness, was prompted to foster it' (p. 276). He follows this fostering all the way forward to the twentieth century and the 'entire killing business' (p. 294) of Nazi sericulture techniques. By tracing such a long historical span, the narrator continually assess-es modernity and the human species: 'If we view ourselves from a great height', the narrator states, 'it is frightening to realise how little we know about our spe-cies' (p. 92). This is what Kennedy labels as *Rings's* 'species thinking', its propensi-ty to take a vertiginous perspective on the human in modernity.[65] But what is also crucial here is that, by uncovering the scale of silkworm harvesting over a *longue durée*, *Rings* also imbues insects with historical significance. By pushing beyond charismatic megafauna and companion animals – the hare and the pig – *Rings* compels its readers to include silkworm exploitation in their idea of modernity's domination, thus developing an expanded idea of creatureliness.

In this section I will turn to another key passage in which Sebald adopts a vertigi-nous perspective in order to bear witness to nonhumans who have been swept away by the 'stream of history'. Described in *Rings's* contents page as 'the natural history of the herring', this seven-page passage reflects on over two centuries of herring fishing in the North Sea. Sebald's melancholic narration reveals the North Sea to be a space of ecological exhaustion, and the herring become a 'species al-ways threatened by disaster' (p. 57). Sebald thus writes a *critical* natural history which foregrounds the long-term consequences of industrialised aquaculture's commodification of herring, including overfishing, oceanic acidification, and eco-system collapse. Against this acceleration of industrialised modernity, Sebald's *Rings* adopts what I will call – following Adorno – a *natural-historical standpoint*. Adorno reimagines classical natural history as natural-history, a dialectical con-

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[65] Kennedy, p. 177.

cept which thinks of human history *as* natural history. Natural-history is important because it simultaneously *historicises nature* and *naturalises humanity*. It understands nature as actively shaping history, and it reminds us that humanity is also part of nature. Natural-history is thus a creaturely term because it destabilises the binary between human and nonhuman. I view natural-history as a key component of Sebald's poetics of connection, and in this section I reveal how Sebald's narrator both includes herring within history and identifies humans as one species among other species. I will analyse how Sebald leverages humour, historical analysis and the placing of in-text images in order to critique industrial aquaculture, and I will end by discussing how these literary strategies reach certain limits throughout Sebald's work.

By turning to Sebald's natural history of the herring, I not only want to develop this chapter's central concern with Sebald's poetics of connection and his preoccupation with the nonhuman. I will also show how *Rings* contributes to and thus anticipates the current waves of critical research into oceanic degradation.[66] In recent years, numerous critics, scientists and activists have drawn attention to the fact that by the 'middle of the twentieth century, hundreds of millions of tons of ocean wildlife have been removed from the sea, while hundreds of millions of tons of waste have been poured into it'.[67] Because of this, '[h]uman biocultural practices flow into the putatively natural zone of the ocean, scrambling nature and culture, life forms and forms of life'.[68] Tying this to the politics and ethics of industrial aquaculture and food consumption, Jonathan Safran Foer's *Eating Animals* (2009) calls on humans to imagine the scale of bycatch each and every time they consume fish: 'this plate also holds all of the animals that were killed for your serving […] The plate might have to be five feet across'.[69] There is, according to Elspeth Probyn, 'no innocent place in which to escape the food politics of human-fish entanglement'.[70] Thus, Sebald's natural-history of the herring not only depicts how humans and nonhumans are fundamentally connected to one another, but in doing so he also throws up provocative questions about the politics and ethics of eating fish.

And it is with a seemingly innocuous scene of fish-eating that I want to begin. After touring Somerleyton Hall, Sebald's narrator checks in to the Albion Hotel in

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[66] Elizabeth DeLoughrey, 'Submarine Futures of the Anthropocene', *Comparative Literature*, 69 (2017), 32–44 (p. 32).

[67] Sylvia Earle, *The World is Blue: How Our Fate and the Oceans Are One* (Washington: National Geographic Society, 2009), p. 12.

[68] Stefan Helmreich, *Alien Ocean: Anthropological Voyages in Microbial Seas* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), p. 13.

[69] Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009), p. 50

[70] Elspeth Probyn, *Eating the Ocean* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), p. 5.

Lowestoft. Later that evening he orders a plate of fish and chips in the hotel's dining room. The narrator is brought a fish that 'had doubtless lain entombed [*vergrabenen*] in the deep-freeze for years' (p. 43). Attempting to cut into the exhumed fish's 'breadcrumb armour-plating' proves so difficult that the narrator's fork bends. When he finally pierces the fish's armour, his plate looking 'a hideous mess' after this 'dissection' [*Operation*], he realises that the fish is 'nothing but an empty shell'. The tartare sauce is grey, 'and the fish itself, or what feigned to be fish, lay a sorry wreck among the grass-green peas and the remains of soggy chips that gleamed with fat'. In the German original, the fish – or, that which merely signifies [*vorstellen*] a fish – is half destroyed [*Hälfte zerstört*].[71] This scene has been read, justifiably so, as an ironic joke about joyless British cuisine.[72] It is 'probably the funniest episode in Sebald's work', according to Long.[73] James Wood argues that the comedy of this scene 'lies in the paradox of painstaking exaggeration (as if the diner were trying to crack a safe, or solve a philosophical conundrum), enforced by Sebald's calm control of apparently ponderous diction'.[74] But in spite of the obvious humour of this passage, it is vital to read this scene *with* and *after* Sebald's description of Lowestoft itself. For Lowestoft is suffering from a 'disheartening' collapse, transforming from 'one of the foremost fishing ports in the United Kingdom' to a place of 'insidious decay' (p. 45). 'It seemed incomprehensible to me', Sebald's narrator remarks, 'that in such a relatively short period of time the place could have become so run down' (p. 41). Despite weathering the storm of a long downturn throughout the late twentieth-century, Lowestoft eventually crumbles under the weight of what Sebald's narrator terms Britain's 'hardline capitalist years' [*realen Kapitalismus verschriebenen Ära*], that is, Margaret Thatcher's neoliberal political-economy.[75] As a metonym for the systematic disinvestment, de-industrialization and deprivation of English seaside towns in the late twentieth century, Lowestoft mirrors the armour-plated fish on the narrator's plate: both are hollowed out.

The concept of natural-history helps reveal the stakes of this doubled hollowing out. Natural-history, or *Naturgeschichte*, is a historico-philosophical category which contests the dichotomy of nature and history, pointing instead to a space between history and nature. Readers of Walter Benjamin's work will know that the term

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[71] *Ringe*, p. 58.

[72] Hutchinson, *W. G. Sebald*, p. 25; Greg Bond, 'On the Misery of Nature and the Nature of Misery: W. G. Sebald's Landscapes', in *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, ed. by J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), pp. 31–44 (pp. 39–40).

[73] Long, p. 86, fn. 4.

[74] James Wood, 'W. G. Sebald, Humorist', *New Yorker*, June 5 & 12 2017 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/06/05/w-g-sebald-humorist> [Accessed 12/09/2017].

[75] *Ringe*, p. 56.

natural-history has many valences across his writing, naming at once the logics of transience dramatised by the German mourning play *and* the historical mode of the work of art as such. For my purposes, I am interested in a third vector of natural-history as what Beatrice Hanssen calls 'another kind of history, one no longer purely anthropocentric in nature or anchored only in the concerns of human subjects.'[76] Adorno takes up this other kind of natural history in his 1932 essay 'The Idea of Natural-History' [*Die Idee der Naturgeschichte*]. Here, natural-history names an attempt to 'dialectically overcome the usual antithesis of Nature and History'. For Adorno, natural-history is 'not concerned with natural history in the traditional, prescientific sense of the history of nature, nor with the history of nature where nature is the object of natural science.'[77] Rather, natural-history's dialectic envisions humanity and nonhuman nature as 'mutually determining' concepts, as Susan Buck-Morss puts it, with each providing 'the key for the demythification of the other'.[78] By bringing nature and history into what Adorno calls a 'concrete unity', natural-history disputes the mythical aura of both terms.[79]

But despite bringing nature and history into a concrete unity, natural-history does not dissolve the boundaries between the two. As Fredric Jameson writes, natural-history demands 'a reciprocal defamiliarisation of the two incommensurable poles of the dualism of Nature and History', a 'perpetual process in which neither term ever comes to rest, any more than any ultimate synthesis emerges'.[80] This explicitly dialectical function seeks to 'comprehend an object as natural where it appears most historical and as historical where it appears most natural'.[81] But, crucially, this does not result in the ecological hybridism of, say, Bruno Latour, in which the distinction between nature and society is permanently blurred.[82] Rather, as Gillian Rose explains, natural-history is chiasmatic. By claiming that 'history is nature, nature is history', Adorno creates an analytic methodology for simultaneously comprehending the connections and differences between them both.[83] Natural-history is a concept of vigilance which neither accepts a simple binary separation

[76] Hanssen, p. 1.

[77] Theodor W. Adorno, 'The Idea of Natural-History', in *Things Beyond Resemblance: Essays on Theodor W. Adorno*, ed. and trans. by Robert Hullot-Kentor (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), pp. 252–269 (pp. 252–253).

[78] Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p. 54.

[79] Adorno, 'The Idea of Natural-History', p. 259

[80] Fredric Jameson, *Late Marxism: Adorno or the Persistence of the Dialectic* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 99.

[81] Robert Hullot-Kentor, *Things Beyond Resemblance: Essays on Theodor W. Adorno* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 239.

[82] Bruno Latour, *The Politics of Nature: How to Bring Sciences into Democracy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004), p. 36.

[83] Gillian Rose, *The Melancholy Science: An Introduction to the Thought of Theodor W. Adorno* (London: Verso, 2014), pp. 13, 152.

of humanity against nature, nor capitulates to a kind of hybridism which collapses nature and history into sameness. To adapt Andreas Malm's recent formulation, natural-history testifies to '*the paradox of historicised nature*', namely that '*the more profoundly humans have shaped nature over their history, the more intensely nature comes to affect their lives*'.[84] Natural-history is therefore creaturely as it reconnects the human to nonhuman history.

Sebald invokes this critical form of natural-history when he talks above about the 'circles of natural history and the history of the human species' colliding, as well as when his narrators meditate on the mutual co-implication of Lowestoft fisheries and pelagic populations. In both cases, Sebald shapes a kind of creaturely natural-historical thinking. While I do not intend to deduce here whether Sebald deliberately adopts the Adornian concept of natural-history, it is well known among Sebald scholars that he spoke openly of his indebtedness to the first-generation Frankfurt School and their 'alternative perspective' on modernity.[85] Numerous critics have already analysed how Sebald's evocations of natural-history.[86] And, as Ben Hutchinson confirms, Sebald's literary project 'is permeated by the thought-forms of Adorno',[87] pointing 'directly to a dialectical critique of the Enlightenment's belief in progress' ['*weist direkt auf eine dialektische Kritik am Fortschrittsglauben der Aufklärung*'].[88] In what follows, then, I argue that Sebald's specific articulation of natural-history is a creaturely form because it interrupts the anthropological machine of human history, presenting human and nonhuman history as being interconnected.

Leaving the Albion Hotel the following morning after his unsuccessful attempt to eat fish and chips, Sebald's narrator begins a seven-page meditation on the 'natural history of the herring'. Thus when Sebald characterises Lowestoft as being trapped in a chain-reaction of 'encroaching misery', he shows how Lowestoft's human inhabitants' 'organic' decline is accelerated by historical events: neoliberalism takes hold, Lowestoft's wharves and factories close down, unemployment soars, personal debt increases, suicides escalate, and education levels plummet (p. 42). Human morbidity is thus deemed part of a historical process. Sebald not only

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[84] Andreas Malm, *The Progress of this Storm: Nature and Society in a Warming World* (London: Verso, 2018), p. 76. Malm's emphasis.

[85] Sebald, *A Place*, p. 8.

[86] See: Mark Ilsemann, 'Going Astray: Melancholy, Natural History, and the Image of Exile in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', in *Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, pp. 301–314 (p. 305); and Bettina Mosbach, *Figurationen der Katastrophe: Ästhetische Verfahren in W. G. Sebalds* Die Ringe des Saturn *und* Austerlitz (Bielefeld: Aisthesis, 2008), p. 100.

[87] Ben Hutchinson, 'The Shadow of Resistance: W. G. Sebald and the Frankfurt School', *Journal of European Studies*, 41 (2011), 267–284 (p. 268).

[88] Hutchinson, *W. G. Sebald: Die dialektische Imagination* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2009), p. 8. My translation.

shows how humans are part of natural history because of human decisions, but also because of nonhuman decisions. Throughout Britain's history, Sebald writes, 'there were repeated occasions when the herring avoided their usual grounds and whole stretches of the coastline were impoverished as a result' (p. 55). The herring's changing migration patterns directly affect the human population which relies on fishing in a yearly food cycle. In doing this, *Rings* concomitantly *historicises* herring and *naturalises* humanity. That is, on the one hand, Sebald demonstrates how herring fishing is a historical process which irrevocably alters nature. On the other, Sebald shows how humanity is not autonomous but reliant on and subject to nature. Nature and humanity are not static; their actions affect one another.

This image of human contingency becomes more acute when Sebald's narrator walks along Lowestoft's coastline, where he notices 'dozens of decommissioned and unemployed trawlers' (p. 44). He contemplates how 'the boats in which the fishermen once put out from the shore have vanished, now that fishing no longer affords a living, and the fishermen themselves are dying out' (pp. 52–53). In the original German, the fishermen are becoming extinct [*selber ausgestorben*].[89] Sebald thus echoes the fact that, by the time of *Rings's* construction in the mid-1990s, only thirty vessels fishing out of two Scottish ports 'were catching most of the national allocation for pelagic fish, and caught even more out-of-quota fish illegally. This policy of going for bulk virtually put an end to hundreds of smaller boats and fishers for herring that has supported many communities on the east coast of the United Kingdom'.[90] Herring fishing collapsed off the East Anglia coast in 1955, and by 1977 the European Commission had called its first moratorium on herring fishing.[91] 'Out on the high seas the fishing continues, at least for the present', Sebald writes forebodingly, 'though even there the catches are growing smaller', and 'the fish that are landed are often useless for anything but fish-meal' (p. 53) – they are fed back into industrial food production. Just as the breadcrumbed fish and Lowestoft are both represented as hollow spaces, so too does *Rings* connect these to a longer-term hollowing out of the fish stocks in the North Sea: the fishermen and the fish are becoming extinct.

Drawing on what maritime historians note to be the particularly wide 'historical record of [herring] fisheries throughout the modern era of European history',[92] Sebald's narrator frequently reflects on what we might call the classical or antiquarian tradition of natural history, the very tradition from which Adorno snatched his

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[89] *Ringe*, p. 71.
[90] Alastair Couper, Hance D. Smith and Bruno Ciceri, *Fishers and Plunderers: Theft, Slavery and Violence at Sea* (London: Pluto, 2015), p. 58.
[91] Callum Roberts, *The Unnatural History of the Sea* (Washington: Island Press, 2007), p. 191.
[92] Couper, Smith and Ciceri, p. 12.

concept. Popular in early modernity and continuing through the Enlightenment with naturalists such as Linnaeus, Buffon, Tournefort, and Steller, this heterogeneous tradition cultivated an encyclopaedic and taxonomical perspective which classified nature into species hierarchies.[93] Michel Foucault suggests that antiquarian natural history was an episteme that is synonymous with 'the nomination of the visible'.[94] Reformulated in the words of Mary Louise Pratt, natural history was a 'European knowledge-building enterprise of unprecedented scale', consolidated in nineteenth century imperial projects.[95] Antiquarian natural history is therefore intimately connected with what has been termed 'green imperialism' and 'the empire of nature', namely the colonisation of ecologies.[96] Sebald's narrator describes how this tradition used herring as a 'popular didactic model' of 'the indestructibility of Nature' (p. 53). Remembering from his childhood an educational film about fishing practices, the narrator recollects how herring fishing was regarded as a 'supreme example of mankind's struggle with the power of Nature' (p. 54). In the English-language translation, Michael Hulse neatly registers this tradition by capitalising 'Nature', reifying and essentialising the concept into humanity's other.

Yet it is clear that Sebald's narrator critiques rather than espouses the dominant traditions of natural history. This is demonstrated most clearly in Sebald's comments on the relationship between industrial aquaculture and what he calls the Enlightenment's 'thirst for knowledge' (p. 55). The narrator comments that the development of aggressive fishing practices saw an increase in the use of nets 'that could take almost a quarter of a million fish' (p. 55). The fish would 'swim up against [the net] in desperation until at length their gills catch in the mesh; they are then throttled during the near-eight hour process of hauling up and winding in the nets.' Because of this, Sebald's narrator reflects, eighteenth- and nineteenth-century naturalists would 'suppose that herring die the instant they are removed from the water'. Countless experiments were performed to ascertain the truth of this supposition:

> Noel de Marinière […] investigate[d] more closely the fishes' capacity to survive, which he did by cutting off their fins and mutilating them in other ways. This process, inspired by our thirst for knowledge, might be described as the

[93] Wolf Lepenies, *Das Ende der Naturgeschichte: Wandel kultureller Selbstverständlichkeiten in den Wissenschaften des 18. und 19. Jahrhunderts* (Munich: Hanser, 1976), pp. 34, 41.

[94] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (London: Routledge, 2002), pp. 144, 171, 172.

[95] Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturalism*, 2nd edn. (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 25.

[96] Richard H. Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); John M. Mackenzie, *The Empire of Nature: Hunting, Conservation and British Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

most extreme of the sufferings undergone by a species always threatened by disaster [… T]he natural historians sought consolation in the idea that humanity was responsible for only a fraction of the endless destruction wrought in the cycle of life, and moreover in the assumption that the peculiar physiology of the fish left them free of the fear and pains that rack the bodies and souls of higher animals in their death throes. But the truth is that we do not know what the herring feels [*Doch in Wahrheit wissen wir nichts von den Gefühlen des Herings*].[97] (pp. 56–57)

By pivoting on this 'but', Sebald negates the earlier tradition of natural history. Rather than perceiving nature as a timeless and insensate abundance, Sebald's narrator implicates himself in 'our' thirst for knowledge. Sebald identifies the practises of modernity – including vivisection and industrialised aquaculture – as the reasons for the herring's near extinction. And the way Sebald does this, with the formulation 'But the truth is that we do not know what the herring feels' (p. 56), also draws the reader's attention to the limits of human knowledge. Sebald's appeal to non-knowledge cuts across the Enlightenment's 'thirst for knowledge'; it is an ethically-attuned corrective which, echoing Jeremy Bentham's famous dictum on animal pain, foregrounds suffering over *logos*. Against the notion that only the so-called higher animals feel pain and fear, Sebald's narrator articulates how such ideologies authorise intensive over-fishing and its attendant threats to the species. For Sebald's narrator, not knowing is enough to not inflict pain.

Sebald also highlights the toxicity, mutation and death among North Sea species affected by deposited pollutants. 'Every year', he writes, 'the rivers bear thousands of tons of mercury, cadmium and lead, and mountains of fertilizer and pesticides, out into the North Sea'. Owing to this industrial pollution, 'toxic substances sink into the waters of the Dogger Bank, where a third of the fish are now born with strange deformities and excrescences':

Time and again, off the coast, rafts of poisonous algae are sighted covering many square miles and reaching thirty feet into the deep, in which the creatures of the sea die in shoals. In some of the rarer varieties of plaice, crucian or bream, the females, in a bizarre mutation, are increasingly developing male sexual organs and the ritual patterns of courtship are now no more than a dance of death, the exact opposite of the notion of the wondrous increase and perpetuation of life with which we grew up. (p. 53)

Against the antiquarian tradition of natural history 'with which we grew up', Sebald's narrator documents how natural cycles of decay have been compromised

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[97] *Ringe*, p. 77.

by industrialisation. Acidification causes catastrophic repetitions of ruination that push pelagic species towards their extinction.

What, then, is the import of Sebald's natural-history of the herring? When Adorno conceptualised natural-history, he wrote about it as a critical mode of analysis which would 'open up an alternative form of re-enchantment that remains socially critical'.[98] Natural history is therefore to be thought of 'not only as the realm of de-composition and dissolution but also as the site of possible resurrection.'[99] Although Sebald's literary project does not espouse the same theological register, it does indeed attempt to remember neglected creatures – be they human or non-human – back into historical memory, back into the archive. While 'no one is interested in their legacy' (p. 53), *Rings's* narrator remarks of the fishermen and of the herring, his creaturely form links these histories together. Sebald's natural-history therefore attempts to linguistically countermand the destruction of human and nonhuman ways of life, giving pause to the narrative of progress and the elevation of the human over the animal.

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I will conclude my reading of *Rings* by analysing one of the dangers that is constitutive to Sebald's poetics of connection. As I have argued throughout this chapter, Sebald's texts imagine modernity as a paradoxically fragmented but also hyper-connected. By doing this, Sebald's poetics creates what Kaisa Kaakinen calls 'weak analogies'.[100] Sebald's weak analogies imply, without necessarily finalising, certain resemblances and proximities between objects, encouraging readers to make historical linkages beyond the narration itself. This is an uncontroversial literary technique when Sebald describes, for instance, how the depleting North Sea fishing stocks are intimately linked with Lowestoft's unemployment rates. But there are a number of flashpoints or limit cases in which Sebald's weak analogies threaten to reduce the specificity of their objects to what we might call, following Frédéric Neyrat, an '*ontological undifferentialism*', that is, a '*flat immanence* where everything becomes equivalent with everything else'.[101] This is indeed one of the methodological problematics of natural-history. For as Fredric Jameson writes, the concept of natural-history has the potential to reduce history and nature to an equiva-

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[98] Alison Stone, 'Adorno and the Disenchantment of Nature', *Philosophy and Social Criticism*, 32 (2006), 231–253 (p. 249).

[99] Hanssen, p. 97.

[100] Kaisa Kaakinen, *Comparative Literature and the Historical Imaginary* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2017), pp. 4, 207.

[101] Frédéric Neyrat and Elizabeth Johnson, 'The Political Unconscious of the Anthropocene', *Society & Space*, 2014 <http://societyandspace.org/2014/03/20/on-8/> [Accessed 04/07/2017]. Neyrat's emphasis.

lence, turning 'all human history into repetition as such'.[102] In other words, natural-history's dialectics are so demanding that any slip-up in this perpetually mutable logic may position history as one long natural catastrophe. This would lose sight of the difference, unevenness, and scale of modernity's violence.

Sebald's in-text images, 'the most conspicuous surface feature' of his fiction according to Long, are the key site of his poetics' potential undifferentialism.[103] Without the direction of narrative framing and rhetorical explanation, and with only the 'aura of indexicality',[104] Sebald's images always leave themselves open to interpretation. They are collaged together as unstable fragments, and thus become spaces of *projection*: readers are not guided to the meaning or referents of these images, but are instead invited to interactively make their own connections between the represented material. Throughout his literary project, Sebald uses photographs, postcards, architectural blueprints, and video stills for juxtapositional effect, simultaneously corroborating and contradicting his works' content. Sebald's photographic practice thus contains a fundamental ambiguity, an ambiguity which might not be able to sustain the dialectic of natural-history. Sebald's natural-history of the herring presents readers with a limit case for Sebald's photographic practice, in a sense the logical conclusion of his multimodal creaturely form, in which two accompanying photographs share an uneasy proximity with one another: the first image, a small postcard, shows a Lowestoft fishing market from the early twentieth-century, in which flat-capped men in wellington boots stand in the midst of thousands of dead herring (p. 54) [Fig. 2]; the second image, some six pages later, is a double-page spread of dead human bodies, strung out on the ground and covered with blankets. The reader is led to assume that these are Jewish victims at Bergen-Belsen concentration camp (pp. 60–61) [Fig. 3].

There are two ways of reading these photographs, and thus two ways of interpreting Sebald's ethics of representation. One argument, taken up by many critics, is that Sebald's 'contiguity of narratives of fishing and genocide induces a reading of these images as visually rhyming,'[105] thus in effect 'lump[ing] together […] qualitatively different phenomena'.[106] Viewed this way, Sebald 'offers no criteria according to which either of these events – the killing of the herring for food and the murder of the Jews – can be privileged over the other.' *Rings* would thus inadequately differentiate 'between the murder of the Jews and industrial trawling for

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[102] Jameson, p. 103.

[103] Long, p. 46.

[104] Marianne Hirsch, 'The Generation of Post-Memory', *Poetics Today*, 29 (2008), 103–128 (p. 122).

[105] Robert Crownshaw, *The Aftermath of Holocaust Memory in Contemporary Literature and Culture* (London: Palgrave, 2010), p. 54.

[106] McCulloh, *Understanding*, p. 65.

herring', thereby conflating two different kinds of suffering and undermining Sebald's own literary attempt at restitution.[107] But at the same time, one could also read these images differently. First, the reproduced photos' differing photographic scales suggests a non-identical relation and therefore a non-equivalent violence: in both the original German and in the English-language editions, the postcard of the herring commands only half a page of print, while the photo of Bergen-Belsen takes up two full pages. Their arrangement on the page consequently suggests a *relation without analogy* between these two images, a relation without equivalence between Jews and animals. This relation without analogy is a kind of 'multidirectional memory', to use Michael Rothberg's formulation, in which suffering is no longer unrepresentable, hierarchised and competitive, but 'subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing'.[108] As J. M. Bernstein writes, Sebald's dichotomy of herring and Bergen-Belsen consequently urges 'on us the thought that the slaughter of the herring and the Holocaust belong together', part of 'the same natural historical constellation.'[109]

Fig. 2 – *The Rings of Saturn*, p. 54.

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[107] Long, p. 144.

[108] Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 3.

[109] J. M. Bernstein, 'Mad Raccoon, Demented Quail, and the Herring Holocaust: Notes for a Reading of W. G. Sebald', *Qui Parle*, 17 (2009), 31–57 (p. 51).

Fig. 3 – *The Rings of Saturn*, pp. 60–61.

Seeing therefore plays an important role in what I am calling Sebald's creaturely form. Unlike Coetzee and Mahasweta, Sebald uses in-text images in order to suggest a connection between human and nonhuman suffering. But because Sebald's photographic practice ultimately leaves this continuity to the reader, these images of human and nonhuman bodies ultimately become something of a test or a challenge of interpretation. The images' chiasmatic proximity prompts the reader to decide: are the lives of herring worth ethical consideration? Is there a relation between these two photos? How, if at all, can the Holocaust be thought alongside the war against animals? For what might be at stake in Sebald's relation without analogy is a significant rethinking of the cleaving – meant in the doubled sense of a connection and separation – of Jews and animals in modernity. In *Of Jews and Animals* (2010), Andrew Benjamin demonstrates how dominant metaphysical traditions of thought – exemplified by the writings of Pascal, Hegel and Heidegger – draw on and construct what is determined to be 'properly' human against the figure of animality, emblematised by the supposedly inhuman Jew and the nonhuman animal. But if metaphysics considers the properly human to be that which is 'without relation to the animal', expelling animality from the universality of the human, then it is only through a 'fundamentally different form of relationality' that ethics and justice can be reconstructed. Through this newfound relationality, Jews and animals would no longer simply serve as abjected and separated figures, but as two particular ontologies which have been negatively coupled together by their historical exclusion from 'humanity'.[110] Perhaps, then, Sebald's use of images

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[110] Andrew Benjamin, *Of Jews and Animals* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), pp. 11, 16, 191.

attempts to redeem this negative coupling of Jews and animals, just as we saw Adorno and Horkheimer attempt this in *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944). How we read these images therefore depends on whether we take Sebald to be *comparing* or *connecting* their content. Either they are damned as an undialectical and ahistorical comparative equivalence, or they are salvaged as an attempt by Sebald to find a way of connecting two seemingly incommensurable events under the same horizon.

But just as Sebald's literary strategy asks questions of the reader, so too can the reader ask questions of Sebald. Most pressingly: what right or responsibility does Sebald have, as a non-Jewish German, to intervene in twentieth-century articulations of anti-Semitism? Moreover, does Sebald's photographic practice actually abdicate responsibility for its own literary decision-making? By approximating these different images, does Sebald ultimately evade committing himself to linguistically unpacking the very connections his texts wants to make? These questions are also at stake in J. M. Coetzee's work. Sebald and Coetzee both use oblique and indirect literary strategies in order to discuss what Marjorie Spiegel famously termed the 'dreaded comparisons' between industrialised agri- and aquaculture and human genocides.[111] But where Sebald uses in-text images, Coetzee creates an entire fictional alter-ego, Elizabeth Costello, who he speaks through in order to posit uncomfortable and provocative linkages between the Holocaust and the slaughterhouse. Thus, both authors utilise the resources of literary form in order to turn literature towards the relationship between the Holocaust and animality. Yet in doing so, Sebald and Coetzee both run the risk of carelessly conflating rather than sensitively connecting these different histories. Sebald's creaturely form thus remains unresolved: his images push at the limits of anthropocentric thought, but their structural ambiguity risks abandoning the natural-historical dialectic and reductively conflating overfishing with anti-Semitism.

The False World: *Austerlitz's* Zooscapes

From the very first pages of *Austerlitz*, readers encounter an unnamed narrator who reflects on the strained connections between human and nonhuman animal life. *Austerlitz* begins with its narrator looking back over a period in the late 1960s in which he shuttled between England and Belgium, 'partly for study purposes, partly for other reasons which were never entirely clear to me' (p. 1). He recalls how, during an excursion to Antwerp in 1967, he suddenly became overwhelmed by anxiety. 'Plagued by a headache' and gripped by 'uneasy thoughts', the narrator remembers taking 'refuge' in Antwerp's zoo. But he realises that this zoo visit

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[111] Marjorie Spiegel, *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (London: Heretic, 1988).

will not 'rescue' [*retten*] him, but will in fact intensify his maladies.[112] Although he cannot 'recall exactly what creatures [he] saw' in the zoo's Nocturama, the narrator remembers locking eyes with a number of different animals – bats and jerboas, owls and lemurs – all 'leading their sombrous lives' (p. 2). The narrator recalls that, as his eyesight acclimatised to the Nocturama's 'artificial dusk', he focused his attention on a solitary racoon in the corner of the room:

> I watched it for a long time as it sat beside a little stream with a serious expression on its face, washing the same piece of apple over and over again, as if it hoped that all this washing, which went far beyond any reasonable thoroughness, would help it to escape the unreal world [*der falschen Welt*] in which it had arrived, so to speak, through no fault of its own. (pp. 2–3)

Austerlitz opens, therefore, with a chance encounter between two different species. Such an encounter sees the exchanging of eye contact: the animals' 'strikingly large eyes' and 'unwavering searching gazes' [*unverwandt forschenden Blick*] meet and return the narrator's gaze. Throughout Sebald's writing, the gaze of animals is always imbued with significance. Peter Boxall notes that, for Sebald's narrators, 'the eyes of the animal seem to carry a kind of special knowledge' which, nevertheless remains opaque, if not completely unreadable.[113] On first sight, this appears confirmed by Sebald's accompanying photographic images [Fig. 4] which, in their closely-cropped focus, emphasise a piercing kind of indeterminacy. In this section, though, I want to argue that the unreadable gaze of the animal is not, for Sebald, a sign of some essential ontological difference between the species. Rather, *Austerlitz* consistently thematises the unreadable gaze of the animal as a symptom of modernity. For here at the zoo, Sebald treats the Nocturama as a modern machine or 'false world' which renders the racoon's gaze incomprehensible. Sebald describes the Nocturama as a mediating technology that simultaneously connects and disconnects the narrator to the racoon. On the one hand, the Nocturama is the very thing which has made possible the narrator's meeting with the racoon. And yet, on the other hand, such a meeting is rendered inauthentic; Sebald's narrator sees the Nocturama as a simulation which wants to guarantee an 'authentic' encounter between human and animal, to make possible an interaction in which the foundational falseness of such an interaction is suppressed or forgotten. Because of this, the Nocturama is depicted as an 'unreal' or 'false' world that ultimately intensifies and mystifies the animal's gaze.

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[112] *Austerltiz. Roman*, p. 5.

[113] Peter Boxall 'The Threshold of Vision: The Animal Gaze in Beckett, Coetzee and Sebald', *Journal of Beckett Studies*, 20 (2011), 123–148 (p. 131).
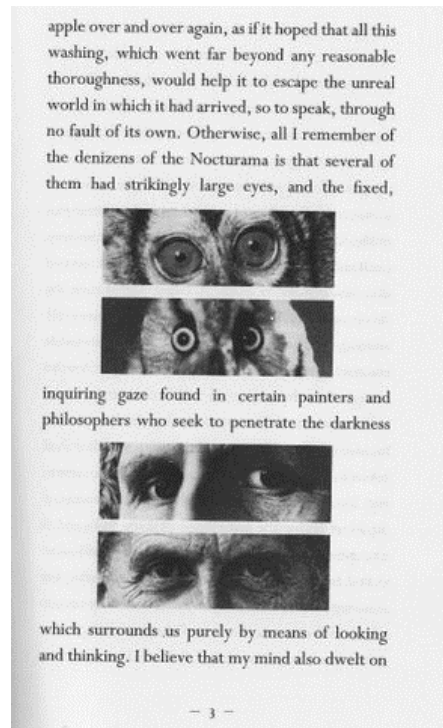
Fig. 4 – *Austerlitz*, p. 3.

This section will argue that the notion of a 'false world' is important for under-standing Sebald's literary project. I will show that, throughout *Austerlitz*, Sebald not only deploys this as a motif which architecturally structures the world in which the novel takes place, but that he does so in order to connect humans and nonhumans together. While *Austerlitz's* critics have often analysed what the narra-tor descibes the novel's reflections on the oppressive 'architectural style of the cap-italist era' – what the narrator describes as the 'lawcourts and penal institutions, railways stations and stock exchanges, opera houses and lunatic asylums' (p. 44) of modernity – I will suggest that *Austerlitz's* criticisms of modern architecture are intertwined with an awareness of how this architecture encloses, distresses and destroys animality. In other words, Sebald presents modern architecture as a car-ceral space. When Jacques Austerlitz discovers an abandoned dovecote covered with pigeon droppings, for instance, he notices both 'the bodies of some of the birds who had fallen from their niches, mortally sick' and the surviving pigeons, living 'in a kind of senile dementia', cooing at each other 'in tones of quiet com-plaint' (p. 302). And at the end of *Austerlitz*, Sebald's narrator notes how the re-built Bibliothèque Nationale de France, with its governing 'Cartesian' structure, leads numerous birds to strike the glass windows and fall 'lifeless to the ground' (p. 392). To paraphrase Sebald's unnamed narrator, *Austerlitz* understands moder-nity as diverting animals from their 'natural' paths (p. 392).

I contend that *Austerlitz's* critique of this false world is sharpest when Sebald re-flects on zoological spaces, or zooscapes. *Austerlitz* imagines the zoo as a key cul-

tural site in modernity's control of life. Sebald already makes this clear in his Zürich lectures on aerial warfare and literature, when he writes that zoos 'owe their existence to a desire to demonstrate princely or imperial power'.[114] *Austerlitz* thus thematises and gives form to this claim that the zoological garden is a leftover of imperial conquest. And I will show here how Sebald's writing of the zoo shares intertextual affinities with the writings of Adorno, Derrida, and John Berger zoological gardens and modernity's simultaneous obliteration and preservation of animal life. To such ends, I contend that *Austerlitz* portrays modernity itself as a 'false world', a world that creates borders – such as the zoological garden – that simultaneously connect and disconnect humans from nonhumans. As those four photographic images above also imply [Fig. 4], humans are also trapped within this false world. They share with animals an 'inquiring gaze' that seeks to 'penetrate the darkness' of modernity.

I want to start by returning to *Austerlitz's* opening scene. Here, the narrator identifies with the animal. He not only notices the racoon's behavioural ticks, but also comments on how the racoon has been displaced and transplanted from a natural to an unnatural habitat. Sebald's narrator intimates that despite the Nocturama's attempts to create a convincing simulacrum – its combination of 'artificial dusk' and a 'pale moon' – this 'topsy-turvy miniature universe' (p. 4) world is nevertheless inauthentic and destructive. While Anthea Bell translates the German *Dämmerleben* as 'sombrous lives', Sebald's compound noun literally suggests 'twilight lives', at once a technical description of nocturnal life and a judgement on the animals' decline. Furthermore, the narrator interprets the racoon's incessant cleaning of the apple as an embodied response to the Nocturama's artificial inversion of diurnal time. The zoo produces a form of debilitating repetition compulsion: the racoon has been denatured and exposed, and its agency has degenerated into a reactive and repetitive twitch. Almost paradoxically, Sebald's narrator contemplates whether the racoon's zoochosis is an appropriate response – perhaps the *only* response – to the 'unreal world' of the Nocturama. Only by descending into madness will the racoon be able to find an 'escape'.

Austerlitz's opening scene shapes the way the rest of the novel is read, alerting the reader to the significance of animals throughout the book. But it also echoes other creaturely encounters throughout Sebald's *oeuvre* in which he depicts animals in captivity as being deadened by modernity. Especially noteworthy here are the correspondences between this meeting of narrator and racoon and the meeting of narrator and hare on Orfordness, as I discussed above. In both of these scenes, Sebald utilises the animal's gaze to open up questions about identification and vul-

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[114] Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction*, trans. by Anthea Bell (New York: Modern Library, 2004), p. 92.

nerability. But equally pertinent are two further encounters in *Rings*, both of which occur on the same page during the narrator's visit to Somerleyton Hall. When the narrator finds a 'yellowish and moth-eaten' taxidermy polar bear in the estate's foyer, he describes the trophy as 'a ghost bowed by sorrows'. Later, when the narrator spots an encaged Chinese quail, he portrays the quail's obsessive pacing around its cage as a hopeless and saddening symptom of dementia (p. 37). The narrators of Sebald's books connect captivity with madness, portraying animals as deranged and disoriented by practices of enclosure, conservation and preservation.

According to Rachel Poliquin, taxidermy and zoos are two historically interrelated 'spectacles of nature' which serve as modern technologies 'for making creaturely life visible'.[115] Brian Massumi writes that the zoological garden 'is an exercise of human sovereignty vis-à-vis the animal'; zoological gardens are a particular kind of modern space in which humans 'hold themselves at a distance in the role of un-implicated observer'.[116] But Sebald's narrators refuse to stand as impartial observers of captive animals. Across *Rings* and *Austerlitz*, Sebald's narrators draw our attention to how zoo animals become 'ghosts bowed by sorrows' (p. 37). This continues Sebald's resistance to Cartesian thought. His descriptions of the quail and the racoon indicate that animals are not reactive automatons by nature of their own essence, as Descartes's mechanical philosophy of the *bête machine* would have it. Instead, animals become involuntary *because* of those anthropological machines – capture, enclosure, and spectacle – which diminish autonomy. In turn, Sebald's attention to individual animals works to reveal the artificial thresholds – such as the Nocturama – that disconnect species from one another in modernity. But I also want to argue that *Austerlitz's* opening scenes move beyond a one-to-one notion of identification extending from human to nonhuman. In fact, Sebald utilises the Nocturama and the racoon's trauma metonymically in order to connect a broader history of anthropocentrism and colonisation in modernity. This effect is first generated by Sebald consistent destabilisation of Enlightenment notions of the knowing subject. As the narrator imparts in the opening passage, his trips to Belgium were 'partly for study purposes, *partly for other reasons which were never entirely clear to me*'. This is further developed in the narrator's admission that 'over the years, images of the interior of the Nocturama have become confused in my mind with my memories of the *Salle des pas perdus*', the waiting room – or, literally, hall of the lost – in Antwerp station. This confusion of memory sees human and non-human worlds slide into one another: 'If I try to conjure up a picture of that wait-

[115] Rachel Poliquin, *The Breathless Zoo: Taxidermy and the Cultures of Longing* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), pp. 10, 115.

[116] Brian Massumi, *What Animals Teach Us About Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), pp. 68, 65.

ing-room today I immediately see the Nocturama, and if I think of the Nocturama the waiting-room springs to my mind' (p. 4). Sebald's rhetorical chiasmus creates a continuity between humans and animals, all of whom are characterised as surviving within their own unreal worlds; the train station becomes 'another Nocturama', and the railway passengers become 'like the creatures in the Nocturama' (pp. 5–6). Akin to Lowestoft's dwindling herring fishers, Sebald's simile imagines both humans and nonhumans as being 'sorrowful' organisms on the verge of extinction.

During this identification of humans with animals, Sebald's narrator draws a more specific connection between the racoon in the Nocturama and 'one of the people waiting in the *Salle des pas perdus*', namely the novel's titular character, Jacques Austerlitz (p. 6). Over the course of the novel, the narrator's chance encounters with Austerlitz produce and drive the plot, which is sustained by Austerlitz's partial and meditative unravelling of his own complicated biography. *Austerlitz's* plot is thus constructed episodically through these two characters' conversations, with Austerlitz telling the narrator, and then the narrator in turn telling the reader, about Austerlitz's pursuit of his own life story. This life story can be reconstructed as follows: Austerlitz is born in Czechoslovakia during the rise of Nazism. Austerlitz's parents, fearing for their safety on the eve of the outbreak of war, decide to send their child on the *Kindertransport* to the United Kingdom. Arriving in Wales as a Jewish refugee, the young Austerlitz is adopted by a Calvinist household who rename him Dafydd Elias. Austerlitz is brought up as Dafydd and remains unaware of his family history until his adulthood, when, working as an architectural historian, his past memories burst out from repression into reality. Austerlitz's resulting identity crisis precipitates a determination to uncover his family history, and it is this ongoing search which is revealed to the novel's narrator, forming the content of the book. During Austerlitz's first conversation with the narrator in Antwerp Centraal, his ruminations on oppressive architecture lead him to convey how deeply he feels the 'marks of pain which […] trace countless fine lines through history' (p. 16).

On first look, then, *Austerlitz's* plot has little to do with animals, nor with animality. But it is precisely through *Austerlitz's* recollective narrative form that the novel develops two ideas related to the creaturely. First, Austerlitz has a tendency to totalise the history of modernity. Austerlitz has a peculiar 'kind of historical metaphysic, bringing remembered events back to life' (p. 14), a connective methodology which reflects melancholically on the destruction of nature. Second, in a move which echoes Austerlitz's own connective methodology, Sebald's narrator also sees Austerlitz's pain as being connected to the racoon. For the narrator, both the racoon and Austerlitz are conducting their own obsessive search for an escape

route out of trauma. Thus the description of Antwerp station's human travellers, these 'last members of a diminutive race which had perished or had been expelled from its homeland', bears a structural resemblance to Austerlitz's own exile. In turn, *Austerlitz's* opening pages construct a fictional world in which humans and animals find themselves enclosed, exiled, and perishing.

It is important to acknowledge here the novel's peculiar narrative temporality: *Austerlitz* is narrated from a present-tense position of the 1990s, but it begins with a recollection of the 1960s, which itself contains recollections of decades and even centuries past. The novel's temporal scope and 'historical metaphysic' present a sense of human alienation from nature over a *longue durée*. Furthermore, Sebald develops the sense that Austerlitz has a profound emotional and intellectual influence on the novel's narrator. In other words, the novel's framed present-tense narration is *determined by* the narrator's past-tense encounters with Austerlitz. Sebald also suggests that his narrator's anxiety-attack, and his failed refuge in the Nocturama, is an *Unglück*, or accident, which restructures his sense of the world. After staring at the racoon's repetitive washing of the apple, and after his conversations with Austerlitz, the narrator can no longer look at Antwerp station in the same way: 'Now, however, I saw how far the station constructed under the patronage of King Leopold II exceeded its purely utilitarian function'. By visiting the zoo, Sebald's narrator recognises that the Nocturama's deterritorialisation of nocturnal species from Egypt, the Gobi desert and Australia is connected to – a consequence of – Belgium's imperial project. This is further developed when the narrator pauses to consider Antwerp Centraal's façade, which houses 'a monument to the world of the animals and native peoples of the African continent' (pp. 4–5). Here, Sebald's narrator realises that the station's 'utilitarian function' – its apparent democratising of continental travel – was in fact only made possible by the profits derived from the slave labour of west Africa's indigenous peoples and the trade of prized animal parts. Sebald thus connects together the Nocturama with the wider expropriation of life in modernity, showing how imperial projects perceived racialised humans and nonhuman animals to be things rather than persons, imprisoning them in what Frantz Fanon describes as 'the bestiary' of 'zoological terms'.[117] That the patronage of the Belgian royal family is implicated in this history is further borne out by the fact that King Leopold II's father, Leopold I, inaugurated the Antwerp Zoo in 1844, and that the 1885 and 1894 World's Fairs saw over one hundred indigenous Africans brought to Antwerp to live temporarily in so-called Negro villages.[118] *Austerlitz* thus connects Antwerp Centraal and Antwerp

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[117] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1960), pp. 32–33.
[118] Maarten Couttenier, '"We Can't Help Laughing": Physical Anthropology in Belgium and Congo (1882–1914)', in *The Invention of Race: Scientific and Popular Representations*, ed. by Nicho-

Zoo – the train station and the zoological garden – to a history of human and non-human exploitation. Here, Sebald continues his preoccupation with Belgian imperialism. In *Rings*, Sebald's narrator reflects on how the Congolese were 'all but eradicated by forced labour [...] dysentery, malaria, smallpox, beriberi, jaundice, starvation, and physical exhaustion' (p. 119). His narrator comes to see Brussels as a 'sepulchral monument erected over a hecatomb of black bodies (p. 122).

This critique of European progress as being founded on the exploitation of black people is sharpened by Austerlitz's own dialogue. Through his research into 'the architectural style of the capitalist era' (p. 44), Austerlitz reveals to the narrator that King Leopold II instructed the building of Antwerp Centraal so as to bring 'international renown to his aspiring state' (p. 10). Public buildings were financed by the slave labour of Belgian imperialism, but at the same time their creation sought to sanitise and distract from this project. Sebald develops this critique further when he has Austerlitz note that the phenomenological experience of the station is like stepping into a 'cathedral consecrated to international traffic and trade' (p. 12). Nowhere is this more apparent than in the panoptic surveillance of the station's clock. All those who enter the station are 'obliged to adjust their activities to its demands' (p. 14), Austerlitz comments. Austerlitz argues that the standardisation of clock-time marks a new form of discipline, producing docile workers whose lives could be privileged against what they were not: the enslaved African, and the animal. What is more, Austerlitz locates this historical function not as a past event but as an iterative one: it 'determines our lives to this day' (p. 9). Just as the Nocturama imposes a false sense of time on its racoons, bats, jerboas, hedgehogs, owls and lemurs, *Austerlitz* suggests, so too does the modern state impose time on its citizens. Like German idealists such as Friedrich Schiller, Austerlitz conceives of the clock as a mechanistic imposition that severs 'the inner connection of human nature', in turn stultifying and dividing political community.[119] This continues Sebald's preoccupation with mechanical philosophy, as I analysed in *Rings*, and hence further evinces how Sebald depicts capitalist modernity as a force which alienates humanity from nature.

To unpack this connection between the zoological garden, imperialism and species alienation, I now want to turn to a handful of critiques of the zoological garden. Doing so will lead us to another significant scene, closer to the end of *Austerlitz*, in which Sebald further challenges modernity through a zoo encounter. In *Minima*

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las Bancel, Thomas David, and Dominic Thomas (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), pp. 101–116 (p. 107); for more, see: Pascal Blanchard and others, eds., *Human Zoos: Science and Spectacle in the Age of Colonial Empires* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008).

[119] Friedrich Schiller, *On the Aesthetic Education of Man: In a Series of Letters*, trans. by Reginald Snell (London: Routledge, 1954), pp. 33–35.

Moralia (1951), for example, Adorno argues that zoological gardens 'in their authentic form' are not only 'products of nineteenth-century colonial imperialism', but that they also testify to a paradoxical conservation and obliteration of nature: 'The more purely nature is preserved and transplanted by civilization', Adorno writes, 'the more implacably it is dominated.' This is exacerbated in the twentieth century, when nature becomes 'completely absorb[ed]' into the orbit of modernity. Because of this, zoo animals no longer simply fulfil their original function – as fetishised signifiers for the exotic, used to confirm western civilisation's 'progress' – but in addition became 'lost objects'.[120] While for Adorno zoo animals are remnants of an unrecoverable lost world, for Jacques Derrida the zoo develops a sovereign gaze. Derrida's 'Beast and the Sovereign' lectures emphasise that zoological gardens are symptomatic of modernity's cultivation of an 'autopsic' gaze. The autopsic gaze is, for Derrida, 'the objectifying inspection of a knowledge that precisely inspects, sees, looks at the aspect of a *zōon* the life and force of which has been neutralised either by death or by captivity, or quite simply by ob-jectification that exhibits there before, to hand, before the gaze, and de-vitalises by simple objectification'.[121] If Adorno conceives of the zoo as a space of domination in which some animals are conserved while others are left to go extinct, then Derrida shows how this domination prompts a consonant way of seeing: zoos encourage a commodifying gaze which sees the living as the living dead.

Both of these critiques are present in John Berger's 'Why Look at Animals?' (1977). In an essay that has become foundational for critical animal studies, Berger posits that public zoos 'came into existence at the beginning of the period which was to see the disappearance of animals from daily life. The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters.' Focusing on the period of capitalist industrialisation in the nineteenth century, Berger conceives of the zoo as housing the living dead: 'nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal. At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. […] They have been immunised to encounter.' Like Adorno, Berger argues that the zoo is a zombie-world of muteness and melancholia. Zoos paradoxically use living animals as memories rather than living beings: 'Everywhere animals disappear. In zoos they constitute the living monuments to their own disappearance'. 'However you look at these animals […] you *are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal*'.[122] The zoo's tech-

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[120] Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974), pp. 115–116.

[121] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign: Volume 1*, ed. by Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), pp. 56, 274, 283, 296.

[122] John Berger, *About Looking* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), pp. 21, 24, 26, 27. Berger's emphasis.

nologies of mediation immediately foreclose the potentiality of an encounter. In this sense, *Austerlitz's* opening scene in the Nocturama bears witness to a restricted cross-species encounter which springs from, reflects on, and works against the particular late-twentieth century transformations of the zoo. The racoon becomes, like the taxidermy polar bear in *Rings*, a 'ghost bowed by sorrows'. While Berger has a tendency to idealise a pre-industrial relationship between the human and the animal, he does not wholly let this nostalgic impulse produce a romanticised vision of the human-nonhuman bond. For at the heart of Berger's analysis is an awareness that there is both an important mutuality *and* difference between the species. As Berger puts it, 'the animal scrutinises [the human] across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension'.[123] Despite the title of Berger's essay, then, he is interested in the ways in which animals look back at the human. For Berger, comprehension lies on the other side of this bottomless pit. The abyss is infinite, Berger implies, but it is a *narrow* infinity, tempting us to make the journey across.

By weaving together Adorno, Derrida and Berger, I want to position *Austerlitz* as a text which refuses the kind of autopsic and fetishising gaze of modernity and, instead, develops a non-anthropocentric way of seeing which attempts to bridge the 'narrow abyss'. Indeed, Sebald quotes Berger's famous formulation towards the end of *Austerlitz*. During his recollection of his visit to Paris's Jardin des Plantes with his close friend, Marie de Vernueil, Austerlitz describes encountering a family of deer. In the passage's final clause, Sebald disguises his own text's intertextuality by translating Berger's words into Marie's first language, French. This technique is identical in *Austerlitz's* German and English-language editions:

> I recollect that I myself saw a family of fallow deer gathered together by a manger of hay near the perimeter fence of a dusty enclosure where no grass grew, a living picture of mutual trust and harmony which also had about it an air of constant vigilance and alarm. Marie particularly asked me to take a photograph of this beautiful group, and as she did so, said Austerlitz, she said something which I have never forgotten, she said that captive animals and we ourselves, their human counterparts, view one another *à travers une brèche d'incompréhension*. (pp. 368–369)

Although a few critics have pointed out this concealed quotation, they tend to do so only in footnote, thus downplaying Berger's importance and marginalising Sebald's preoccupation with animality.[124] Crucially, Sebald's translation shifts the

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[123] Ibid., p. 5.

[124] See: Long, p. 45, fn. 21; Boxall, p. 132; Clive Scott, 'Sebald's Photographic Annotations', in *Saturn's Moons: W. G. Sebald – A Handbook*, ed. by Jo Catling and Richard Hibbit (Abingdon: Legenda, 2011), pp. 217–245 (p. 245, fn. 82). Research in the *Deutsches Literaturarchiv* in Marbach confirms that Sebald's working library contained a heavily annotated copy of Berger's *About*

emphasis: whereas in Berger 'the animal scrutinises [the human] across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension', in *Austerlitz* 'captive animals and we ourselves, their human counterparts, view one another *à travers une brèche d'incompréhension'*. Sebald transforms this scrutiny into a connected process, two-way rather than one-sided. Sebald also turns the human into the object of the sentence, identifying humans as the counterparts to captive animals. Moreover, Sebald's translation, '*une brèche*', turns Berger's 'narrow abyss' into a gap, a hole, or a breach. Modernity is no longer a bottomless pit but a breach in the relationship between species. It therefore also holds within it the possibility of re-connection.
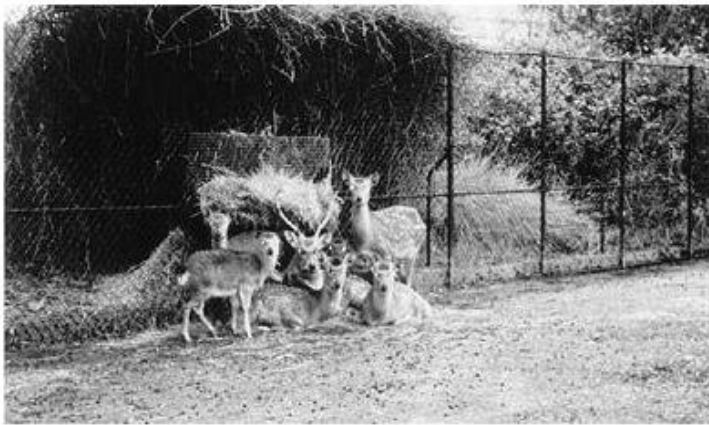
Fig. 5 – *Austerlitz*, p. 369.

Sebald also incorporates Berger's critique through the disappointed children who Austerlitz overhears running through the zoo. 'On these walks', Austerlitz remembers, 'it was not unusual for us to hear one of the children whose adult companions still took them to the zoo calling out, in some exasperation: *Mais il est où? Pourquoi il se cache? Pourquoi il ne bouge pas? Est-ce qu'il est mort?'* Sebald lifts the children's frustrations directly from Berger's parenthetical questions: '(As frequently as the calls of animals in a zoo, are the cries of children demanding: Where is he? Why doesn't he move? Is he dead?)' For Berger, the children's demands equate to the following question: 'Why are these animals less than I believed?'[125] Just like *Rings* before it, *Austerlitz* is preoccupied with mining this question for answers. Austerlitz describes the Jardin des Plantes as an 'old zoo' with a 'dreary terrain', a false world which now lies almost empty: 'large animals had once been put on display, said Austerlitz, elephants, giraffes, rhinoceroses, dromedaries and crocodiles, although most of the enclosures, decked out with pitiful remnants of natural objects – tree stumps, artificial rocks and pools of water – were now empty and deserted' (p. 368). Sebald supplements his description with a

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Looking (1980): Kevin Brazil, 'W. G. Sebald's Revisions of Roland Barthes', *Textual Practice* (2017), 1–18 <https://doi.org/10.1080/0950236X.2017.1308961> [Accessed 11/09/2017].
[125] Berger, p. 23.

photo of the fallow deer [Fig. 5], all huddled together and vigilantly monitoring the spectator's actions. Hovering at the edge of their enclosure, the fallow deer do not confirm the 'autopsic gaze' but block it by offering back their own alert and guarded stares.

Throughout *Austerlitz*, then, encounters with captive animals – and the always restricted cross-species meeting of humans and nonhumans – turn into critical reflections on both the diminishment of natural life in modernity *and* the sense that both humans and nonhumans find themselves enclosed within modernity's false world. As we have seen throughout this chapter, one gets the sense when reading *Austerlitz* that animals provide something of a mirror: whether it is Sebald's unnamed narrator or Jacques Austerlitz, Sebald continually runs the risk of interpreting zoo animals merely as a *reflection* of the narrator's own alienation. This would elide the animal completely. But as Marie's quoting of Berger demonstrates, *Austerlitz* is a novel which thematises the abysses and breaches which modernity creates between the human and the animal. For Sebald, then, the zoological garden becomes a central node in the architecture of modernity and the suppression of nonhuman nature. The zoo, for Sebald, mediates – which is to say, obstructs *and* creates – a connection between human and nonhuman. Sebald may well have inherited this from Berger, who writes that 'all sites of enforced marginalisation—ghettos, shanty towns, prisons, madhouses, concentration camps—have something in common with zoo'.[126] Like Berger, Sebald's false world attempts to connect the zoo to other modern sites of marginalisation. The final question to ask, then, is whether Sebald's texts offer the kinds of literary restitution they aim for?

Conclusions: Archiving Life

Over the course of this chapter I have analysed Sebald's poetics of connection in relation to *Unglück* and natural-history in *Rings*, and in relation to zoos and false worlds in *Austerlitz*. To conclude, I wish to discuss two grammatical hallmarks of Sebald's poetics of connection: hypotaxis and parataxis.[127] By concentrating on Sebald's hypotactic and paratactic form, this conclusion will bring together the readings that I have made throughout this chapter while also interrogating to what extent Sebald's concern with creaturely life is enabled and frustrated by his formal repertoire. My key claim here will be that Sebald's paratactic form attempts to suspend the onward rush of plot, which are deemed to ideologically sanction the

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[126] Berger, p. 21.
[127] J. J. Long and Anne Whitehead, 'Introduction', in *W. G. Sebald: A Critical Companion*, pp. 3–15 (p. 5).

anthropocentric narratives of progress. His uses of lists mark an attempt to archive animals that have been lost to the rush of modernity.

Hypotaxis and parataxis are syntactic devices of arrangement; they are the means by which sentences are connected together. Derived from Greek rhetoric, hypotaxis and parataxis denote respectively the vertical (arranging under) and the horizontal (arranging side by side).[128] Hypotaxis is a practice of subordination whereby conjunctions create dependent clauses and connectives. Sebald's extended sentences, for instance, make consistent use of hypotaxis, generating a dispassionate essayistic tone that stretches across his works. In *Austerlitz*, Sebald intensifies this hypotactic practice, composing sentences of such length that the reader, following the sentences' twists and turns, might momentarily forget who is speaking. *Austerlitz's* leitmotif, 'said Austerlitz', thus reminds the reader whose voice is in play during this multi-storied hypotactic narrative. Parataxis, in contrast, connotes the practice of juxtaposing clauses *without* coordinating subordination. The logical relationship between each discrete syntactic element is therefore not causally explained, but rather left for the reader to infer. We might think here of how Sebald pivots from describing one memory to another without any explication. And as I have argued above, Sebald's in-text images can be described as a non-linguistic parataxis: not only do Sebald's images destabilise the accompanying linguistic content, but there is also no guiding thread for the reader to determine how they might be read together. Sebald's hypotactic and paratactic style has received consistent but by no means exhaustive commentary. Wolff suggests that Sebald's sentences hasten readers 'to arrive at the subject or object of the sentence' while simultaneously compelling them 'to return and reread passages'. Thomas S. Davis adds that Sebald 'mimics the style of eighteenth-century German naturalist writers, whose use of multiple subordinate clauses bolstered their observations with thick detail while outlining complex relationships within and among different phenomena. In Sebald's narrative, however, hypotaxis decreases narrative reliability, casting into sharp relief the uncertainty of memory and the pressure of history.' More recently, Kaakinen analyses how Sebald's paratactic form creates 'undetermined narrative and historical linkages across vast temporal and geographic distances'.[129] Taken together, these three insights elucidate how Sebald's hypotactic and paratactic practice subverts the hierarchical ordering of plotted narrative and, in doing so, foregrounds the reader's role in piecing together the narrative.

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[128] Roland Greene and others, eds., *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, 4th edn. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 650.
[129] Wolff, *Hybrid Poetics*, p. 64; Thomas S. Davis, *The Extinct Scene: Late Modernism and Everyday Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 226; Kaakinen, p. 176.

I have argued in the introduction to this thesis that literature always already participates in the discursive logics of anthropocentrism. And I have argued throughout this chapter that Sebald's prose, conceived of as a literature of restitution, attempts to re-member the connections between humanity and nature, widening the horizon of remembrance to incorporate animality. Following these hypotheses, I suggest that Sebald's hypotactic and paratactic sentences continue this attempted re-membering of animality and, in consequence, also undermine some of the anthropocentric logics of the novel form. Sebald's texts repurpose hypotaxis and parataxis in the service of creaturely life. More specifically, I want to suggest that *Austerlitz* strives to *horizontalise* the verticality of hypotaxis, in effect utilising hypotaxis *paratactically*. For while Sebald's critics have long identified his writing's habitual subordination of clauses, such clauses are rarely written in the service of privileging particular events or particular living beings over one another. In fact, because Sebald's literary project understands modernity to come 'after nature', a world already hierarchised, his texts repurpose hypotaxis in order to dispute the domination of animality in modernity. In this conclusion I will tease out how Sebald puts this to work throughout *Austerlitz*, and I will question to what extent this horizontal hypotaxis might reproduce the risk of ontological undifferentialism that we saw in *Rings*.

Let us begin with Austerlitz's description of dying moths that have become trapped in the curtains of houses. 'I believe', Austerlitz says, 'they know they have lost their way'. He continues:

> Sometimes, seeing one of these moths that have met their end in my house, I wonder what kind of fear and pain they feel while they are lost. As Alphonso had told him, said Austerlitz, there is really no reason to suppose that lesser beings are devoid of sentient life. We are not alone in dreaming at night for, quite apart from dogs and other domestic creatures whose emotions have been bound up with ours for many thousands of years, the smaller mammals such as mice and moles also live in a world that exists only in their minds whilst they are asleep, as we can detect from their eye movements, and who knows, said Austerlitz, perhaps moths dream as well, perhaps a lettuce in the garden dreams as it looks up at the moon by night. (p. 133–134)

Similar in tone to the description of the dissected herring in *Rings*, here we encounter another occasion in which Sebald's narrators speculate on nonhuman sentience. While Sebald's narrator cannot definitely say whether moths feel fear or pain, 'there is really no reason to suppose' that moths lack them. And Sebald achieves this through hypotaxis: each clause incrementally broadens the horizon of dreaming, extending outwards from the human to mice and moles to lettuces. Hypotaxis thus connects humans to the world, imagining a multi-species dream-

scape that unites all organisms. Sebald uses hypotaxis to undermine human su-
premacy, and to connect different species together in a horizontal archiving of
phenomenological experience.

Sebald's formal remembrance of nature can be further exemplified by considering
the sections in *Austerlitz* which recall the Andromeda Lodge, the former decadent
family home of Austerlitz's childhood friend, Gerald Fitzpatrick. Austerlitz re-
members visiting the Lodge over consecutive school holidays, and describes it as
being a peaceful idyll near the seaside town of Barmouth that made him feel like
he was 'living in another world' (p. 115). For Austerlitz, the Lodge functioned –
and continues to function in his memory – as a window onto the exotic. The
Lodge's acreage housed a biodiversity Austerlitz had never before encountered as
a child, including Welsh mountains and estuaries in the background, with giant
rhubarb and New Zealand ferns in the foreground; the Fitzpatrick family also kept
a working orangery, a collection of taxidermy parrots, and a number of living
cockatoos that 'were very like human beings in many ways'. Here Austerlitz re-
calls that the cockatoos took kindly to the land-owning Fitzpatricks but 'screeched
at [the Welsh housekeeper] in the most obnoxious way' (p. 116), as if the cockatoos
had absorbed the class privilege of their owner. In other words, the Andromeda
Lodge testifies to and therefore ironises the opulence of the landed class and their
'animal estate', Harriet Ritvo's term for the aristocratic management of nonhuman
nature.[130]

Sebald utilises hypotaxis and parataxis throughout the descriptions of the Lodge.
Especially important in this regard are Sebald's use of lists when describing the
scale of the Lodge's collections of preserved nonhuman specimens. Austerlitz
notes that 'there was some kind of cabinet of natural curiosities in almost every
room at Andromeda Lodge', and explains that the collections began with Gerald's
'great-grandfather or great-great-grandfather from his circumnavigation of the
globe' (p. 117). The Lodge began transforming into a natural history museum in
the late nineteenth century, 'when Gerald's parrot-collecting ancestor made the
acquaintance of Charles Darwin'. Austerlitz remembers the thousands of speci-
mens collected across generations of Fitzpatricks, displayed in cases and cabinets
throughout the house and maintained by Great-Uncle Alphonso:

> [C]ases with multiple drawers, some of them glass-fronted, where the roun-
> dish eggs of parrots were arranged in their hundreds; collections of shells,
> minerals, beetles and butterflies; slowworms, adders and lizards preserved in

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[130] Harriet Ritvo, *The Animal Estate: The English and Other Creatures in Victorian England* (Cam-
bridge: Harvard University Press, 1987).

formaldehyde; snail shells and sea urchins, crabs and shrimps, and large her-
baria containing leaves, flowers and grasses. (pp. 118–119)

Sebald's lists, catalogues, classifications and inventories have received much criti-
cal discussion.[131] The central question of this critical commentary is whether Se-
bald's lists merely re-present or critically reflect on their objects and materials. For
on the one hand, lists add precision and specialised terminology which capture
and preserve specimens in language. As the above passage seems to suggest, then,
there is a formal symmetry between the Lodge's collections and Sebald's prose
style. By using the list form to describe what is preserved and contained, telescop-
ing in on the name and characteristics of each specimen, Sebald's prose risks be-
coming a linguistic counterpart to Alphonso's taxidermic practices, hence reinforc-
ing the very division of human over nature which other aspects of Sebald's liter-
ary project seek to counter. This position is summed up by Carolin Duttlinger
who, along with Long elsewhere, notes that Sebald replicates 'the logic of the col-
lection.'[132] As is also clear from characters and interlocutors throughout Sebald's
work, such as Paul Bereyter in *The Emigrants*, the collecting of animals plays a key
role in Sebald's texts. Sebald's 'logic of collection' risks nostalgically yearning for
an impossible pristine nature. This not only melancholically clings to the lost ob-
ject, but also reproduces what Derrida theorises as the violent foundational logic
of the archive, that 'compulsive, repetitive, and nostalgic desire' which widens
and extends itself but must, in the end, always keep something excluded.[133]

But on the other hand, the very construction of these sentences can be argued to
critically reflect on naturalism's legacies in the mid-twentieth century. Sebald's
sentences seek to use the archival impulse against itself, bearing witness to the
sheer scale of British imperialism's expropriation of nonhuman nature while also
parodying this imperial antiquarianism. Eggs are collected in their hundreds, and
worms and lizards are preserved in formaldehyde; there is a sense of unsustaina-
ble excess here that spills over into decay. By repurposing parataxis and hypotaxis
in this way, Sebald's texts uncovers a traumatic excess at the heart of the naturalist
project, typified by the opulence of the British country house.[134] This is further
demonstrated by the way Sebald connects the Lodge within the novel's thematic
focus on decay and decline. By the time of Austerlitz's adulthood, and his meet-
ings with the novel's narrator, Alphonso will have passed away and the Lodge

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[131] See: Wolff, *Hybrid Poetics*, p. 224.

[132] Carolin Duttlinger, 'W. G. Sebald: The Pleasure and Pain of Beauty', *German Life and Letters*,
62 (2009), 327–342 (pp. 333–334); Long, p. 39.

[133] Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. by Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: University
of Chicago Press, 1996), pp. 12, 57.

[134] Lucienne Loh makes a similar argument in *The Postcolonial Country in Contemporary Litera-
ture* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013), p. 32.

will have been auctioned off. The Andromeda Lodge is thus presented as being just as unsustainable as the imperial project it emerged out of. As Austerlitz comments, it is a 'fading world' (p. 158).

The complicated interrelation between Sebald's lists and the world of naturalism is exemplified by the character of Great-Uncle Alphonso. On the one hand, Alphonso's passion for the natural sciences renders him acutely aware of nature's importance, and thus well positioned to mourn modernity's increasing 'disturbances and disruptions' of nonhuman life (p. 127). But on the other, Alphonso's passion is bound up with what Sebald described in *Rings* as modernity's 'thirst for knowledge'. Alphonso contributes to nature's disappearance. Austerlitz recalls, for instance, how Alphonso would speak of the chalk cliffs of Devon and Cornwall from his childhood, 'where hollows and basins have been carved and cut out of the rock by the breakers over millions of years'. Alphonso remembers 'admiring the endless diversity of the semi-sentient marvels oscillating between the vegetable, animal and mineral kingdoms, the zooids and corallines, sea anemones, sea fans and sea feathers'. But all this will soon change when his 'passion for collecting' is met by its inevitable consequences of biodiversity loss and extinction:

> At that time the whole south-west coast of the island was surrounded by a colourful fringe ebbing and flowing with the tides, and now, said Uncle Alphonso, barely half a century later, those glories had been almost entirely destroyed by our passion for collecting and by other imponderable disturbances and disruptions. (pp. 126–127)

Sebald juxtaposes Alphonso's melancholic attachment to the British coast's depleting biomass with his failure to mourn the unseen damage his natural collections have caused elsewhere in the world. The existence of the Fitzpatricks' estate is only made possible by British imperialism; it is a beacon of 'domestic imperialistic culture' built on the materials of conquest, as Edward Said suggested of Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* (1814).[135] This is why it is important that Sebald includes the detail that Alphonso's taxidermy parrot is an African Grey Parrot taken from 'the Congo' (p. 117). This situates Alphonso within a history of colonialism which, as Jessica Dubow and Richard Steadman-Jones write, turns the taxidermy parrot into an emblem for the 'history of desubjectification'.[136] Austerlitz's recollections of the Lodge therefore demonstrate an ambivalent, rather than celebratory, relationship between the human collector and the nonhuman collection.

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[135] Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), p. 95.

[136] Jessica Dubow and Richard Steadman-Jones, 'Sebald's Parrot: Speaking the Archive', *Comparative Literature*, 65 (2013), 123–135 (p. 130).

Sebald's lists offer a thematic reflection on the ambivalent relationships between humanity and nature in Western modernity. Yet they also develop a formal modulation of narrative time that attempts to suspend the onrush of modernity. According to Tom McInnes Lee, for example, lists are a just one part of Sebald's non-syntactical style, which encompasses his use of photographic images, tables, signatures, diagrams, maps, and stamps. For McInnes Lee, the key feature of Sebald's style is the juxtaposition between the list form and the 'well-composed sentence', between the non-syntactic and the syntactic, which in turn produces a 'complex kind of narrative time'.[137] But what are the effects of this complex narrative time? For Amir Eshel and, more recently, Laura García Moreno, the answer is that Sebald's lists enact a 'poetics of suspension' or 'aesthetics of delay'. Sebald's paratactically hypotactic sentences 'halt the rapid pace of time and set limits to modernity's obliviousness'.[138] Thus for all of the ways Sebald's lists adhere to the logic of the collection – the logic of antiquarian naturalism and taxonomy – they also transform naturalist narratives by pausing the destructivity of British ecological imperialism. Sebald's parataxis suspends modernity's acceleration and, in doing so, draws attention to the kinds of nonhumans that modernity obliterates. Lists thus become part of Sebald's creaturely form.

Famously, Sebald refused to describe *Rings* and *Austerlitz* as novels, preferring to call his books 'prose fictions'. *Austerlitz*, he said, is a 'prose book of an indeterminate kind'.[139] He even went so far as to rebuke the stylistic tendencies of the popular and dominant novel form. In two interviews conducted late in his life, Sebald criticises the contemporary novel for its mechanical function: he pushes back against the 'mechanisms of the novel', and describes the novel's desire to 'get to the next phase of the plot' as being akin to 'the wheels […] grinding and going on'. Against this mechanistic novel form, Sebald states that his hypotactic style derives from a loose tradition of German-language prose that has 'fallen into disrepair'.[140] This tradition includes naturalists such as Georg Wilhelm Steller, for example, but also writers like Adalbert Stifter and Gottfried Keller in the nineteenth-century, and Robert Walser, H. G. Adler, Peter Weiss, Thomas Bernhard, and Marianne Fritz in the twentieth century.[141] Admittedly, these pronouncements on the novel

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[137] Tom McInnes Lee, 'The Lists of W. G. Sebald', *M/C Journal*, 15 (2012) <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/552> [Accessed 24/10/2017].

[138] Amir Eshel, 'Against the Power of Time: The Poetics of Suspension in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', *New German Critique*, 88 (2003), 71–96 (pp. 71, 96); Laura García Moreno, 'Strange Edifices, Counter-Monuments: Rethinking Time and Space in W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', *Critique*, 54 (2013), 360–379 (p. 360).

[139] Sebald quoted in Carol Jacobs, *Sebald's Vision* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), p. 167.

[140] Silverblatt, pp. 77–78; Lubow, p. 169.

[141] Adler's *Theresienstadt, 1941–45* (1955) has, for example, a unique presence within *Austerlitz*. Sebald intertextually incorporates Adler's descriptions of the ghetto's organisation via Auster-

are rather vague. They do not add up to a substantive analysis of the history of literary forms. But even so, they communicate something about what Sebald's literary project is *not* doing. *Rings* and *Austerlitz* are not interested in oiling the novel's grindingly mechanical pursuit of plot. Instead, Sebald's essayistic prose pauses the novel's steady linearity of progression: *Austerlitz* contains no chapters and no paragraphs – in the German edition at least – and ends ambiguously, without closure; *Rings* has its own orbiting narrative logic which ultimately circles back to where it began. Thus for all of Sebald's ambulatory narratives, his texts actually perform something of a stasis. His narrators, but also the texts themselves, stop to collect together those forms that have 'fallen into disrepair'. Whether zoo animals, over-fished herring, or even literary forms, Sebald's creaturely form re-members the nonhuman life forms and literary forms which have been forgotten by the onrush of modernity.

There is, then, an intimate connection between literary forms and life forms in Sebald's work: his poetics re-members forgotten forms, whether human, animal, or literary. His literary form, with 'its own insurgent tendency to kick against plot', thus develops what David James calls a kind of 'critical solace' which refuses the plots of modernity, suspending the novel's rearticulation of modernity's dominant temporality and providing symbolic compensation to the victims of anthropocentric modernity.[142] In the end this gesture of critical solace, this attempt at restitution, may turn out to be little more than an actively passive mode of attentiveness. For while Sebald expands the archive of the vanquished, his prose becomes wedded to the necessarily exclusionary logic of the archive. Sebald's texts, just like the zoological gardens they critique, hold life forms together and preserve them against the rush of history. Thus while Sebald's creaturely form therefore witnesses the alienation between humans and other animals in modernity, it might never push beyond the scopic regime of looking that it so thoroughly criticises.

Over the course of this chapter I have argued that Sebald's writing bears witness to modernity's disarticulation of humanity and nature. Beginning with '*Zerstreute Reminiszenzen*' and *After Nature*, before then concentrating in detail on *Rings* and *Austerlitz*, I have made the case that Sebald's literary project is creaturely because it develops a poetics of connection which, in content *and* form, depicts the human and the nonhuman as connected. By drawing on Sebald's explicit intertextual relationship with Theodor Adorno and John Berger, as well as picking up on his texts' resonances with the work of Jacques Derrida and Catherine Malabou, my chapter

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litz's own account of reading Adler. This re-description produces *Austerlitz's* longest and most hypotactically complex sentence (pp. 331–342). For more, see: Helen Finch and Lynn Wolff, eds., *Witnessing, Memory, Poetics: H. G. Adler and W. G. Sebald* (Rochester: Camden House, 2014).
[142] David James, 'Critical Solace', *New Literary History*, 47 (2016), 481–504 (p. 484).

has situated Sebald's literary project within a critical discussion on modernity, animality, and representation. Throughout, I have identified certain structural tendencies in Sebald's poetics of connection which undermine his stated attempt at restitution. Sebald's natural-history of the herring might flatten rather than uphold an important differentiation between the Holocaust and industrial herring fishing. And Sebald's preoccupation with antiquarianism and the archive is ambiguously positioned between self-aware utilisation and nostalgic replication, between critical and antiquarian standpoints. Undergirding all of this is Sebald's melancholic identification with nonhumans, which at best surrenders an anthropocentric idea of the self, but at worst treats animals as mirrors for reflecting human alienation in the late twentieth century. In spite of these limitations, though, Sebald's literary project remains attentive to the creaturely connections that link the human to animality. And I have ended with Sebald's comments on the novel form in order to preface some of the overarching discussions of my next chapter on J. M. Coetzee, in which I interrogate more closely the relationship between the novel and anthropocentric thought.

Chapter Two—J. M. Coetzee's Deformations: Creaturely Trouble in *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*

Introduction: Deforming the Novel, Deforming the Person

When J. M. Coetzee was awarded the Jerusalem Prize for literature in 1987, he used his acceptance speech to express how colonialism and apartheid had completely deformed the social relations of South Africa. Speaking at the height of the nationwide state of emergency, a time in which internal resistance to and international pressures against apartheid had intensified the country's political crisis, Coetzee describes how not just human relations, but also the very *writing* of human relations, the literature of South Africa itself, had become irrevocably distorted by what he calls the 'unfreedom' of colonial domination. He states:

> The deformed and stunted relations between human beings that were created under colonialism and exacerbated under what is loosely called apartheid have their psychic representation in a deformed and stunted inner life. All expressions of that inner life, no matter how intense, no matter how pierced with exultation or despair, suffer from the same stuntedness and deformity. I make this observation with due deliberation, and in the fullest awareness that it applies to myself and my own writing as much as to anyone else.[1]

Throughout his speech, Coetzee identifies South African fiction as a 'literature in bondage'. Overly preoccupied with the 'elementary relations of contestation, domination, and subjugation', it is 'exactly the kind of literature you would expect people to write from a prison'. But he admits that his own writing is no better equipped to approach the 'vast and complex human world that lies beyond'. Speaking here with the 'fullest awareness' that he too is locked in the prison of apartheid, Coetzee tells his audience that his own novels are just as equally trou-

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[1] J. M. Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 98.

bled and disfigured. His writing is nothing other than 'a less than fully human literature'.[2]

Coetzee's speech hopes for a day in which South African literature will be able to 'take up residence in a world where a living play of feelings and ideas is possible'.[3] But until that day comes, Coetzee considers it ethically impossible for literature to prematurely transcend the deformed and stunted social relations produced by colonial domination. Instead, he recognises that writing, if it is to remain ethically responsive to the historical conjuncture, must retain its 'less than fully human' condition. More than this, I want to argue that Coetzee makes this 'less than fully human' condition the very content or object of his fiction: his novels continuously interrogate the ways in which domination deforms social relations. Coetzee therefore takes on the ethical challenge of *shouldering* these deformations within his writing. By carrying and giving voice to the distorted social relations between differently racialised humans and, as this chapter will demonstrate, between humans and other animals, his fiction assumes new shapes that are more fitted to express the contours of life lived under mastery. Coetzee's semantics of an unsettled or distorted 'humanity' are, I argue, crucial for understanding how his fiction stages a two-way process of deformation. On the one side, Coetzee constantly deforms the generic conventions of the novel form. On the other, his writing deforms the person, the subject, or the human whose very characterisation and individuation lies at the heart of the novel form. Throughout Coetzee's writing, form and character both become 'less than fully human'. They become, I suggest, more creaturely.

This chapter proposes two key contentions about Coetzee's creaturely form. First, that his self-consciously deformed novels destabilise the modern anthropological machine. By writing works which announce themselves as being 'less than fully human', as being more creaturely than idealistically and firmly human, Coetzee ties together and then deconstructs the relationship between anthropocentric domination and literary form. Second, his fiction not only transforms the novel's function as a machine that discursively makes the human; his work also – albeit on rarer occasions – imagines different modalities of life through an attentiveness to the 'less than fully human' relations between humans and other animals. I will make these two arguments by exploring how Coetzee intensifies his double deformation of form and character in the years leading up to and surrounding the millennium. In the 1990s, Coetzee developed a public, intellectual and literary concern with the lives of animals: with animal rights, animal welfare, and vegetar-

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[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid.

ianism.[4] This public-facing animal turn is concomitant with a fictional turn towards unwanted dogs and slaughterhouse cattle, as well as the shadow of anthropocentrism across modernity. In three texts, conceived, researched and drafted in tandem – *The Lives of Animals* (1999), *Disgrace* (1999), and *Elizabeth Costello* (2003) – Coetzee deepens his literary project's deformation of form and character via the figure of the animal. At the very same time, these texts envision different genres of human living that affirm the life 'we share with animals', as *Disgrace's* Lucy Lurie puts it.[5]

But how can these texts' differing literary forms play a role in confronting anthropocentrism? How might Coetzee's realism on the one hand dramatise cross-species care, and how can his metafiction on the other articulate less violent ways of thinking and being? This chapter's key contentions are undergirded by a third, more fundamental and structural analysis of how Coetzee utilises literary forms. I contend that, across *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace*, and *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee strives to find literary forms that can express a creaturely affinity with and attentiveness towards animality. In these texts, Coetzee tests out, at a sentence-by-sentence level, the capacities of differing genres and styles to accommodate a more creaturely perspective. I will argue that Coetzee is vigilant about what I have been calling the ongoing war against the animal, just as he is vigilant about the ways in which literature might contribute towards anthropocentric and colonial modes of thought. In turn, this chapter contends that Coetzee bends and reshapes novelistic forms in order to unsettle literature's production of a stable human subject and its sacrifice of nonhuman others. If I argued in the introduction to this thesis that literature has the potential to function as an anthropological machine, to participate in the 'sacrificial war' against creaturely life, as Jacques Derrida calls it,[6] then I will reveal here how Coetzee deforms literature so as to suspend or disturb its perpetual sacrificial decision between human and animality. By foregrounding the animal, Coetzee's creaturely form attempts to wrest the novel away from its humanist logics.

To begin, I want to think about Coetzee's deformation of the novel and the person. On the one side, Coetzee's writing is built on what Patrick Hayes describes as an 'abiding concern with the origins, history, and ongoing cultural legacy of the form

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[4] J. C. Kannemeyer's biography notes that Coetzee became a vegetarian in 1974, but only began public-facing activism in the lead up to his emigration to Australia in 2002. See: *J. M. Coetzee: A Life in Writing*, trans. by Michael Heyns (Melbourne: Scribe, 2012), pp. 154, 588.

[5] Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Vintage, 2000), p. 74. All further references to this edition will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[6] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 101.

of the novel'.[7] From *Dusklands* (1974) to *The Schooldays of Jesus* (2016), as well as throughout his public lectures, works of criticism, published correspondences and private notebooks, Coetzee displays a deep engagement with various novelistic forms, including the nineteenth-century epistolary novel of sensibility, the South African *plaasroman* (or farm novel), and the Russian novel of ideas. But as numerous critics note, Coetzee sets out not just to draw on these forms, but also to deform them, to reshape novelistic forms into 'countergenres'.[8] Coetzee's writing strives to 'remake or even unmake the novel'[9] and to 'defy, reform, and to some degree reinvent the realist novel'.[10] In his foundational study of Coetzee's first six novels, David Attwell describes how Coetzee develops a form of 'situational metafiction', a mode of postmodern novel-writing that positions itself against the 'primary texts' of colonialism.[11] This mode of writing has, to a greater or lesser extent, persisted until today. In the early 1990s, Coetzee suggested that, for him, the question of the novel has always been 'what next?'[12] Twenty years later, writing in the auto-fictional novel *Summertime* (2010), Coetzee adopts the voice of a former lover in order to reflect on his own career's constant attempts to 'deform his medium in order to say what has never been said before'.[13] Put in the words of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, whose writing on Coetzee I will turn to throughout this chapter, Coetzee's literary project can be said to 'ab-use' the novel form: it dismantles the form from within.[14]

Just as Coetzee ab-uses the novel, so too does he ab-use the human persons or characters who inhabit and propel his fiction, dramatising the 'breakup of the dominating, rationalist subject of colonialism'.[15] Coetzee repeatedly throws his characters into narrative situations in which they become precarious and vulnerable. His novels worry away at the stable selfhood of his characters, and he plots his protagonists' dissolution into forms of bareness that rupture their previous ways of life and recalibrate their relationship with the other. This 'negative transcendence', as Sam Durrant calls it, 'brings the self into an abject, bodily relation

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[7] Patrick Hayes, *J. M. Coetzee and the Novel: Writing and Politics After Beckett* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 1–2.

[8] Ibid., p. 134.

[9] Jarad Zimbler, *J. M. Coetzee and the Politics of Style* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 199.

[10] Benjamin H. Ogden, 'The Coming into Being of Literature: How J. M. Coetzee's *Diary of a Bad Year* Thinks through the Novel', *Novel*, 43 (2010), 466–482 (p. 466).

[11] David Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 20, 6.

[12] Coetzee, *Doubling*, p. 27.

[13] Coetzee, *Summertime: Scenes from Provincial Life* (London: Vintage, 2010), p. 242.

[14] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 395.

[15] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee: South Africa and the Politics of Writing*, pp. 1–2.

with itself'.[16] And it always has something to do with power. Whether these characters are administrators of colonial regimes (as in the unnamed Magistrate from *Waiting for the Barbarians* (1980)), active participants in U.S. post-war imperialism (as in *Dusklands'* Eugene Dawn), or passive beneficiaries of South African apartheid (Elizabeth Curren in *Age of Iron* (1990)), his characters become stunted and deformed by their relation to domination. Coetzee's novels are therefore 'narratives of displacement', according to Laura Wright, in which protagonists are repeatedly asked to give things up and let things go.[17] Coetzee's literary project offers us what Regina James has described as 'the recurrence of loss'.[18] In the words of the Magistrate: 'I lose myself'.[19]

This chapter builds on the argument, made by many critics, that Coetzee's fiction connects this negative transcendence, of 'losing myself', to the figure of the animal. Jacqueline Rose has already gestured towards this aspect of Coetzee's fiction when she writes that, because 'transcendence is no option' in *Disgrace* and *The Lives of Animals*, Coetzee's characters must 'travel down the chain of being towards animals'.[20] But, importantly, these texts do not conceive of this negative transcendence as an ontological plummet down towards the animal. If they did, this would leave intact the very anthropocentric hierarchising of life which they want to unsettle. Instead, I will argue that Coetzee relegates the human subject – what Jarad Zimbler has termed a 'metaphorics of diminution' – in order to deconstruct anthropocentric personhood as a space of uprightness.[21] I take the term 'uprightness' from Adriana Cavarero's *Inclinations* (2016), who critiques the Enlightenment discourse of 'rectitude' for mischaracterising the human subject as upright, erect, correct, and autonomous. This narrow and historically specific figuration of the human as 'Man', fused with logics of race, gender and ability, conceals human interrelatedness and difference while also occluding what Cavarero calls our 'inclinations' to one another. For Cavarero, inclination is an ethical project that 'calls into question our being creatures who are materially vulnerable and, often in greatly unbalanced circumstances, consigned to one another.'[22] While Cavarero rarely discusses nonhuman life, we can stretch her contentions in order to argue that rectitude is an anthropological machine, and that a creaturely way of life re-

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[16] Sam Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative and the Work of Mourning: J. M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, and Toni Morrison* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p. 48.

[17] Laura Wright, *Writing Out of All Camps: J. M. Coetzee's Narratives of Displacement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 12.

[18] Regina Janes, '"Writing Without Authority": J. M. Coetzee and His Fictions', *Salmagundi*, 114 (1997), 103–121 (p. 105).

[19] Coetzee, *Waiting for the Barbarians* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 28.

[20] Jacqueline Rose, *The Last Resistance* (London: Verso, 2013), p. 155.

[21] Zimbler, p. 149.

[22] Adriana Cavarero, *Inclinations: A Critique of Rectitude*, trans. by Amanda Minervini and Adam Sitze (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), p. 13.

thinks anthropocentrism by inclining towards humans and other animals. In other words, Coetzee's literary inclination towards animality contests and reconfigures the supposed great chain of being, which positions 'Man' at the summit. Coetzee inclines his texts towards animals, and in doing so develops a creaturely form of writing which deconstructs the anthropological machine of human rectitude and uprightness.

Coetzee announced how his growing inclinations towards animals in *Doubling the Point* (1992):

> (Let me add, *entirely* parenthetically, that I, as a person, as a personality, am overwhelmed, that my thinking is thrown into confusion and helplessness, by the fact of suffering in the world, and not only human suffering. These fictional constructions of mine are paltry, ludicrous defences against that being-overwhelmed, and, to me, transparently so.)[23]

Derek Attridge, one of Coetzee's foremost critics, reminds us how important it is to pay close attention to 'the shaping of language, the phrasing of syntax, [and] the resonating of syllables' throughout Coetzee's writing.[24] This is especially true here as Coetzee calls attention to his own writing's grammatical precision and syntactic arrangements. By unfolding the first-person 'I' into an entanglement of private self (I), subjectivity and personhood (person), and public-facing authorial negotiation (personality), Coetzee demonstrates how his 'thinking', both inside *and* outside his fiction, is 'overwhelmed' by the 'fact of suffering in the world'. He thus suggests that his fiction – the very writing itself – is overwhelmed by suffering. He concedes that his writing is an attempt to protect himself from the reality of suffering in the world, to shelter himself from the fact of pain. But the defences do not hold. He confesses that the suffering body easily breaches the 'paltry' stylistic barricades of literary form. Coetzee's writing is, therefore, just as overwhelmed and deformed by suffering as he himself is as a person and personality. His fiction presents a formal articulation of this 'being-overwhelmed'.

Undergirding all of this is Coetzee's indication that his writing is overwhelmed by human *and* nonhuman suffering. It is easy to underestimate the significance of the adjacent subordinate clause, *and not only human suffering*. But with this formulation, Coetzee opens out onto an entire ethics beyond the human. And it is this fact that breaks his fiction's barricades, destabilising the contours of his literary form. Moreover, by enclosing these parenthetical remarks *within* parenthesis, and by

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[23] Coetzee, *Doubling*, p. 248. Coetzee's emphasis.

[24] Derek Attridge, *J. M. Coetzee and the Ethics of Reading: Literature in the Event* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004), p. 48.

alerting us again to their supposed parenthetical status by the use of italics, the reader cannot help but feel that these thoughts are *anything but* parenthetical, that they are, instead, at the forefront of Coetzee's mind. I return to this passage because it can be read as an early instantiation of Coetzee's developing concern for animals, because it echoes Jeremy Bentham's question about animal pain (Can they suffer?), and because it presages the ways in which many of Coetzee's characters reassess their ideas of who or what can suffer – of whose lives are determined to be grievable, as Judith Butler puts it.[25] But I also want to suggest here that the phrasing itself actively challenges anthropocentrism. Coetzee's qualification 'and not only' troubles dominant forms of anthropocentrism which assume only the human to be able to experience suffering.

Coetzee's writing therefore marks an attempt to articulate the suffering of animals, both thematically and formally. His fiction attempts to write from a creaturely perspective, a perspective that is shaped – misshaped, deformed – by the fact of animal pain. This chapter therefore builds on Sam Durrant's suggestion that Coetzee develops an ethical response to history because he bears witness to colonialism's tyranny 'while remaining powerless to effect reconciliation'. For Durrant, Coetzee's texts take an ethical position precisely because they remain 'inconsolable' and 'speechless before apartheid'.[26] There is no restitution in Coetzee's work, as there is in W. G. Sebald's. I argue that Coetzee continues this during his animal turn: his fiction ultimately remains speechless before animal suffering. Despite his characters' many attempts to put animal suffering into words, Coetzee's texts ultimately remain overwhelmed by animal pain.

Coetzee has arguably become the most written-about author in the burgeoning literary animal studies canon. Numerous critics, 'haunted' by his portrayal of human-animal relations, have closely read his texts' representation of animals while also analysing his commitment to animal rights and vegetarianism.[27] Some have re-examined Coetzee's entire literary project in light of his animal turn, arguing that 'from his earliest to his most recent work, [Coetzee builds] a pattern of incorporating animals as narrative elements associated with suffering and death'.[28] Some argue that Coetzee's writing generates a 'literary staging-ground' for a 'posthumanist ethics',[29] while others attest that his fiction develops a form of 'bio-aesthetics', a kind of writing informed by a 'cross-species conception of the aes-

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[25] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), pp. 14–15.

[26] Durrant, *Postcolonial Narrative*, pp. 23–24.

[27] Kari Weil, *Thinking Animals: Why Animal Studies Now?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. xviii.

[28] Louis Tremaine, 'The Embodied Soul: Animal Being in the Work of J. M. Coetzee', *Contemporary Literature*, 44 (2003), 587–612 (p. 595).

[29] Calina Ciobanu, 'Coetzee's Posthumanist Ethics', *MFS*, 58 (2012), 668–698 (p. 669).

thetic'.[30] Why, then, is there the need for another chapter on Coetzee's fictional writing on the lives of animals? Firstly, I suggest that the creaturely offers a way of making sense of the interrelation between Coetzee's posthumanist ethics and his bio-aesthetics. The creaturely allows us to determine how his 'less than fully human' writing presents an ethical relationship with animality, generatively deconstructing the stability of the 'human' while calling for a reconfigured responsibility towards the animal. Secondly, although much has been written about Coetzee and animality, many critics remain unconvinced that animals are central to his literary project. David Attwell, for example, claims that Coetzee is not so much invested in the question of animal suffering as he is in the 'spectacle of cruelty'. For Attwell, writing in his recent archival study of Coetzee's literary career, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing* (2015), his fiction uses animals as mere 'touchstones for debates about cruelty in general'.[31] Elsewhere, Pieter Vermeulen adopts Eric Santner's notion of the creaturely (a notion I critiqued in the introduction to this thesis) in order to analyse how Coetzee's later protagonists are 'abandoned creatures'. Vermeulen insists that, in works such as *Slow Man* (2005) and *Diary of a Bad Year* (2007), Coetzee writes about a specifically human vulnerability precipitated by the shrinking of discursive and social infrastructures, including postmodernism's weakening of grand narratives and neoliberalism's attenuation of the state. Like Attwell, Vermeulen concludes that Coetzee is not especially concerned with exploring the 'physical pains of biological life' that are shared between human and nonhuman, but rather a metaphysical wounding of the human in contemporary life.[32]

Both of these accounts obscure Coetzee's growing commitment to animals in the 1990s, as well as his explicit fictional and non-fictional preoccupations with the 'ways in which our relationship with animals is wrong'. These are Coetzee's opening remarks at a 2007 exhibition by the Australian animal rights charity, Voiceless. Here, he speaks of how 'there is something deeply, cosmically wrong with regarding and treating fellow beings as mere units of any kind'.[33] In the three texts I discuss in this chapter, both Coetzee and his characters strive to not simply use animals as reified 'units'. Instead, they attend to the specificity and materiality of animal life. Each text differently explores personal and societal relationships with familiar and familial animals, while at the same drawing attention to the intractability of anthropocentrism. To such ends, Coetzee centralises animal bodies along-

[30] Carrie Rohman, 'No Higher Life: Bio-aesthetics in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *MFS*, 60 (2014), 562–578 (p. 563).

[31] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing: Face to Face with Time* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 219.

[32] Pieter Vermeulen, 'Abandoned Creatures: Creaturely Life and the Novel Form in J. M. Coetzee's *Slow Man*', *Studies in the Novel*, 45 (2013), 655–674 (pp. 656–657, 665).

[33] Coetzee, 'Exposing the Beast', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 22 February 2007, p. 17.

side human ones, bringing animals into physical and conceptual contact with his human protagonists. Whether it is through David Lurie's love for unwanted dogs, or through Elizabeth Costello's refusal to touch meat products, I argue that Coetzee dramatises moments in which humans find themselves deformed via their encounters with and commitments to other animals. Unlike Attwell and Vermeulen, then, my analysis re-centres Coetzee's engagement with animality. In doing so, I take up Anat Pick's suggestion that *The Lives of Animals* develops a kind of 'creaturely thinking' that imagines the body as a site of vulnerability.[34] I extend this argument by analysing the creaturely across Coetzee's animal turn. But by also foregrounding the question of literary form, by considering his writing itself as a creaturely form, I will suggest new ways of reading Coetzee's attentiveness towards animality.

This chapter conceives of Coetzee's animal turn as a kind of textual experiment, an experiment attending simultaneously to the problem of writing about animals and the problem of writing animals as such. Coetzee's critics have long suggested that his novels share peculiar similarities with philosophical thought-experiments. Carrol Clarkson writes that 'just as philosophers develop thought-experiments, Coetzee develops formal and literary ones'.[35] David Attridge argues that his writing shares with thought-experiments a tendency to stage without ever resolving numerous vexing, intractable, and open questions.[36] According to Spivak, 'the formal logic of Coetzee's fiction mimes ethical moves in an uncanny way'.[37] But his writing is in no way *reducible* to philosophy. For as Coetzee himself puts it, storytelling is 'another, an other mode of thinking'.[38] Rather than reproducing the abstract moral reasoning of the prototypical thought-experiment, which is precisely the mode of cold rationality that Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* rallies against, his writing is rooted to the contingency and specificity of each narrative form, his characters' particular attitudes and lived experiences, and each text's given world and plotting, namely its materiality. I argue throughout this chapter that Coetzee's experimental approach is powerfully demonstrated throughout his animal turn, in which the detached, cerebral and anthropocentric notion of 'experiment' is unsettled by each text's own attention to the bodies of humans and other animals. *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* can be described as three 'biologico-

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[34] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 7.

[35] Carrol Clarkson, *J. M. Coetzee: Countervoices* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2009), p. 13. For more on Coetzee's experiments, see: Stephen Mulhall, *The Wounded Animal: J. M. Coetzee and the Difficulty of Reality in Literature and Philosophy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 27.

[36] Attridge, p. xi.

[37] Spivak, 'Ethics and Politics in Tagore, Coetzee, and Certain Scenes of Teaching', *Diacritics*, 32 (2002), 17–31 (p. 25, fn. 10).

[38] Coetzee, 'The Novel Today', *Upstream*, 6 (1998), 2–5 (p. 4).

literary experiments', to quote Coetzee's *Slow Man*.[39] They are textual experiments which deal with material problems, never losing sight of the creaturely bodies they describe, whether these bodies are human or nonhuman.

I argue that Coetzee's writing tests out to what extent different literary forms – such as the realist novel and metafiction – can imagine a less anthropocentric and more creaturely interrelatedness between humans and other animals. In *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* Coetzee asks what happens to the already knotted challenges of animal ethics when they come up against plotted events that threaten to overwhelm both the possibility of cross-species care *and* the very literary forms that they are written within. Cora Diamond describes this knottiness of social relations, ethics and aesthetics as signalling the 'difficulty of reality', of 'experiences in which we take something in reality to be resistant to our thinking it, or possibly to be painful in its inexplicability'.[40] This difficulty is played out via Coetzee's writing of bodies – human and nonhuman bodies that are variously ageing, gendered, dehumanised, assaulted, and rendered vulnerable – and it reaches its apex when his texts propose incalculable questions such as: can the euthanasia of dogs be counted as an act of love? And how does someone who has opened their eyes to animal suffering 'break bread' with those for whom the commonplace slaughter and eating of dead bodies is normal? This chapter looks to these incalculable questions because they trouble anthropocentrism and pose particular form-problems for Coetzee's own writing.

But as with any experiment, there are always limitations, failures and troubles to be accounted for. By inclining his fiction so strongly towards animals, Coetzee also reaches formal limits in his writings of animal life. *Disgrace*, I will argue, ultimately *recoils* from enacting the kinds of actions and events which are regularly demanded by the diachronic movement of plot, what Peter Brooks theorises as the 'narrative motor' of realism.[41] I suggest that *Disgrace's* ending agonises about and even hesitates to complete the very scene of animal death that it finds itself compelled towards, thus refusing to reproduce the realist novel's promotion of the human over and above the nonhuman. I will also ask why it is that *Elizabeth Costello* is written in a metafictional style, a genre of literature that Coetzee had rebuked a decade earlier as being merely 'a phase […] in the history of the novel'.[42] Under my reading, *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello* mark two attempts to

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[39] Coetzee, *Slow Man* (London: Vintage, 2005), p. 114.

[40] Cora Diamond, 'The Difficulty of Reality and the Difficulty of Philosophy', in *Philosophy and Animal Life*, Stanley Cavell and others (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), pp. 43–90 (pp. 45, 53).

[41] Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 52.

[42] Coetzee, *Doubling*, p. 27.

write animal lives without the demands of realism's narrative motor. For if *Disgrace* reaches an impasse in its representation of animal life, an impasse that seems to be caused by the very realist register it is written within, then *Elizabeth Costello* investigates whether metafiction's deconstructing of the novel form allows a different writing of animality. Linda Hutcheon's and Patricia Waugh's foundational critical accounts of metafiction explicate the genre's particular ability to 'include within itself a commentary on its own narrative and/or linguistic identity',[43] thereby 'self-consciously and systematically draw[ing] attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality'.[44] *Elizabeth Costello* turns to metafiction in order to self-consciously interrogate the lives of animals in fiction and reality.

Ultimately, I will suggest that Coetzee's writing on animals is troubled by two crucial factors. First, Coetzee's creaturely form tends to foreground its own limitations and paradoxes. As a close reader of Samuel Beckett, Coetzee inherits a Beckettian preoccupation with failure, impossibility, and negativity. And as someone notably influenced by postmodernist and metafictional literature, he also mobilises these genres' tendencies towards auto-critique and aporias. On the one hand, this attention to failure testifies to the overwhelming power of anthropocentrism and animal suffering. On the other, it risks offering a purely futile representation of creaturely life, and thus capitulating to the very humanism it wants to resist. Second, Coetzee often offloads the burden of animality or creatureliness onto his fictional women, such as Magda (*In the Heart of the Country* (1977)) Elizabeth Curren (*Age of Iron*), Lucy Lurie and Bev Shaw (*Disgrace*) and Elizabeth Costello (*The Lives of Animals*; *Elizabeth Costello*; *Slow Man*). This runs the risk of essentialising women as being naturally 'closer' to nature while at the same time allowing Coetzee to abdicate authorial responsibility for the kinds of comments, often highly provocative, that his female characters articulate. Even so, I hope to show that, when at its most thoughtful, Coetzee's creaturely form connects women with animality in order to reappropriate or ab-use the kinds of stunted and deformed logics of colonial domination which define women by their corporeality. Coetzee's women characters take hold of their animality in order to reject anthropocentric and patriarchal personhood.

As I have suggested, this chapter examines how Coetzee develops different formal means for approaching this 'difficulty of reality' and for contesting anthropocentrism through the 'less than fully human' relations between humans and other an-

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[43] Linda Hutcheon, *Narcissistic Narrative: The Metafictional Paradox* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1980), p. 1.

[44] Patricia Waugh, *Metafiction: The Theory and Practice of Self-Conscious Fiction* (London: Routledge, 1984), p. 2.

imals. In the first half of this chapter, I examine how *Disgrace* takes up the terrain of what Coetzee labels 'dull realism' in order to ask: how do animals fare within the tightly-plotted logics of the realist novel?[45] I argue that Coetzee uses literary techniques such as focalisation and the grammar of tense in order to deconstruct the relation between 'dull realism', literature's anthropocentrism, and the ideology of the person. I show how Lucy becomes the novel's 'third person' who speaks back to forms of colonial and anthropocentric domination that are constructed around the logic of personhood. I also offer a re-reading of the novel's ending, a reading based on a close analysis of how Coetzee formally and grammatically navigates animal euthanasia. In sum, I argue that *Disgrace* wants to disabuse dull realism of its anthropocentrism. In the second half of this chapter, I argue that *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello* develop a metafictional register which differently accommodates animals within literary form. While Coetzee finds himself in creaturely trouble at the end of *Disgrace*, compelled by his novel's internal logic to sacrifice the animal for the redemption of the human protagonist, in *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello* he turns to a form of novel writing in which nonhuman animals need no longer be sacrificed. Here, nonhuman animals become spoken about and advocated for, rather than written into and out of the plot. But Coetzee does so through the animalised figure of Elizabeth Costello, who shares a vulnerable affinity with the suffering animals she bears witness to. Under my reading, Costello is figured as a vegetarian killjoy whose appeals on behalf of animals gets her into trouble – she sacrifices herself in place of nonhuman animals.

Closer to the Ground: Coetzee's Creatures

In this first section I wish to concentrate on how Coetzee uses the tropes of relegation, diminishment and dissolution in order to deform his characters into a form of creaturely life. I trace how his texts deform their protagonists and demand that they 'start at ground level' (p. 205), to use the words of *Disgrace's* Lucy Lurie. I will argue that Coetzee mobilises different modulations of groundedness, or ways of living 'closer to the ground', which approximate his human characters to a level of creaturely animality. As a phrase, 'closer to the ground' names a mode of embodiment which, in its bareness and associations with animality, ultimately gives up the anthropocentric property of personhood, and in its place fosters a minimal ethics borne out of an affinity with the animal. By tracing this vector of groundedness across *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*, I will reveal how *Disgrace* articulates two overlapping but differentiated, and to an extent even competing, valences of the creaturely: while David and Lucy are both abjected, and while both abjections engender new formations of the human, we will see how the novel's focalisation positions

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[45] Coetzee quoted in Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, p. 187.

Lucy as a countervoice to David's humanistic 'idea of the world' (p. 146). Against the property of human personhood, Lucy turns towards the lives 'we share with animals' (p. 74). She develops a gendered and postcolonial kind of creatureliness which responds to the changing relations between humans and other animals in post-apartheid South Africa. To arrive at this argument, I would like to begin by way of a comparison, measuring Coetzee's creatureliness against W. G. Sebald's.

In 2002, Coetzee reviewed the posthumous translation of W. G. Sebald's debut literary work, *After Nature* (1988). Reflecting on Sebald's rise to international literary recognition, he writes that 'the people in Sebald's books are for the most part what used to be called melancholics. The tone of their lives is defined by a hard-to-articulate sense that they do not belong in the world, that perhaps human beings in general do not belong here.' For Coetzee, Sebald's literary project develops a feeling of species-wide melancholia that imagines the human as a creature who is out of place in the world. And this species-oriented alienation is best exemplified by those moments in which Sebald's unnamed narrators are gripped by 'hallucinations of being in a high place looking down on the world […] A spinning of mind followed by mental collapse.'[46] If his review pinpoints the vertigo of Sebald's creaturely form, then what form does Coetzee's own creatureliness take? Put differently, if Sebald's narrators and characters often adopt the observational standpoint of the melancholic archivist, a position which allows for the connecting together of pasts and presents, spaces and places, and human and nonhuman life forms, then how do we describe the ways in which Coetzee's characters are more deeply embedded and located within the present tense of their own bodies, environments, and plots? Although Sebald and Coetzee both share a preoccupation with rendering the human more uncertain and unstable, they can be differentiated by the perspectives that their fiction tends to prioritise: Sebald's narrators scan a *longue durée* of modernity, while Coetzee's texts are considerably closer to the ground.

Coetzee returns to the phrase 'closer to the ground' throughout his work to describe deformed ways of living which are caused by coloniality's deformed and stunted social relations. In *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace* especially, the phrase becomes iterated in conjunction with a gendered and creaturely proximity with animality. In both cases, he uses the phrase to describe how his characters' deformations challenge anthropocentric modes of personhood. But while *Age of Iron* dramatises a particularly negative side of the creaturely, *Disgrace* articulates a more positive sense of the creaturely as a productive relegation of the person in which they be-

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[46] Coetzee, *Inner Workings: Literary Essays 2000–2005* (London: Penguin, 2007), pp. 145, 146, 148); Coetzee also discusses Sebald's work with Arabella Kurtz in *The Good Story: Exchanges on Truth, Fiction and Psychotherapy* (London: Harvill Secker, 2015), pp. 182–190.

come inclined towards other forms of life. Let us start with the former. Set during the escalating violence of the late apartheid years, *Age of Iron* is an epistolary novel in which a mother addresses her absent daughter. The novel is constructed around a white and middle class narrator, Elizabeth Curren, who is slowly dying of cancer, and black South Africans in the townships, who are systematically oppressed, assaulted, and killed under the apartheid regime. By confronting this unevenly distributed space of onto-political disease, Coetzee's protagonist – a liberal and humanist retired classics professor – begins to disavow her 'humanity' in favour of a more inhuman form of life. Curren's reduction of herself quickly slips away from the human and assumes the signifiers of various animal figures: crabs, whales, dogs, grubs and moths. In turn, she contests the concept of 'Man'. After spending a night sleeping rough, Curren returns home to find her house ransacked: locks forced, windows smashed, 'nothing left untouched'. In shock, Curren swallows two pills and slides down onto her bedroom floor:

> Man, I thought: the only creature with part of his existence in the unknown, in the future, like a shadow cast before him. Trying continually to catch up with that moving shadow, to inhabit the image of his hope. But I, I cannot afford to be man. Must be something smaller, blinder, *closer to the ground*.[47]

Curren instantiates and then revokes human exceptionalism. Catalysed by her recognition of two wounds – the personal (her malignant cancer tumour) and the political (the horror of the townships) – her confessional narrative effaces the personal pronoun, suggesting a withdrawal from the self-consolidating event of first-person narration. Curren therefore assumes a mode of living that is *less* human; and she becomes, in her own words, a 'liminal creature' that is 'smaller, blinder, closer to the ground'.[48] Coetzee has her abstain from man's sovereign-seeking logic. Her invective overturns the humanist narrative of man's evolutionary ascent and, with it, denounces the associated domains of personhood, property, and propriety. In doing so, *Age of Iron* troubles the distinctions between evolution and entropy. As Graham Huggan points out, Coetzee uses Curren's creaturely abjection in order to imagine the South African white liberal subject 'as a species which awaits – entreats – its own extinction'.[49] Curren's displacement and diminishment consequently becomes tethered to a kind of 'white South African deracination', as Benita Parry puts it, a plotted dissolution of the colonial self in an encounter with

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[47] Coetzee, *Age of Iron* (London: Penguin, 1991), pp. 154–155. My emphasis.

[48] Ibid., p. 127.

[49] Graham Huggan, 'Evolution and Entropy in J. M. Coetzee's *Age of Iron*', in *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*, ed. by Graham Huggan and Stephen Watson (Macmillan: Basingstoke, 1996), pp. 191–212 (p. 200).

the colonised other.[50] But there is little sense of futurity here beyond Curren's dead letters, which may or may not be read by her daughter upon her death. Instead, she responds to her own cancer and the cancer of apartheid by turning towards a negative inflection of creaturely life, one without an 'existence in the unknown, in the future'.

Disgrace takes up Curren's challenge to live 'smaller, blinder, closer to the ground', but it does so in a different form and in a different register, with a more deliberate inclination towards postcolonial futurity. *Disgrace's* plot is by now well known. The novel is set in a fledgling post-apartheid South Africa in the years following the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The novel is focalised through the figure of David Lurie, a twice-divorced and middle-aged adjunct professor of communications (formerly a professor of modern languages, with a specialism in Romantic literature), who leaves his job at the Cape Technical University after raping a young female student, facing charges for sexual harassment, and then refusing to issue a public apology to the university's disciplinary tribunal. Lurie exiles himself from his home in Cape Town and moves in with his daughter Lucy, a self-identified lesbian and feminist, at her smallholding farm in the Eastern Cape. Here they are both brutally assaulted: Lucy is gang-raped, and David is splashed with ethanol and set alight. Both father and daughter survive the attack, but the assault dramatically changes their relationship with each other and with their daily existence in post-apartheid South Africa. Lucy, despite learning that she is pregnant, and despite also finding out that her black neighbour, Petrus, is related to one of her attackers, decides both to carry the baby and to accept Petrus's formal offer of marriage as an offer of protection. David, shaken by his daughter's decisions, gives himself over to volunteering at an animal welfare shelter, at which he assists in putting to sleep stray and unwanted animals. It is here that David warms to Bev Shaw, the clinic's owner. Although he describes Bev early on in the novel as a 're-markably unattractive' woman (p. 82) with a name that reminds him 'of cattle' (p. 79), they will later have sex on the clinic's operating room floor, '[w]ithout passion but without distaste either', a moment which appears to further consolidate David's recognition of his own disgrace: 'And let him stop calling her poor Bev Shaw. If she is poor, he is bankrupt' (p. 150).

When reading *Disgrace*, critics tend to foreground the ways in which the novel functions as a 'coherent narrative of personal salvation'.[51] Under this interpretation, critics explore David's so-called ethical turn, that is, his plotted deformation and re-formation as a 'dog-man' (p. 146). Critics argue that David eventually rec-

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[50] Benita Parry, 'Speech and Silence in the Fictions of J. M. Coetzee', in *Critical Perspectives on J. M. Coetzee*, pp. 37–65 (p. 37).
[51] Marianne DeKoven, 'Going to the Dogs in *Disgrace*', *ELH*, 76 (2009), 847–875 (p. 847).

ognises his moral bankruptcy, and that he is 'in trouble' (p. 85), thereby developing a more ethical relationship to the world via a 'communion with animals' (p. 126). By charting David's narrative trajectory across the novel, critics interrogate to what extent David transforms from a 'monad divorced totally from other beings' into a supposedly more ethical and 'selfless' subject.[52] While some argue that David's 'reduction to the self-assumed role of 'dog-man' ultimately achieves a 'surrender of self through empathy',[53] others point out that he sacrifices nonhuman animals in order to redeem himself, displacing his own white guilt onto the animal and therefore continuing a 'normative moral cleansing process'.[54] In truth, both of these arguments are borne out by the novel: Coetzee uses the ambiguity of David's supposed redemption to drive the narrative tension. When David arrives in the Eastern Cape soon after leaving his job, he starts out with no intention of surrendering to his disgrace. Instead he hopes to take stock and, eventually, return to Cape Town and re-enter 'human' society. But David soon becomes undone: 'If he came for anything, it was to gather himself, gather his forces. Here he is losing himself day by day' (p. 121). This pattern of David 'losing himself' correlates with his growing attachment to voluntary labour at the clinic, which brings him into regular contact with suffering and dead animals: 'He goes off to the Animal Welfare clinic as often as he can, offering himself for whatever jobs call for no skill: feeding, cleaning, mopping up' (p. 142), and then carefully feeding the dogs' stiff bodies into an incinerator. What is at stake here for David is his 'idea of the world, a world in which men do not use shovels to beat corpses into a more convenient shape for processing' (p. 146).

Thus, on the one hand, David appears to develop an affinity with the animal. And we might describe this affinity as creaturely. In one particularly illustrative scene, David climbs into a bulldog's cage and 'tickles her behind the ears. "Abandoned, are we?" he murmurs. He stretches out beside her on the bare concrete. Above is the pale blue sky. His limbs relax' (p. 78). This, perhaps the first moment of relaxation in the whole novel, sees David fall asleep next to the bulldog inside her cage, discovered later by Lucy. In another scene, David recognises that a 'bond seems to have come into existence between himself and […] two sheep' that are soon to be slaughtered (p. 125). Soon after, his sudden sensitivity towards animals catches him off guard: 'Sunday evening, driving home in Lucy's kombi, he actually has to stop at the roadside to recover himself. Tears flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. He does not understand what is happening to him' (pp.

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[52] Mike Marais, 'J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and the Task of the Imagination', *Journal of Modern Literature*, 29 (2006), 75–93 (p. 76).

[53] Elleke Boehmer, 'Not Saying Sorry, Not Speaking Pain: Gender Implications in *Disgrace*', *Interventions*, 4 (2002), 342–351 (pp. 346–348).

[54] Noam Gal, 'A Note on the Use of Animals for Remapping Victimhood in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *African Identities*, 3 (2006), 241–252 (p. 250).

142–143). But at the same time, David's commitment to animals cannot simply guarantee his redemption. For his relationship with other humans remains fraught. A few pages before the end of the novel, when taking Katy the bulldog for a walk, David discovers one of Lucy's attackers, Pollux, peering into their bathroom window. He strikes the boy's face, yelling 'You filthy swine!' (p. 206) and labelling him a 'jackal' (p. 208), thus enunciating a racist equivalence between blackness and animality that figures Pollux as inhuman. Earlier, David refers to her attackers not as rapists but as animals who were 'mating' (p. 199). David's continuing projection of animality onto black life complicates any easy narrative of personal salvation. It prompts us to think that it might even be easier for David to care for nonhuman animals – those who cannot respond in an immediately comprehensible way – than it is for him to care for black people.

But I do not want to produce yet another critique or recuperation of David Lurie. Doing so would not only re-tread ground already covered by other critics, but it would also elide the ways in which the novel itself cautions us from simply focusing on David. *Disgrace* is suspicious of how novels demote 'minor' characters by promoting a single protagonist at the text's centre. In turn, Coetzee smuggles in forms of life that the realist novel struggles to accommodate. Lucy and the dogs, as forms of fugitive creaturely life, deform literature's tendency to reproduce the category of Man. For it is through Lucy's voice, or her countervoice, that Coetzee unsettles the anthropocentric foundations of the realist novel, which abide by a formal logic in which a (male) protagonist develops across the work's given trajectory. By this, I do not mean to claim that David is not the driving force of the novel. Rather, it is to say that because Coetzee's novel inclines itself – both ethically and formally – towards animal life, it instructs us to pay close attention to how voices other than David's call into question the realist novel's plot and drive. Indeed, Lucy gestures to this when she scolds her father for treating the world as if it were his own story:

> You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life. You are the main character, I am a minor character who doesn't make an appearance until halfway through. Well, contrary to what you think, people are not divided up into major and minor. I am not minor. I have a life of my own, just as important to me as yours is to you, and in my life I am the one who makes the decisions. (p. 198)

Here, Lucy implores her father not to read the world as if it were a realist novel. At the very same time, Coetzee is imploring his readers not to read *Disgrace* as a straightforwardly realist novel committed to redeeming David. He is alerting us, through Lucy's discursive interruptions of her father's focalisation, to read beyond

the surface realism and read for Lucy's role in the novel. Coetzee pushes this point home a few pages later when Bev Shaw turns to David:

> Perhaps the time has come, David, for you to stand back and let Lucy work out solutions for herself. Women are adaptable. Lucy is adaptable. And she is young. She lives *closer to the ground* than you. Than either of us. (p. 210; my emphasis)

While David is sceptical about Bev's claims, the novel positions her remarks as an acknowledgement of Lucy's attentiveness to the unique demands placed on the white subject in post-apartheid South Africa, 'in this place, at this time' (p. 112). For, in contrast to *Age of Iron*, Lucy does not recapitulate the tortured tone that saturates Curren's I-you narrative. Bev associates Lucy's creaturely groundedness with an embrace of futurity. Bev's formulations propose affirmative ways of living. In the words of Zoë Wicomb, Lucy's adaptability to the land moves beyond the settler colonial imaginary of the Afrikaans *boervrou* (or farmer's wife). Lucy's smallscale subsistence farming, a co-venture with Petrus, enacts a 'translation from settler into something new', a lived and linguistic translation that aims to reject the colonial whiteness of the *boervrou*.[55] Building on Wicomb's argument, I read Lucy's decision to live closer to the ground as an affirmation of life, rather than an evolutionary descent or a being-towards-death. Coetzee imbues Lucy's creaturely life with the futurity of pregnancy over the melancholia of cancer. *Disgrace* thus promises Lucy a form of survival, 'a line of flight out of the novel' as Philip Dickinson puts it.[56] Lucy thus deconstructs the colonial landholding legacies of South Africa through a kind of creaturely groundedness.

I am arguing, then, that *Disgrace* is more invested in Lucy's creatureliness than it is with David's. But the question remains: *how* does Coetzee write Lucy into the text, and what is at stake in this gesture? Although critics warn against an uncritically redemptive reading of Lucy, Spivak offers a productive inroad for tackling this question by shifting the debate away from *Disgrace's* plotting.[57] Spivak argues that Coetzee deliberately creates a formally exclusionary narrative that, by committing itself to David's own strict and 'relentless […] focalisation', provokes readers into what she calls 'counterfocalisation'. Thus although *Disgrace* troubles many readers because it appeared to be nothing other than the 'vehicle of the sympathetic por-

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[55] Zoë Wicomb, 'Translations in the Yard of Africa', *Journal of Literary Studies*, 18 (2002), 209–223 (p. 220). See also: Weeraya Donsomsakulkij, 'Whiteness and Future Environmentalism in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *Journal of the African Literature Association*, 11 (2017), 70–82.

[56] Philip Dickinson, 'Feeling, Affect, Exposure: Ethical (In)capacity, the Sympathetic Imagination, and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *Mosaic*, 4 (2013), 1–19 (p. 12).

[57] See, for example: Rita Barnard, 'J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace* and the South African Pastoral', *Contemporary Literature*, 44 (2003), 199–224 (p. 221); and Boehmer, 'Not Saying Sorry', p. 350.

trayal of David Lurie', Spivak reminds us that 'If we, like [David] Lurie, ignore the enigma of Lucy, the novel, being fully focalised precisely by Lurie, can be made to say every racist thing.'[58] To adopt Carrol Clarkson's terminology, Lucy becomes a 'countervoice' who destabilises David's role as the knowing subject of the novel.[59] The reader must counterfocalise with Lucy against her father, against the narrative voice, and, by implication, against the residual colonial imagination that haunts the novel. This is most clearly dramatised in Lucy's rejoinder to her father quoted above ('You behave as if everything I do is part of the story of your life…'), and in her insistence that she is not interested in the kinds of abstract knowledge that her father is wedded to: 'No. You keep misreading me. Guilt and salvation are abstractions. I don't act in terms of abstractions. Until you make an effort to see that, I can't help you' (p. 112). While David contemplates his disgrace in abstract terms, Lucy remains 'immersed' in life (p. 134).

Spivak's account is important because it helps us make sense of how Coetzee uses literary forms to counter the narrative of David's salvation. Even so, her analysis overlooks the fact that Lucy's countervoice is inseparable from her advocacy for the lives of animals. In fact, Lucy wants to bring an end to the anthropocentric social relations in which animals must 'live under us':

> You think I ought to be painting still lives or teaching myself Russian. You don't approve of friends like Bev and Bill Shaw because they are not going to lead me to a higher life […] They are not going to lead me to a higher life, and the reason is that there is no higher life. This is the only life there is. Which we share with animals. That's the example that people like Bev try to set. That's the example I try to follow. To share some of our human privilege with the beasts. I don't want to come back in another existence as a dog or a pig and have to live as dogs or pigs live under us. (p. 74)

For Lucy, and this is stressed by Coetzee's pointed repetition, 'there is no higher life', only a life that is lived closer to the ground, a creaturely life that is lived in proximity – 'shared' – with dogs and pigs. But Lucy's deformation is by no means presented as a one-way process of regression in which she is dragged down to the status of animals. Rather, Lucy embraces there being 'no higher life' as part of a kind of postcolonial way of surviving during the shifting relations of 'privilege' in post-apartheid South Africa.

Lucy is acutely aware that, in apartheid's wake, a complex recalibration of social relations is underway, not just between white and black but between human and

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[58] Spivak, 'Ethics and Politics', pp. 22, 24.
[59] Clarkson, pp. 8, 193.

nonhuman. While the dogs on her smallholding farm – 'Dobermanns, German Shepherds, ridgebacks, bull terriers, Rottweilers' (p. 61) – were previously used as security machines for the functioning of the apartheid state as so-called 'racist dogs' trained to police black people and separate white from black, the dogs now lie alone in cages, unwanted and obsolete: '"Watchdogs, all of them", she says. "Working dogs, on short contracts: two weeks, one week, sometimes just a week-end"' (p. 61). As commodities, these 'animate tools of a former racist regime' no longer hold their previous exchange value, with short rentals overtaking purchases.[60] In witnessing this post-apartheid conjuncture, in which the complex coupling of white privilege and animal reification is slowly being disarticulated, Lucy reflects on how the state utilised animals for securing racial segregation: 'They [dogs] are part of the furniture, part of the alarm system. They do us the honour of treating us like gods, and we respond by treating them like things' (p. 78). In *With Dogs at the Edge of Life* (2016), Colin Dayan writes that 'dogs are captive in the yoke of care and cruelty that defines our status as humans. They are property and persons, both *res nullius*, or noone's thing, and valuable possession'.[61] *Disgrace* dramatises this unique relationship while also contesting it: Lucy's countervoice repeatedly asserts an affinity with animals that rejects these colonial and anthropocentric forms of power and personhood.

Writing in an early review of *Disgrace*, Jane Taylor describes how Coetzee 'considers the failure of a Western liberal tradition […] a culture which contradictorily holds as sacred the absolute rights of the individual and the absolute value of private property.'[62] This failure of liberalism is inextricable from its anthropocentric logics, which have historically determined that certain individuals have rights to own and control humans and nonhumans as property. Lucy's creatureliness is thus represented across the novel as a rejection of liberalism's deformed social relations. When David warns Lucy that she is humiliating herself by carrying the baby, she replies: 'Yes, I agree, it is humiliating. But perhaps that is a good point to start from again. Perhaps that is what I must learn to accept. To start at ground level. With nothing. Not with nothing but. With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity' (p. 205). In a word, Lucy rejects the liberal construction of personhood. In his book *Third Person* (2012), Roberto Esposito unpacks the vicissitudes of the concept of the 'person' as a *dispositif* (an apparatus, a mechanism) that has organised Western human subject-formation from Roman law to Christian theology to secular modernity. Personhood, Esposito writes, is an especially privileged form of subjectification, and 'is seen as the only semantic field

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[60] Donna J. Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), p. 37.

[61] Colin Dayan, *With Dogs at the Edge of Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), p. 16.

[62] Jane Taylor, 'The Impossibility of Ethical Action', *Mail & Guardian*, 23 July 1999, p. 25.

that can overlap the two spheres of law and humanity'.[63] The categorisation of personhood aims to pull the human subject upwards from a bare biology towards rights, duties, responsibilities, and citizenship. But what is so striking about this process, Esposito argues, is that these efforts to 'personalise' particular humans have been concomitant with a corresponding depersonalisation of others: gendering, racialisation, and animalisation. The person is elevated at the cost of others who are deemed inhuman or nonhuman – it is, in other words, an anthropological machine. Against this exclusionary *dispositif*, Esposito calls for a theorisation of the 'third person', an impersonal figure who might yet escape the binary between person and non-person. I want to suggest that Lucy might become the 'third person' of *Disgrace*. By opting to live closer to the ground, living in proximity with dogs, Lucy's negative formulations of rights confound David's abstract logic of personhood. While David ends the novel resolving to be 'A good person. Not a bad resolution to make, in dark times', Lucy jettisons personhood in favour of creatureliness: she chooses to be creaturely, 'like a dog' (p. 205), to stay on the farm and carry the child. Thus while Coetzee holds onto the concept of 'closer to the ground' across *Age of Iron* and *Disgrace*, developing this creaturely phrase as it is picked up and transferred from Curren to Lucy, it is in Lucy's counterfocalisation that creatureliness becomes directed towards a kind of narrative futurity that leaves behind the baggage of personhood and 'starts again'.

The Putting-to-Death of *Driepoot*: *Disgrace's* Creaturely Tensions

> Sunday has come again. He and Bev Shaw are engaged in one of their sessions of *Lösung*. One by one he brings in the cats, then the dogs: the old, the blind, the halt, the crippled, the maimed, but also the young, the sound – all those whose term has come. (p. 218)

The closing scene of *Disgrace* is deceptive. If we were to read only the critical literature on the novel's ending, but not the ending itself, we would most likely come away thinking that *Disgrace* ends with a scene of hesitant but caring euthanasia, a scene in which David puts down his closest canine companion, the three-legged dog, *Driepoot*. Many of Coetzee's critics have read *Disgrace's* final scene in this way. Derek Attridge, for example, explains that 'The novel ends on one of the killing Sundays [… David] Lurie brings in a dog of whom he has grown particularly fond and gives him up to the waiting needle.'[64] In turn, the kinds of questions that

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[63] Roberto Esposito, *Third Person: Politics of Life and Philosophy of the Impersonal*, trans. by Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), p. 3.

[64] Attridge, p. 190.

critics ask of the novel tend to focus on the consequences – be they textual, ethical, or political – of this final event of putting-to-sleep. Critics ask: should David's work at the clinic be read as a confirmation of his ethical transformation?[65] Or, would it be a fundamental miscalculation to interpret David's voluntary commitment to unwanted dogs as an 'attempt to counterbalance the sexual wrong' that initiates the novel's plot?[66] Is it possible to conceive of David's killing of animals as an ethical act of care, as a 'sacrificial gesture of care for another body'?[67] Or does the 'business of dog-killing' (p. 161) represent little more than a self-deluded continuation of David's domination, with dogs functioning as sacrificial and 'expendable props' for David's redemption narrative?[68]

But what if *Disgrace's* ending is not quite as it appears on first glance? What if critics have been reading *Disgrace* for its plot without sufficiently attending to Coetzee's use of form? Put more precisely, what if critics have taken *Disgrace's* ending to be synchronic with the novel's narrative temporality when it is, in actual fact, anachronic? In this section, I will re-read *Disgrace's* closing scene. In doing so, I contend that *Disgrace's* ending paradoxically commits to but also attempts to suspend its own decision to euthanise the dog, *Driepoot*. Under my reading, the novel's ending is not simply an attempt to resolve David's plot, as critics often argue. In fact, Coetzee's ending can be read as a formal navigation of the tightly-plotted novel form's internal anthropocentrism, that is, as an ending that is critical of literature's own discursive participation in the sacrifice of animality. I will show how *Disgrace* is compelled to end with David's sacrificial killing of *Driepoot*. But I argue that Coetzee, mindful of his novel's gravitation towards a sacrificial resolution, rearranges narrative time in order to trouble the potential anthropocentrism of literature. Coetzee looks to the narrative resources of tense in order create narrative tensions. In other words, I argue that Coetzee deforms *Disgrace's* novelistic temporality in order to leave open the possibility of a non-violent solution to the novel. This is an ending which acknowledges, but also refuses to simply follow, realism's demands of animal sacrifice. Put simply, Coetzee gives up *Disgrace* at the same time that David gives up the dog.

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Let us begin again. At the very beginning of the novel, David is engaged in what we might call the economy of exchange. Every week he drives to Green Point and

[65] Attwell, 'Race in Disgrace', *Interventions*, 4 (2002), 331–341 (p. 339).
[66] Attridge, p. 188.
[67] Lucy Graham, '"Yes, I am giving him up": Sacrificial Responsibility and Likeness with Dogs in J. M. Coetzee's Recent Fiction', *Scrutiny2*, 7 (2002), 4–15 (p. 9).
[68] Gareth Cornwell, 'An Image of Animals: Speciesism in Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *English Academy Review*, 25 (2008), 133–138 (p. 136).

visits a sex worker, where he exchanges four hundred South African Rand for a 'ninety-minute session' (p. 2). But come the end of the novel, David's world has changed. Now, his weekly routine involves visiting the Animal Welfare clinic, in which he engages in voluntary labour with unwanted dogs. 'One by one Bev touches them, speaks to them, comforts them, and puts them away, then stands back and watches while he seals up the remains in a black plastic shroud' (p. 219). David's new routine of animal euthanasia appears to signal a newfound attentiveness towards the other: 'He and Bev do not speak. He has learned by now, from her, to concentrate all his attention on the animal they are killing, giving it what he no longer has difficulty in calling by its proper name: love' (p. 219). In other words, David has been forced to swap the economy of exchange and desire for the economy of the gift and care. Informed by Bev's teachings in particular, David appears to cultivate what Attridge calls a 'dedication to singularity', caring for animals 'one by one' in their final moments of life.[69]

But as this passage continues, another kind of economy enters the picture: sacrifice. With the novel's final sentences, David brings in the three-legged dog – 'a young male with a withered left hindquarter which it drags behind it' (p. 215) – and lays him down on the table. Numerous critics have teased out how *Disgrace*, both in this scene and across the entire novel, reconfigures the Judeo-Christian motifs of sacrifice and scapegoating through the figure of the animal.[70] Lucy Graham writes that David's sacrifice of the three-legged dog can be interpreted as 'an alternative to Lurie's earlier sacrifice of Melanie Isaacs, this final *lösung* is a sacrificial gesture of care for another body.'[71] By sacrificing his favourite dog, the 'one he has come to feel a particular fondness for' (pp. 214–215), David ultimately accepts his disgrace and redeems himself. Margaret Herrick disputes this affirmative reading, arguing that David's 'work at the clinic is not primarily about caring for living creatures. It is about killing them'. Herrick continues that 'It is the dogs who are sacrificed here in the name of an abstraction, in the name of Lurie's own sense of himself, his own "idea of the world".'[72] This critical re-reading therefore implies that David's animal euthanasia participates in the 'sacrificial structure' of humanistic ethics. According to Jacques Derrida, this sacrificial structure reproduces an-

[69] Attridge, p. 188.

[70] See, for example: Adeline Rother, 'Say the Ram Survived: Altering the Binding of Isaac in Jacques Derrida's "Rams" and J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', in *Demenageries: Thinking (of) Animals after Derrida*, ed. by Anna Emmanuelle Berger and Marta Segarra (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2011), pp. 145–165; Sundhya Walther, 'Refusing to Speak: The Ethics of Animal Silence and Sacrifice in Coetzee and Derrida', *Journal for Critical Animal Studies*, 12 (2014), 76–97.

[71] Graham, p. 9.

[72] Margaret Herrick, 'The "Burnt Offering": Confession and Sacrifice in J. M. Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *Literature and Theology*, 30 (2016), 82–98 (pp. 89–90).

thropocentrism through the 'noncriminal putting to death' of animals.[73] I want to develop these arguments by concentrating on the politics of form. By analysing Coetzee's use of tense shifts and prolepsis, we can uncover how *Disgrace's* ending stages a formal contestation between the realist novel's sacrificial economy and Coetzee's own creaturely perspective.

To do this, let us first revisit how Coetzee ushers in a proleptic temporality of certitude which dictates the inevitability of *Driepoot's* death:

> [David] can save the young dog, if he wishes, for another week. But a time must come, it cannot be evaded, when he will have to bring him to Bev Shaw in her operating room (perhaps he will carry him in his arms, perhaps he will do that for him) and caress him and brush back the fur so that the needle can find the vein, and whisper to him and support him in the moment when, bewilderingly, his legs buckle; and then, when the soul is out, fold him up and pack him away in his bag, and the next day wheel the bag into the flames and see that it is burnt, burnt up. He will do all that for him when his time comes. It will be little enough, less than little: nothing. (pp. 219–220)

Coetzee is wrestling here with the apparent *inevitability* of *Driepoot's* death under the stunted and deformed social relations of anthropocentrism. To do so, he uses the proleptic tense to dramatise how even the future is predetermined: *Driepoot* 'will have to' die. Bruce Robbins reminds us that narrative prolepsis in the novel functions as a secularised and weak version of the epic's recourse to divine fate and justice. By jumping forwards in time and narrating future events, prolepsis instantiates a distribution of justice that 'throws attention onto the boundaries and uncertainties of the community of fate'.[74] In other words, prolepsis can resolve or complicate who is included in the community of fate. In *Disgrace*, *Driepoot* is not included in that community. Nor does Coetzee's anachronic ending open out onto the futurity of narrative possibility, onto those anticipated modal, temporal and even *political* dynamics that Mark Currie collects together under the names of 'narrative surprise' and 'the unforeseeable', such as Benjaminian messianic time and the Badiouian event.[75] Rather, Coetzee's deployment of the future tense formalises an experiment in which the outcomes are always already predetermined. Coetzee replaces the future conditionals *if* and *can* with the inescapability of *will* and *must*.

[73] Jacques Derrida, '"Eating Well," or the Calculation of the Subject', in *Points…: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. by Elisabeth Weber, trans. by Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 255–287 (p. 278).

[74] Bruce Robbins, 'Many Years Later: Prolepsis in Deep Time', *The Henry James Review*, 33 (2012), 191–204 (pp. 203, 199).

[75] Mark Currie, *The Unexpected: Narrative Temporality and the Philosophy of Surprise* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2013), p. 8.

Thus as *Disgrace* moves into its future, it presents a *telos* that is already mapped out to its conclusion: *Driepoot* can be saved for another week, but he cannot be saved altogether. By foreclosing the narrative's unforeseeability, all that Coetzee leaves open for *Driepoot* in this present-to-come is the parenthetical 'perhaps' of whether David will carry the dog in his arms. To such ends, David's only choice here becomes whether he will care for the animal *within* and *during* the scene of death. The conditions of hospitality under which the dog will die remain up to David to determine, even if they are 'less than little: nothing', but what overshadows this care-giving is the fact that the narrative *decision* has already been made: the dog *will* and *must* die.

Why must *Driepoot* die? One way of answering this question is to focus on what the novel's characters reveal about post-apartheid South African. Lucy explains to David that the state chronically underfunds animal welfare shelters: there 'is no funding any longer. On the list of the nation's priorities, animals come nowhere' (p. 73). Because there are simply 'too menny' unwanted dogs (p. 146), it would be overly sentimental to delay their deaths. Worse, how could David adopt only one of these dogs without adopting them all? But this reading is not watertight: Katy, Lucy's bulldog, ends the novel very much alive precisely because she has no longer been deemed 'unwanted' by her human companion. Another way of reading *Driepoot's* inevitable death, then, would be to speculate that it is necessary for the novel itself to come to an end. With *Driepoot's* death, *Disgrace* fulfils its apparent adherence to plot by neatly dramatising David's ostensibly selfless voluntary labour. In this sense, *Disgrace* symbolically rehabilitates the disgraced masculine subject back into the civilisation of humanity through the sacrifice of animals.

Disgrace's future tense ending therefore stands in juxtaposition to *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), the only other instance in which Coetzee's fiction ends by recourse to prolepsis. After escaping from an internment camp, Michael K daydreams about how he might travel back to the 'the farm, the grey thornbushes, the rocky soil'. He imagines what would happen if an 'old man' accompanied him on his journey: 'They could share a bed tonight [… A]t first light, they could go out searching the back streets for an abandoned barrow'. Gripped by this hypothetical scenario – indicated by Coetzee's reflexive and parenthetical aside '(things were gathering pace now)' – K projects the thought even further into the future: what if K and the old man did make their way towards the veld? And what if, in need of water, they found a pump that had been destroyed by the civil war? Mobilising the conditional tense, Coetzee grants K the possibility not just of imagining these problems but also of finding answers. Producing a teaspoon and a roll of string, K 'would clear the rubble from the mouth of the shaft, he would bend the handle of the teaspoon in a loop and tie the string to it, he would lower it down the shaft

deep into the earth, and when he brought it up there would be water in the bowl of the spoon; and in that way, he would say, one can live.'[76] In these final lines Coetzee imbues the novel with an immanent hope, even if we take it to be a minor and misplaced one. Yet *Disgrace* turns the spoon into a needle, turns life to death, using prolepsis to foreclose rather than open up narrative possibility.

As this brief excursion through *Michael K* demonstrates, Coetzee has long been interested in what he terms the 'analytic intensity' of narrative time.[77] From his stylistic criticism in essays such as 'Time, Tense and Aspect in Kafka's "The Burrow"' (1981) to his fiction's own adoption of the present simultaneous, Coetzee has – according to Irmtraud Huber – 'probably had the greatest influence on the contemporary popularity of present-tense narration'.[78] In *Disgrace*, Coetzee repeatedly draws attention to the narrative tense, and in doing so imagines tense as a political issue related to histories of domination. In the novel's very first sentence, David boasts about his weekly visits to Soraya, a sex worker: 'For a man of his age, fifty-two, divorced, he has, to his mind, solved the problem of sex rather well' (p. 1). What makes the novel's opening sentence 'so unusual, so perturbing', John Mullan writes, is the way in which Coetzee deploys the present perfect tense in order to represent David's relationship with sex as a 'solved […] problem'.[79] David's world, which is the focalised world of the novel that readers have access to, is presented in the novel's opening as being 'solved': 'His temperament is not going to change, he is too old for that. His temperament is fixed, set' (p. 2). But because *Disgrace* positions David as a leftover of apartheid social relations, a stubborn and untimely 'hangover from the past' (p. 40), Coetzee shifts the tense in order to initiate and plot David's disgrace. David's weekly visits to Soraya come to an abrupt end when their eyes meet in a public street: '*Then* one Saturday morning everything changes' (p. 6; my emphasis). Coetzee utilises the present tense in order to destabilise David's 'fixed and set' social position.

Coetzee's present tense narration grammatically formalises David's fall into disgrace. But even so, David himself spends much of the novel trying to hold onto the perfective tense as a bulwark against his own deformation. In one of David's lectures on Romantic poetry, he teaches his class about the 'unusual verb form *usurp upon*' found in Wordsworth's reflections on Mont Blanc: '*usurp upon* means to intrude or encroach upon. *Usurp*, to take over entirely, is the perfective of *usurp upon*; usurping completes the act of usurping upon' (p. 21). For David, the perfec-

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[76] Coetzee, *Michael K*, pp. 183–184.

[77] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p. 199.

[78] Irmtraud Huber, *Present Tense Narration in Contemporary Fiction* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), p. 45.

[79] John Mullan, *How Novels Work* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), p. 71.

tive tense unlocks how Wordsworth's real, embodied encounter with Mont Blanc eclipses his previously held romantic *idea* of Mont Blanc. 'We don't have Alps in this country,' David continues, 'but we have the Drakensberg, or on a smaller scale Table Mountain, which we climb in the wake of the poets, hoping for one of those revelatory, Wordsworthian moments' (p. 23). Although Melanie sits at the back of the room, David misses the irony of his own sexual intrusions and encroachments. The reader even gets the sense that David is subtly justifying his own usurpations, as if Melanie too were a mountain to be climbed 'in the wake of the poets'. On the next page, Coetzee echoes this when David throws himself at Melanie: 'He has given her no warning; she is too surprised to resist the intruder who thrust himself upon her' (p. 24). With these sentences, then, Coetzee alerts us to the colonial impulse of domination. For Nicole Shukin, Coetzee's association of the perfective with domination 'foregrounds and troubles the desire for perfectibility that underlies both white pastoral relationships to the land and European humanism.'[80] We can add to this the fact that perfectibility is inseparable from David's own domination of Melanie, which is itself tied to the 'long history of exploitation' (p. 53) in South Africa.

Disgrace therefore stages a tension between tenses, between the perfective's finality and the present tense's continual unfolding. Coetzee presents this tension as political and historical, as well as being linked to colonial desire. Later on in the novel, now with Lucy in the Eastern Cape, David further reflects on how 'Two weeks ago he was in a classroom explaining to the bored youth of the country the distinction between drink and drink up, burned and burnt. The perfective, signifying an action carried through to its conclusion. How far away it all seems! I live, I have lived, I lived' (p. 71). It seems, then, that the perfective's power is waning. Building on this, I want to argue that Coetzee weakens the perfective tense in order to disabuse the realist novel of its anthropocentric sacrificial economy. We can see David reach for the perfective again in the novel's final lines, when he imagines how he will 'fold [*Driepoot*] up and pack him away in his bag, and the next day wheel the bag into the flames and see that it is *burnt, burnt up*. He will do all that for him when his time comes' (p. 219; my emphasis). But while David is concerned here with carrying the action through to its conclusion, the novel ends in an indeterminate and suspended moment:

> [David] crosses the surgery. 'Was that the last?' asks Bev Shaw.
> 'One more.'

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[80] Nicole Shukin, 'Tense Animals: On Other Species of Pastoral Power', *CR*, 11 (2011), 143–167 (p. 163).

> He opens the cage door. 'Come,' he says, bends, opens his arms. The dog wags its crippled rear, sniffs his face, licks his cheeks, his lips, his ears. He does nothing to stop it. 'Come.'
>
> Bearing him in his arms like a lamb, he re-enters the surgery. 'I thought you would save him for another week,' says Bev Shaw. 'Are you giving him up?'
>
> 'Yes, I am giving him up.' (p. 220)

The novel's supposed resolution hinges on the death of the dog. But Coetzee switches to the present continuous tense, which cancels out the completion of this sacrificial economy. As such, David's closing speech act, delivered in the present continuous, does not complete the death of the dog, but rather designates the process of setting this death in motion. Because the present continuous never ends, *Driepoot's* death necessarily remains incomplete. *Driepoot* is becoming-killed. Only a handful of Coetzee's critics have noticed this temporal imperfectability. Mark Sanders writes that Coetzee leaves 'the aspect of the verb "to give up" undecided, its meaning suspended between an anticipatory affirmation and a statement about action that is under way [… T]he book's *ending* may not be an *end*.'[81] Chris Danta points out that '*Disgrace* ends by *anticipating* a reluctant scene of animal sacrifice'. 'If Coetzee's syntax allows the young dog to escape into the temporal wilderness beyond the edge of the novel, it nonetheless reminds us that he will be "burnt, burnt up" in the near, rather than the distant, future.'[82] And Tom Herron writes that '[e]verything at the end is tentative: balanced between what is determined and what is mutable.'[83] There is a fundamental grammatical ambiguity here that emphasises the non-completion of the event. *Driepoot* is being given up, but has not yet been given up.

My analysis develops these critical readings of *Disgrace's* ending by focusing on the question of writing animals. By refusing to simply 'give up' the dog, I contend that *Disgrace* attempts to cancel out the sacrificial anthropocentrism of its plot. Coetzee's recourse to anachronic time is thus *Disgrace's* final articulation of creaturely form, in which he deforms his novel through the figure of the dog. Here, Coetzee recognises that the economy of animal sacrifice animates *Disgrace's* plot. Because of this, he reorganises the narrative tenses so that *Driepoot's* sacrifice is infinitely deferred, and therefore not carried through to its completion in the perfective tense. This circumventing of nonhuman death through narrative tense not only leaves the question of David's so-called transformation ultimately unre-

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[81] Mark Sanders, 'Disgrace', *Interventions*, 4 (2002), 363–373 (p. 368). Sanders' emphasis.

[82] Chris Danta, '"Like a dog… like a lamb": Becoming Sacrificial Animal in Kafka and Coetzee', *New Literary History*, 38 (2007), 721–737 (pp. 733, 735). My emphasis.

[83] Tom Herron, 'The Dog Man: Becoming Animal in Coetzee's *Disgrace*', *Twentieth Century Literature*, 51 (2005), 467–490 (p. 480).

solved, but also dramatises a deep contradiction between the novel form and any ethical commitment towards nonhuman animals. For if *Disgrace*'s plot dictates that *Driepoot* must die so that the novel can decide on the question of David's transformation, then Coetzee writes an ending which refuses this decisionist logic. Prolepsis becomes a creaturely form for showing and telling the 'solution' to the novel as an anthropological machine without necessarily capitulating to that decision; it is a way of critically revealing David's continued sovereign function. To place *Driepoot's* death in the future is to both soberly acknowledge its facticity within an anthropocentric world of scarce resources while also leaving open the possibility of its non-completion. *Driepoot* thus becomes the figure of the novel's creaturely non-closure.

Literature and Animality in *Elizabeth Costello*

Where *Disgrace* ends with one dog, *Elizabeth Costello* ends with another. In the novel's final chapter, 'At the Gate', Coetzee constructs an elaborate but deliberately unconvincing literary set piece in which an ageing and prize-winning Australian novelist, Elizabeth Costello, struggles to negotiate her way through purgatory. Arriving at a simulacrum of an Austro-Italian border town, Costello pulls her suitcase across the cobbled streets and makes her way towards a gate: 'Excuse me. Can someone open the gate for me?', she asks the gatekeeper.[84] For the gate to be opened, the porter intimates, Costello must write and deliver a 'statement of belief' for a panel of judges. 'For each of us there is something we believe. Write it down, what you believe. Put it in a statement' (p. 194). But much to the dismay of the judges, Costello instead produces what we might call a statement of *disbelief*. 'I am a writer', she says. 'It is not my profession to believe, just to write' (p. 194). She identifies herself as a conduit for other voices, a 'secretary of the invisible' (p. 199), who 'cannot afford to believe': 'It is not for me to interrogate, to judge what is given to me. I merely write down the words and then test them, test their soundness, to make sure I have heard right' (pp. 201, 199). Costello is sent away. So she tries again. This time, she professes a passionate belief in the frogs of the Dulgannon River, who – she says – erupt into a 'chorus of joyous belling' when the drought-ending rains pour down every year: 'What do I believe? I believe in those little frogs. […] they exist whether or not I tell you about them, whether or not I believe in them […] It is because of their indifference to me that I believe in them' (p. 217). But again the judges are unmoved: 'Is childhood on the Dulgannon another of your stories, Mrs Costello? Along with the frogs and the rain from heaven?' Cos-

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[84] Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Vintage, 2004), p. 193. Further references to this edition will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

tello pleads: 'The river exists. The frogs exist. I exist. What more do you want?' (p. 218). The judges howl with laughter.

Reeling after her disastrous courthouse appearances, Costello implores the gate-keeper to divulge whether she stands any chance of passing through. His indifferent shrugs do little to ease her anxieties, and the chapter ends with Costello imagining a dog lying on the other side of the gate. The dog is similar to *Driepoot* in that it too is 'mangled'. But while *Driepoot* is in a sense *too real* for *Disgrace*, in that the figure of *Driepoot* provokes Coetzee's text into a formal dilemma in its closing pages, *Elizabeth Costello's* dog is, in contrast, too allegorical, too metaphorical and too clichéd. In a word, the dog is '*too literary*':

> She has a vision of the gate, the far side of the gate, the side she is denied. At the foot of the gate, blocking the way, lies stretched out a dog, an old dog, his lion-coloured hide scarred from innumerable manglings. His eyes are closed, he is resting, snoozing. Beyond him is nothing but a desert of sand and stone, to infinity. It is her first vision in a long while, and she does not trust it, does not trust in particular the anagram GOD-DOG. *Too literary*, she thinks again. A curse on literature! (pp. 224–225; Coetzee's emphasis)

In this section, I will argue that *Elizabeth Costello* is highly suspicious of literature, of language, and of fiction's representation of animals. When Costello scoffs at the clichéd figure of the GOD-DOG and puts a 'curse on literature', she crystallises one of the overarching thematic and formal concerns of the work as a whole. Namely, *Elizabeth Costello* constantly points out the failures of literature to embody the very animals it represents. This leads Coetzee away from the kinds of realism that he worked with in *Disgrace*, and towards a more metafictional aesthetics that focuses on literature's capacity to represent affinities between humans and other animals. But, curiously, while *Elizabeth Costello* is a more metafictional work than *Disgrace*, it is also a metafiction that ultimately calls for and desires a new kind of realism, a realism that both 'embodies' ideas and no longer revolves around the sacrifice of animal others. *Elizabeth Costello's* metafictional style therefore troubles the relationship between literature and nonhuman animals, while also holding out for a kind of literary form that is attentive towards the animal.

In recent years, much has been made of Coetzee's aesthetic shift towards a 'late style'. In this 'third stage' of Coetzee's career,[85] arguably demarcated by his emigration from South Africa to Australia in 2002,[86] Coetzee's texts begin to more

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[85] Attwell, *J. M. Coetzee and the Life of Writing*, pp. 233–234.

[86] Boehmer, 'J. M. Coetzee's Australian Realism', in *Strong Opinions: J. M. Coetzee and the Authority of Contemporary Fiction*, ed. by Chris Danta, Sue Kossew and Julian Murphet (New York:

overtly foreground their own fictionality, flag up their own inadequate rendering of the 'real', and explore ideas over plots. Julian Murphet, citing Theodor Adorno's and Edward Said's foundational formulations of late style, writes that Coetzee's later works are marked by recalcitrance, decay, and 'a steely authorial resolve not to charm via synthesis and integration.' Coetzee's late style enacts 'a progressive worrying away at the distinction between fiction and non-fiction, art and opinion, illusion and truth'. In doing so, he retreats 'from the very comforts of novelistic form. Novels against the novel.'[87] But among these interrogations of Coetzee's late style, critics have rarely considered how this stylistic shift occurs in the wake of his textual experiments with the writing of animality. After *Disgrace's* dead-end, *Elizabeth Costello* can be described as the work which inaugurates Coetzee's late style. It reflects on literature's failures, ambiguities, and paradoxes, laying the formal groundwork that Coetzee will develop in later novels.

Although published in 2003, *Elizabeth Costello's* origins stretch back to 1996, when Coetzee was invited to give the annual Ben Belitt lecture at Bennington College, Vermont. Rather than speaking earnestly as a postcolonial author navigating his positionality within South African literature and politics, as we saw him do a decade earlier in his Jerusalem Prize acceptance speech, Coetzee began experimenting with the idea of reading out fictional stories about an ageing Australian novelist. By developing the character of Elizabeth Costello, Coetzee abandoned the expectations of speaking directly to audiences 'as a person, as a personality', as he puts it in *Doubling the Point*, and instead read out short fictional narratives which themselves called into question the efficacy of public speaking. In doing so, Coetzee positions Costello as a 'compromise and a surrogate' for his own beliefs.[88] But Costello is also irreducible to Coetzee himself. For although she speaks in place of Coetzee, she does not speak for him.

By the time of *Elizabeth Costello's* eventual publication, seven of the book's nine chapters were already recited or published elsewhere. Perhaps for this reason, the novel's 'novelty' – both in its publication history and its formal construction – has been called into question.[89] Gareth Cornwell argues that *Elizabeth Costello* is only 'a kind of novel', an 'oddly hybrid text – patently a product of authorial entrepre-

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Continuum, 2011), pp. 3–18; Melinda Harvey, '"In Australia you start zero": The Escape from Place in J. M. Coetzee's Late Novels', in *Strong Opinions*, pp. 19–34 (p. 27).

[87] Julian Murphet, 'Coetzee and Late Style: Exile within the Form', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 57 (2011), 86–104 (pp. 88, 86).

[88] Attwell, 'The Life and Times of Elizabeth Costello: J. M. Coetzee and the Public Sphere', in *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, ed. by Jane Poyner (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006), pp. 25–41 (p. 33).

[89] Patrick Denman Flanery, '(Re-)Marking Coetzee and Costello: The [Textual] Lives of Animals', *English Studies in Africa*, 47 (2004), 61–84 (pp. 75, 61).

neurship rather than artistic design'.[90] And an anonymous Booker Prize judge reportedly described it as 'a deplorable book, a dishonest book'.[91] But I want to suggest that *Elizabeth Costello's* flimsy repackaging is an integral part of its aesthetic function as a book that deforms the novel. Sarah Brouillette has already laid the groundwork for this argument in her research on Coetzee's literary navigation of the politics of authorship, in which she argues that the book stands as a 'testament to the proliferating possibilities for subsidiary or auxiliary rights for what writers produce, made up largely of previously published pieces that were themselves often originally given as lectures'.[92] But rather than focusing on the literary marketplace as Brouillette does, I am particularly interested in how *Elizabeth Costello* abandons the narrative through-line of plot, as demonstrated in *Disgrace*, and adopts a metafictional register that not only deploys but also draws attention to the apparently exhausted conventions of storytelling. Coetzee initiates this thematic and formal preoccupation from the novel's opening sentences, in which he deconstructs the very form of an opening sentence:

> There is first of all the problem of the opening, namely, how to get us from where we are, which is, as yet, nowhere, to the far bank. It is a simple bridging problem, a problem of knocking together a bridge. People solve such problems every day. They solve them, and having solved them push on.
>
> Let us assume that, however it may have been done, it is done. Let us take it that the bridge is built and crossed, that we can put it out of our mind. […]
>
> Elizabeth Costello is a writer, born in 1928, which makes her sixty-six years old, going on sixty-seven. She has written nine novels, two books of poems, a book on bird life, and a body of journalism. By birth she is Australian. (p. 1)

Building a bridge between 'nowhere' and the 'far bank' is precisely what fiction does. But Coetzee's world-building metaphor expresses how arbitrary this process is. Coetzee invites us to participate in a metafictional game which defamiliarises the logics of what he calls 'moderate realism' (p. 4). Readers are asked to assume that this 'simple bridging problem' has already been successfully completed, and that we are therefore already within the verisimilitude of a fictional world. Coetzee consolidates this by deliberately constructing Costello as a weak and unconvincing character. Coetzee writes that 'the blue costume, the grey hair, are details,

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[90] Gareth Cornwell, 'J. M. Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello*, and the Inevitability of "Realism"', *Critique*, 52 (2011), 348–361 (pp. 348–349).

[91] D. J. Taylor, 'Prize Fights', *The Guardian*, 14 October 2003 <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2003/oct/14/bookerprize2003.thebookerprize> [Accessed 06/01/2017].

[92] Sarah Brouillette, *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2007), p. 136.

signs of a moderate realism. Supply the particulars, allow the significations to emerge of themselves' (p. 4). *Elizabeth Costello's* opening sentences therefore cheat their way into fictional believability, developing a postmodernist and auto-critical aesthetics in which the problem of the opening becomes the opening as such.

Elizabeth Costello is assembled out of a tangle of literary forms. In a review, David Lodge remarks that Coetzee 'mixes and transgresses generic conventions', developing a book which 'begins like a cross between a campus novel and a Platonic dialogue, segues into introspective memoir and fanciful musing, and ends with a Kafkaesque bad dream of the afterlife.'[93] In private correspondence with Coetzee via email, Wayne C. Booth states somewhat hyperbolically that Coetzee has 'invented a new form of novel.'[94] But, importantly, each of the forms that Coetzee draws on quickly come to a halt. Whether the short story form, metafiction and metanarrative, monologue and its attendant performative rhetorics, symposium, intertextual parody, or epistolary narrative, Coetzee cuts short each chapter and announces its failures. In lesson five ('The Humanities in Africa'), he persistently draws attention to his story's potential endpoints: 'That would be another good place to end the story', he writes. Two paragraphs later, he continues that 'As a story, a recital, it could end here […] But in fact it goes on a little longer' (p. 153). In lesson six ('The Problem of Evil'), Coetzee ends with Costello in a hotel, faced with a decision: does she retreat to her room, or sneak into the conference auditorium and listen to a lecture? But Coetzee writes: 'There ought to be a third alternative, some way of rounding off the morning and giving it shape and meaning'. While the story imagines the possibility of Costello 'bump[ing] into someone in the corridor', it ends with the confession that 'the corridor, it seems, is empty' (p. 182). This is a book which tells us that it is struggling to make sense of reality, that its language is insufficient, and that its stories are foreclosed.

Elizabeth Costello is suspicious of realism's claims to depict reality. In the book's opening lesson, Coetzee focalises the narrative through Costello's son, John, who she visits when invited to receive a literary prize. But a few pages into the chapter, the story's narrative voice becomes the author's voice, which asserts that:

> Realism has never been comfortable with ideas. It could not be otherwise: realism is premised on the idea that ideas have no autonomous existence, can exist only in things. So when it needs to debate ideas, as here, realism is driven to invent situations – walks in the countryside, conversations – in which character give voice to contending ideas and thereby in a certain sense em-

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[93] David Lodge, 'Disturbing the Peace', *New York Review of Books*, 20 November 2003, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2003/11/20/disturbing-the-peace/> [Accessed 09/01/2017].
[94] Quoted in Kannemeyer, p. 549.

body them. *The notion of embodying turns out to be pivotal. In such debates ideas do not and indeed cannot float free: they are tied to the speakers by whom they are enounced.* (p. 9; Coetzee's emphasis)

At one level, *Elizabeth Costello* laments realism's inability to communicate and debate ideas. When Costello herself delivers a lecture on realism, she announces to her audience that 'There used to be a time when we knew. We used to believe that when the text said, "On the table stood a glass of water," there was indeed a table, and a glass of water on it [...] But all that has ended. The word-mirror is broken, irreparably, it seems' (p. 19). For Costello, literature's 'reality effect' – as Roland Barthes would have it – has evaporated.[95] Literature has become deformed; 'The bottom has dropped out', as Costello puts it, as she imagines the room around her slipping away: 'About what is really going on in the lecture hall your guess is as good as mine: men and men, men and apes, apes and men, apes and apes. The lecture hall itself may be nothing but a zoo' (p. 19). Coetzee continues these reflections on realism in the rickety and '*excessively literary*' world of 'At the Gate': 'She cannot stand the literariness of it all'; 'Out of a book'; 'Purgatory of clichés'; 'a kind of literary theme park' (pp. 200, 204, 206, 208; Coetzee's emphasis). Costello even registers how her trial is little more than an unimaginative intertextual pastiche of Kafka's parable 'Before the Law' (1915): 'The wall, the gate, the sentry, straight out of Kafka [...] Kafka reduced and flattened to a parody' (p. 209). In postmodern terms, the real becomes pastiche.

But across the novel itself, what Costello calls 'the notion of *embodying*' becomes vital for salvaging literature's relationship to ideas and to animality. Throughout the novel's 'eight lessons', Coetzee dramatises scenes in which Costello 'curses' literature's clichéd figurations and interpretations of animals. She rallies against fables for abstracting animals and utilising them to 'stand for human qualities: the lion for courage, the owl for wisdom, and so forth' (p. 95); she mistrusts primitivist writing for its nostalgic and 'deeply masculine, masculinist' pursuit of an originary and authentic oneness with the natural world (p. 97); she cautions against one 'indignant reader' who has scribbled 'Anthropomorphism!' (p. 74) in the margins of a book by Wolfgang Köhler, the German psychologist whose primate research she similarly scolds for exploiting its simian test subjects in order to confirm 'practical, instrumental reason' (p. 73); and she further worries that 'when we divert the current of feeling that flows between ourself and the animal into words, we abstract it for ever from the animal' (p. 96). Coetzee intensifies these concerns in the novel's postscript, in which he re-writes Hugo von Hofmannsthal's high

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[95] Roland Barthes, *The Rustle of Language*, trans. by Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 142, 148.

modernist 'Chandos Letter' (1902) from the perspective of Lady Chandos.[96] By deliberately giving voice to Lady Chandos, Coetzee ends his novel by disputing the linguistic crisis, or *Sprachkrise*, that befalls the letter's original speaker: 'All is allegory, says my Philip. Each creature is key to all other creatures. A dog sitting in a patch of sun, licking itself, says he, is at one moment a dog and at next a vessel of revelation' (p. 229). Quilting Chandos and Costello together with the shared name Elizabeth C. (which also echoes *Age of Iron's* own Elizabeth C.), Coetzee gives us two voices who push back against the abstraction of creatures as 'vessels of revelation'. At the heart of this is Costello's feeling – encoding within the formal construction of the text itself – that language and representation are inadequate.

But while *Elizabeth Costello* is suspicious about how literature utilises animals as 'vessels of revelation', the novel also establishes and calls for different kinds of encounters with animality. First, Coetzee adopts a theological register that perceives of humans and animals as created beings with souls. 'To be alive is to be a living soul', Costello states. 'An animal – and we are all animals – is an embodied soul' (p. 78). Costello develops a form of post-secular attentiveness towards animals via the 'soul' that echoes the Christian concept of love, or 'caritas' (p. 154). This echoes similar ideas that Coetzee presents in *Disgrace*, in which animals are said to have souls which are 'yanked out of the body' in the moment of death (p. 219). Second, Coetzee turns to other kinds of literary forms that stage an affinity between humans and nonhumans. In Costello's lectures on poetry, for example, she calls for a kind of literature 'that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with' the animal (p. 96). Against this abstraction, Costello repeatedly invokes a form of attentiveness towards the animal's 'material embodiment' (p. 99), and she urges her audience to 'read the poets who return the living, electric being [of animality] to language' (p. 111). Costello therefore imagines how literature itself can become more creaturely in its methods of writing animals. And 'if the poets do not move you', she adds, 'I urge you to walk, flank to flank, beside the beast that is prodded down the chute to his executioner' (p. 111). If language tends towards abstraction, then only a language that has walked 'flank to flank' with the animal will do. Franz Kafka is, for Costello, one writer whose work follows the animal 'through to the end, to the bitter, unsayable end' (p. 32). In other words, Costello is reaching here for the kinds of literature that I am interrogating throughout this thesis, namely, kinds of literature that walk with and 'beside' the animal as it heads towards destruction, and that have generated, in turn, a 'record of an engagement' with animality.

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[96] For analysis of *Elizabeth Costello's* postscript, see: Reingard Nethersole, 'Reading in the In-Between: Pre-scripting the "Postscript" to *Elizabeth Costello*', *Journal of Literary Studies*, 21 (2005), 254–276.

Despite Costello calling for a kind of literature that would walk 'beside' the animal, the irony of *Elizabeth Costello* is that the novel itself does not appear to be a 'record of an engagement' with animality at all. In contradistinction to *Disgrace's* emphasis on plot and character, in which animals are designated as characters within the story, *Elizabeth Costello* shifts the emphasis from plot and character to the *question* of plot and the *question* of character. Thus while Coetzee uses *Elizabeth Costello* to caution against literary abstraction, he nevertheless does so within a text which relies on the abstraction of metafiction. *Elizabeth Costello's* metafiction self-consciously interrogates the uses of literature and literature's uses of animals. The corollary here is that the nonhuman animals of *Elizabeth Costello* are by and large spoken about, contemplated, and even vouched for, rather than lived with, as they are in *Disgrace*. Coetzee's late style therefore appears to exacerbate the vanishing of animals by merely speaking about them. And yet, Coetzee's apparent relegation of nonhuman animals to absent presences is, almost paradoxically, precisely where Coetzee develops with an attentiveness towards animality. By no longer including nonhumans as characters, Coetzee does not have to confront their sacrificial deaths for human development. By abandoning the plotted incorporation of animals, Coetzee stages different kinds of encounters between humans and animals. In doing so, *Elizabeth Costello* deforms literature's relationship with animality in order to become more attentive towards the nonhuman.

Despite the fact that 'At the Gate' ends with Costello conjuring and then dispelling the hackneyed image of the GOD-DOG, she also identifies with two images of nonhuman life that cannot be easily ignored: the Dulgannon frogs and the ram. As we have seen, Costello's belief in the frogs derives from their indifference to her, from the simple fact that they 'are'. Costello reminds the judging panel that the frogs are not mere allegories for Costello's life: 'the life cycle of the frog may sound allegorical, but to the frogs themselves it is no allegory, it is the thing itself, the only thing' (p. 217). While Costello accepts that her presentation is 'lamentably literary', she soon reflects that 'she remains, strangely, under the spell of the frogs'. Costello's image of these frogs has crystallised, and the frogs now stand as more 'alive' than even she originally predicted. When Costello 'gives the frogs a tap with her fingernail', a metaphorical sounding-out of their reality and vitality, 'the tone that comes back is clear, clear as a bell' (p. 222). The frogs prove real and lively enough for Costello, and perhaps for the novel's readers too. What Coetzee is negotiating here is, at one level, the question of writing animals itself. It is the question of how one can write about what is shared between human and nonhuman without collapsing animality into allegory. When Costello approximates herself to the frogs because they communicate 'the dissolution, the return to the elements', she is attempting to ascribe specificity to the frogs – their aestivation in the

dry-season – while at the same time foregrounding what she shares with them: 'what is earth, what is flesh' (p. 217).

Costello consolidates this approximation with the animal when she meditates on an episode from Homer's *Odyssey*. Shivers shoot down her spine when she recalls Tiresias instructing Odysseus to 'cut the throat of his favourite ram', 'let[ting] its blood flow into the furrow' (p. 211). This seems like a deliberate pastiche of *Disgrace's* conclusion: both Odysseus and David Lurie must sacrifice their 'favourite' animal in order to meet narrative demands. But Coetzee's narration, focalised through Costello, diverts attention away from the human decision and towards the haunting of the cut itself, as well as to the body of the dying ram as it oozes 'sticky, dark, almost black' blood: 'She believes, most unquestionably, in the ram, dragged by its master down to this terrible place. The ram is not just an idea, the ram is alive though right now it is dying […] treated in the end as a mere bag of blood' (p. 211). Costello does not want to use this story as a way of passing through the gate (she doubts that it would make for 'a good enough story for them, her hungry judges'). Instead, the ram's death reminds Costello of her own vulnerability: 'She could do the same, here and now: turn herself into a bag, cut her veins and let herself pour on to the pavement, into the gutter. For that, finally, is all it means to be alive: to be able to die' (p. 211). By allying Costello with the suffering animal, not the heroic figure of Odysseus, Coetzee centres a shared creatureliness over and above narrative sacrifice.

These two moments of nonhuman identification demonstrate that Costello herself becomes the central 'animal' of the text. While nonhuman animals are not made into characters, Coetzee's readers come to see Costello as a human animal, as someone whose animality is always on display. She considers herself as a 'creature of belief' (p. 222) who is just as 'unpleasantly heavy, unpleasantly corporeal' (p. 215) as other animals. She turns towards her own body's animality: 'For the moment, all she hears is the slow thud of blood in her ears, just as all she feels is the soft touch of the sun on her skin.' And she reflects on what it means to be a body:

> That at least she does not have to invent: this dumb, faithful body that has accompanied her every step of the way, this gentle lumbering monster that has been given to her to look after, this shadow turned to flesh that stands on two feet like a bear and laves itself continually from the inside with blood. Not only is she *in* this body, this thing which not in a thousand years could she have dreamed up, so far beyond her powers would it be, she somehow *is* this body (p. 210; Coetzee's emphasis).

Coetzee develops this theme across the entire novel, and in doing so concentrates on how the relations between humans and animals have been damaged across

modernity. In 'The Novel in Africa', for instance, Costello has been invited to appear as a guest-speaker on a cruise-ship circling the Antarctic. Costello concedes that her motivations are the promise of an A-class berth and a substantial pay cheque. But she also wants to 'feel what it is like to be a living, breathing creature in spaces of inhuman cold' (p. 35). Coetzee thematises Costello's creaturely body when she embarks on a short excursion to Macquarie Island in the Southern Ocean. After Costello is helped ashore, 'as if she were an old old woman', she 'suddenly, unexpectedly' encounters an albatross and its chick: 'She recognises the long, dipping beak, the huge sternum' (p. 55–56). The albatross 'regards her steadily' and its fledging 'gives a long, soundless cry of warning'. In this moment of encounter, 'she and the two birds remain, inspecting each other' until the bird 'los[es] interest'. It is important to keep in mind here that Costello is an author, presumably well versed in the rich history of literary symbolism associated with albatrosses from Coleridge to Baudelaire and beyond. This passage is important, then, because Coetzee focuses on the particularity of a cross-species encounter. The albatross is not an abstracted metaphor to be hung around Costello's neck. It becomes a living bird with its own autonomy, warily scrutinising her before losing interest. 'An albatross', she says to a Russian woman also visiting the island. 'That is the English word. I don't know what they call themselves'. Again, Coetzee emphasises the gap between language and its object, but this time in a way which assigns a specificity to the albatross. While on Macquarie Island, Costello also meditates on the commercial exploitation of nature which began apace from 1810 onwards. 'She has read about Macquarie Island. In the nineteenth century it was the hub of the penguin industry. Hundreds of thousands of penguins were clubbed to death here and flung into cast-iron steam boilers to be broken down into useful oils and useless residue' (p. 55). Costello describes how colonial expansion destabilises ecologies at the corners of the globe, adopting a linguistic register reminiscent of Sebald's narrators and their natural-historical perspective on modernity's obliteration of nonhuman nature. Coetzee therefore presents Costello's human body as an animal body, as 'embodied' in the world. She shares a 'flesh' with the Dulgannon frogs, the ram and the albatrosses, even if these animals remain different and indifferent to her. By doing this, *Elizabeth Costello* wants to do with away with literature's abstraction and narrative sacrifice of animal bodies.

But, crucially, the novel appears to achieve this only by displacing the logic of sacrifice onto Costello herself. In each and every lesson, Coetzee metaphorically sacrifices Costello. Each lesson stages a different kind of trial in which Costello is further alienated from the human species, and is sacrificed in the place of the nonhuman animals she advocates for. Costello thus becomes the text's sacrificial animal, or beast of burden, who merely fulfils a role in the text's self-conscious questioning of fiction. There is, to be sure, something troubling about the ways in

which Coetzee utilises a female protagonist in order to repeatedly push up against anthropocentrism, just as there is in the novel's insistence that Costello is living on the verge of death. Although sometimes claimed by Costello herself, her age is routinely remarked upon by her son, by others, and by the book's third-person narrator. She is characterised as 'old and tired', 'looking her age' and 'a little frail' (pp. 2–3). Her hair has turned from black to grey, and her skin has 'grown flabby' (p. 59); she emerges throughout the text as a 'fleshy, white-haired lady' (p. 60) with 'old flesh' (p. 115). Costello puts it directly: 'I am an old woman'; 'I am beyond time's envious grasp' (pp. 62, 20). This unease is compounded by the fact that Coetzee – the author, 'as person, as a personality' – might be said to hide behind Costello in his public readings. Even so, when Coetzee's public readings become an entire work of literature, as in the publication of *Elizabeth Costello*, the attention shifts towards small but significant creaturely encounters in which Costello embraces her own animality. This is of course done so under the signs of vulnerability and even death, but her animality goes some way to combating the abstraction and sacrifice of animals across literary forms and, indeed, across the institutions of modernity.

Conclusions: Elizabeth Costello, Vegetarian Killjoy

In 1997, Coetzee was invited to give the Tanner Lectures on Human Values at Princeton University. But rather than meeting the generic and thematic expectations of the Lectures themselves, Coetzee chose to present two works of fiction that diverted from the lecture format and, in doing so, challenged the entire enterprise of 'human values'. Republished as *The Lives of Animals* in 1999, with footnotes and reflections from Marjorie Garber, Peter Singer, Wendy Doniger and Barbara Smuts, and then incorporated (without footnotes and reflections) into *Elizabeth Costello* four years later, 'The Lives of Animals' tells the story of Costello's visit to Appleton College, and her various attempts to vocalise commitments to and appeals on behalf of absent nonhuman animals. Like Coetzee, Costello is also anticipated to speak 'about herself and her fiction, as her sponsors would no doubt like' (p. 60). But in her lecture and seminar, titled respectively 'The Philosophers and the Animals' and 'The Poets and the Animals', she – and, by extension, Coetzee too – stresses the urgency of reconsidering our responsibilities to nonhumans and of questioning anthropocentrism. Coetzee's Tanner Lectures therefore interrogate human values through metafiction.[97] As such, Costello's fictional lec-

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[97] Coetzee delivered his lectures one year after Dorothy L. Cheney's and Robert M. Seyfarth's Tanner series, *Why Animals Don't have Language*. Against Cheney and Seyfarth's strict biological arguments, Costello suggest that 'animals have only their silence left with which to confront us' (p. 70). See: Dorothy L. Cheney, and Robert M. Seyfarth, 'Why Animals Don't Have Lan-

tures draw attention to the ways in which these 'human values' are grounded on the systematic industrial slaughter and ingestion of nonhuman animals. But her rhetorical performances are so sharp, and her demands are so uncompromising, that any hospitality shared between her and her audience completely breaks down. By allying herself so strongly with animals, especially those animals that her audiences regularly consume, Costello finds herself alienated from both her hosts and her own family. In an attempt to persuade others to join her in the fight against the accelerating 'meatification' of life in the late twentieth century, Costello ends up generating bad affects: 'acrimony, hostility, bitterness' (p. 112).[98]

In this concluding section I want to explore how Coetzee stages this 'acrimony, hostility, [and] bitterness' through Costello's invectives against what she calls anthropocentrism's 'war […] against animals.' Echoing Derrida's comments on the war against animals that I introduced at the beginning of this thesis, Costello thinks of animals as 'prisoners of war' (p. 104) who are sacrificed in the march of progress. Like Derrida, Costello rails against the 'profoundly anthropocentric' kind of 'scientific experimentation that leads you to conclude that animals are imbeciles' (p. 108). She pushes back against the 'industrialisation of animal lives and the commodification of animal flesh' (p. 107). And she uses each of her public engagements to foreground 'what is being done to animals at this moment in production facilities […], in abattoirs, in trawlers, in laboratories, all over the world' (p. 63).

A wealth of critical discussion has already been devoted to exploring 'The Lives of Animals' as performed lecture-narratives which critique anthropocentric philosophical discourses (as in the Tanner Lectures), as metafictional critiques to be read as fiction, not lectures (*The Lives of Animals*), and as integrated chapters in a wider novel that develop Costello's characterisation (*Elizabeth Costello*). According to Robert McKay, Coetzee's attention to the 'competing claims of human community and justice to animals' marks 'The Lives of Animals' out as 'the most profound attempt in contemporary writing to answer the challenge of animal ethics'.[99] Caught between these competing claims, Costello tells us that she is a creature, somehow 'less than fully human', a 'branded, marked, wounded animal […] I am not a philosopher of mind but an animal exhibiting, yet not exhibiting, a wound, which I cover up under my clothes but touch on in every word I speak' (pp. 70–71). Costello's body thus becomes the site of argumentation itself, offering its own

guage' (1997), p. 176 <http://tannerlectures.utah.edu/_documents/a-to-z/c/Cheney98.pdf> [Accessed 08/02/2017].

[98] On the 'meatification' of modernity, see: Tony Weis, 'Towards 120 Billion: Dietary Change and Animal Lives', *Radical Philosophy*, 199 (2016), 8–13 (p. 8).

[99] Robert McKay, 'Metafiction, Vegetarianism, and the Literary Performance of Animal Ethics in J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*', *Safundi*, 11 (2010), 67–85 (pp. 74, 67).

articulation of creaturely suffering. Stephen Mulhall and Cora Diamond both demonstrate how Costello's woundedness strengthens her creaturely affinities with the animal.[100] But her woundedness simultaneously isolates her from the very humans she is appealing to, and she ends up creating antagonisms between her and her audience. In other words, Costello's vegetarianism not only deforms her (it wounds her), but also deforms her relationship with other humans. Because of this, I will argue that Costello functions as a vegetarian killjoy: her arguments for vegetarianism trouble the cultural dominance of meat-eating, but by articulating these arguments she too gets into trouble. This creaturely trouble – of troubling anthropocentrism, but encountering new forms of trouble in the process – is ultimately where Coetzee leaves us, both in 'The Lives of Animals' and in his wider experiments with the lives of animals.

Recently, Sara Ahmed's writing on the figure of the feminist killjoy has become key for envisioning ongoing feminist struggles against normative epistemologies and institutions. Developed across Ahmed's writing since 2010, the feminist killjoy is imagined as someone who punctures the putatively happy façades of communities that perpetuate sexism. Ahmed introduces her figure of the feminist killjoy with the story of a family table, a table at which 'the family gathers having polite conversations, where only certain things can be brought up'. Ahmed illustrates how even a surreptitious eye-roll at sexist comments can result in the eye-roller, not the sexist, being ostracised from the table: 'To be willing to go against a social order, which is protected as a moral order, a happiness order, is to be willing to cause unhappiness, even if unhappiness is not your cause', Ahmed writes. 'A killjoy: the one who gets in the way of other people's happiness.' 'In speaking up or speaking out, you upset the situation. That you have described what was said by another person as a problem means you have created a problem. You become the problem you create.'[101] For Ahmed, feminist killjoys are therefore 'willful subjects' [*sic*], subjects who actively assert their own will against the dominant community, and in doing so risk becoming 'affect aliens': 'to be unwilling to participate is not only assumed to kill the joy of participation but it is read as motivated by the desire to kill joy'.[102] In her most recent work, *Living a Feminist Life* (2017), Ahmed further describes the killjoy as 'the one who puts others off their food. […] Another dinner ruined. So many dinners ruined.'[103]

[100] Mulhall, p. 54; Diamond, p. 46.

[101] Sara Ahmed, 'Feminist Killjoys (And Other Willful Subjects)', *S&F Online*, 8 (2010) <http://sfonline.barnard.edu/polyphonic/ahmed_01.htm> [Accessed 12/07/2017].

[102] Ahmed, *Willful Subjects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 160.

[103] Ahmed, *Living A Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), p. 39.

Elizabeth Costello constantly ruins dinners. Whether in a restaurant or at a family home, one of Costello's major roles is to put others off their food. But Costello does not do so out of an explicitly feminist response to patriarchal norms, even if we might argue that her stance is largely consonant with ecofeminist tenets.[104] For her, it has more to do with what is on the table itself. Costello is not so much a feminist killjoy as a vegetarian killjoy, a character whose invectives against meat-eating get her into trouble. Those who know Costello are acutely aware of her capacity to ruin dinners. Norma, Costello's daughter-in-law, is sceptical of Costello's vegetarianism, and reveals to her husband John (Costello's son) that 'I have no patience when she arrives here and begins trying to get people, particularly the children, to change their eating habits. And now these absurd public lectures! She is trying to extend her inhibiting power over the whole community!' (p. 113). When Costello and John arrive for the celebratory meal with the university faculty at Appleton College, John already anticipates the 'damage' that Costello might cause:

> What he dreads is that during a lull in conversation someone will come up with what he calls The Question – 'What led you, Mrs Costello, to become a vegetarian?' – and that she will then get on her high horse and produce what he and Norma call the Plutarch Response. After that it will be up to him and him alone to repair the damage.
>
> The response in question comes from Plutarch's moral essay. His mother has it by heart; he can reproduce it only imperfectly. 'You ask me why I refuse to eat flesh. I, for my part, am astonished that you do not find it nasty to chew hacked flesh and swallow the juices of death wounds.' Plutarch is a real conversation-stopper: it is the word *juices* that does it. Producing Plutarch is like throwing down a gauntlet; after that, there is no knowing what will happen. (p. 83; Coetzee's emphasis)

I quote this passage in full not just because of its visceral imagery, but because it exemplifies just how far Costello's vegetarianism has gotten under her son's skin. As described here, Costello's challenge to what has been called the 'omnivorously normative happiness order' is that she restores to the dinner table the presence of animals.[105] By reminding meat-eaters of precisely *what* they are eating, *where* it has come from, and *how* it was slaughtered, Costello offers another critique of abstraction and its vanishing-away of animal life. This is especially important because, as Carol J. Adams contends in *The Sexual Politics of Meat* (1990), one of the key ways

[104] See: Laura Wright, 'A Feminist-Vegetarian Defense of Elizabeth Costello: A Rant from an Ethical Academic on J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*', in *J. M. Coetzee and the Idea of the Public Intellectual*, pp. 193–216.

[105] Richard Twine, 'Vegan Killjoys at the Table: Contesting Happiness and Negotiating Relationships with Food Practices', *Societies*, 4 (2014), 623–639 (p. 626).

in which factory farming damages the social relations between humans and animals is by rendering animals into 'absent referents'. The production and commodification of meat involves the fabrication of a distance between the dead animal and the meat it is sold as, which thereby creates an abyss between consumers and the animals whose flesh they ingest.[106] Adams' term 'absent referent' thus names a chain of signification in which living animals are literally killed but symbolically reproduced as pieces of meat, moving from pig to pork. As a vegetarian killjoy, Costello's provocations interrupt this semiotic system by identifying meat as animal flesh.

As John's comments indicate, Costello gets into trouble because of her commitment to animals. Come the end of her visit to Appleton, Costello finds herself rendered completely speechless by how alienated she is from her meat-eating friends and family. As John drives his mother to the airport, he abruptly stops when Costello starts sobbing: 'I no longer know where I am', Costello says. 'I seem to move around perfectly easily among people, to have perfectly normal relations with them. Is it possible, I ask myself, that all of them are participating in a crime of stupefying proportions?' 'I look into your eyes, into Norma's, into the children's, and I see only kindness, human kindness. Calm down, I tell myself, you are making a mountain out of a molehill. This is life.' (pp. 114–115). Echoing the moment in *Disgrace* in which David 'has to stop at the roadside to recover himself', in which tears 'flow down his face that he cannot stop; his hands shake. He does not understand what is happening to him' (p. 143), Coetzee attends to the contradictions between human hospitality and nonhuman suffering. By recognising the dizzying scale of animal suffering, both David Lurie and Elizabeth Costello are differently 'overwhelmed' – to recall Coetzee's remarks on animal suffering from earlier – by the ongoing and institutionalised violence directed against animals. And Costello has trouble reconciling this alongside the fact that her family continues to participate in and consent to industrial animal agriculture.

Costello also finds herself alienated because she uses her lectures to make uncompromising associations between the Holocaust and industrialised animal slaughter. Costello states that, for daily life in the west to continue, 'We need factories of death; we need factory animals. Chicago showed us the way; it was from the Chicago stockyards that the Nazis learned how to process bodies' (p. 97). Put directly: 'Each day a fresh holocaust' (p. 80). While Costello asks her audience to pardon the 'tastelessness' of her rhetoric (p. 66), her continued references to the Holocaust lead one of the university's staff members, the poet Abraham Stern, to refuse to break bread with her at the post-lecture meal. In a private letter, Stern accuses her

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[106] Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*, Twentieth anniversary edn. (New York: Continuum, 2010), pp. 13, 66–71.

of wilfully misunderstanding the uses of similes and 'the nature of likenesses': 'The Jews died like cattle, therefore the cattle die like Jews, you say. That is a trick with words which I will not accept. You misunderstand the nature of likenesses […] The inversion insults the memory of the dead' (p. 94). In its first oral iteration in Coetzee's Tanner Lecture, Stern's indignation functions as a way for Coetzee's text to pre-empt any offense that it might cause. Much like Coetzee's creation of the character of Costello herself, then, Coetzee might be said to incorporate Stern's letter as a means to guard against the charge of uncritically formulating a dreaded comparison between industrialised agriculture and the Holocaust. But once re-produced as a letter in *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello*, Stern's criticism becomes an opportunity for readers to reflect on the specificity of Costello's language, and of the specific kinds of trouble that it creates. For Stern, the Holocaust can never be 'like' anything else. Thus, under his logic, Costello insults the memory of the dead.

But a careful reading of Costello's position suggests that she is not speaking of likenesses, nor of 'therefores'. In words which echo Derrida's arguments about animal genocide, Costello arrives at the even sharper provocation that industrial animal agriculture is not 'like' the Holocaust, but technically surpasses it: 'Let me say it openly: we are surrounded by an enterprise of degradation, cruelty, and killing which rivals anything the Third Reich was capable of, indeed dwarfs it, in that ours is an enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them' (p. 65). Readers might be suspicious here of Coetzee's own authorial responsibility. While Costello approaches this comparison head-on, Coetzee uses Costello in order to only indirectly approach the comparison himself. In other words, just like Sebald's use of non-indexical images in *The Rings of Saturn*, Coetzee uses Costello in order to offer a more indirect articulation of the historical relation between industrial animal production and the Holocaust, however direct Costello's own comments remain. But in doing so, Coetzee and Sebald both tempt the charge of flattening-out different kinds of suffering, while also potentially excusing themselves from their authorial decision to approach this comparison in the first place. In the scholarship on *The Lives of Animals*, there have been some attempts to recuperate Costello's comments. Craig Smith, for example, argues that Coetzee's use of the Holocaust comparison exposes and troubles the 'hierarchy of suffering that accompanies (the rejection of) Holocaust comparisons'.[107] For me, though, Costello's comments testify more to the poverty of comparative thinking when it comes to comprehending the scale of the war against animals. Her comparison is, in a sense, reaching for the kinds of horrifying imagery that would be immediately comprehensible to the

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[107] Craig Smith, 'Blasphemous Likenesses: J. M. Coetzee's *The Lives of Animals*, America, and the Holocaust', *Safundi*, 12 (2011), 47–68 (p. 52).

humanist audience in front of her. But by doing so, *Elizabeth Costello* as a text ultimately reveals the paucity of language to grasp the scale of animal suffering.

Costello's vegetarianism is rendered more complex by her refusal to accept any sort of purity or virtuousness. Although John and Norma characterise her vegetarianism as a 'power game' (p. 114) in which she climbs on her 'high horse' (p. 83), Costello finds no consolation from animal suffering by adopting a vegetarian diet and ethos. At the official dinner, for example, when the university's president asks whether her vegetarianism comes out of a moral conviction, she troubles her own stance by claiming that 'No I don't think so […] It comes out of a desire to save my soul.' The narrative voice notes the silence after Costello's remark, 'broken only by the clink of plates'. When the president replies that he has great respect for her 'way of life', she pushes even further: 'I'm wearing leathers shoes […] I'm carrying a leather purse. I wouldn't have overmuch respect if I were you.' Costello presents her vegetarianism as fundamentally compromised and minimal. There is no pure position for Costello, only 'degrees of obscenity' (p. 89). Coetzee's texts have been shown to regularly 'prefer a position they deliberately devalue'.[108] And here Coetzee depicts Costello as fundamentally uncertain about her own efficacy. She implies that merely substituting tofu for beef – eschewing rather than chewing meat – is insufficient for overcoming the power of anthropocentrism. In this sense Costello helps us make sense of how the literal and symbolic ingestion of animal flesh (what Derrida calls 'carno-phallogocentrism') cannot be simply solved by not eating meat.[109] As Derrida argues, meat-eaters and vegetarians participate in the symbolic structural sacrifice of animals: 'We are all – vegetarians as well – carnivores in the symbolic sense.'[110] 'Vegetarians, too, partake of animals, even of men. They practice a different mode of denegation'.[111]

By troubling and devaluing her own vegetarianism, Costello's self-critique turns away from one aspect of carno-phallogocentrism, namely the anthropocentrism of philosophical argumentation. At the end of the celebratory meal, Costello rebukes philosophy's recourse to the adverb 'therefore'. Because animals are perceived to possess 'no consciousness that we would recognise as consciousness', philosophy inserts a 'therefore': 'They have no consciousness *therefore*. Therefore what? Therefore we are free to use them for our own ends?' (p. 90). For Costello, 'therefore' metonymically reveals all that is wrong with philosophical approaches to animals. Such approaches, Costello argues, are just one constituent part of 'the great West-

[108] Janes, p. 111.
[109] Derrida, 'Eating Well', p. 280.
[110] Derrida quoted in Daniel Birnbaum and Anders Olsson, 'An Interview Jacques Derrida on the Limits of Digestion', *e-flux journal*, 2 (2009) <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/02/68495/an-interview-with-jacques-derrida-on-the-limits-of-digestion/> [Accessed 03/06/2018].
[111] Derrida, 'Eating Well', p. 282.

ing against reason while remaining bound within it'.[114] Cora Diamond fore-grounds Costello's wounded animality: 'Coetzee's lectures [... present] a kind of woundedness or hauntedness, a terrible rawness of nerves. What wounds this woman, what haunts her mind, is what we do to animals.'[115] And Anat Pick develops Diamond's concern with vulnerability: 'The question of animals here is no longer properly philosophical at all. It has become a wound [...] a physical rather than an intellectual problem.'[116] Thus when Costello's son John remarks that his mother's lecture is 'ill-gauged, ill-argued. Not her *métier*, argumentation. She should not be here' (p. 80), he misjudges the power of her wounded performance. Costello's embodied response to suffering is not a failure of argument, but rather a deliberate repudiation of philosophy's sacrificial logics and suspended commitments. As Laura Wright puts it, Costello is 'a creature who both speaks about and enacts her ethics.'[117] Thus although Costello's embodied pleas and killjoy performances do not solve the questions of animal ethics, they are still powerful in that they make the questions of animal ethics visible. At one level, her recourse to the sympathetic imagination presents a kind of sentimental liberalism that strives for a transformative sense of empathy with the other. For Costello, it seems, humanity's capacity for sympathetic imagination allows it to momentarily inhabit the body of another, whether human or animal. But Costello is equally suspicious of literature's role in building or cultivating this sympathetic imagination, urging her audience to prioritise walking 'flank to flank' with exploited animals. In other words, if poetic language is not enough to disrupt philosophy's privileging of *logos*, and if literature's empathetic capacities are insufficient, then one must momentarily abandon language and reading and place oneself in physical proximity with those about to die. When Costello compels her audience to 'listen to your hearts', I do not take it that she is articulating a sentimental plea. She is also, I think, being literal: listen to the 'slow thud' of blood (p. 210) pumping around your body.

In this chapter I have sought to re-approach Coetzee's animal turn through the concept of the creaturely. I have formulated how his aesthetic journey from *Disgrace* to *Elizabeth Costello*, and towards what has been called a late style, demonstrates how Coetzee continually reshapes the novel form in order to interrogate literature's relationship with animality. I have argued that his texts do not pretend that simply undermining or destabilising anthropocentrism will necessarily result in new social relations or new literary forms. Rather, in *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee consistently dramatises the intractability and uncertainty of the posi-

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[114] Graham Huggan, *Interdisciplinary Measures: Literature and the Future of Postcolonial Studies* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 72.

[115] Diamond, p. 47.

[116] Anat Pick, *Creaturely Poetics: Animality and Vulnerability in Literature and Film* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), p. 9.

[117] Wright, 'A Feminist-Vegetarian Defense', p. 199.

tions his texts and characters take. In *Disgrace*, he uses counterfocalisation in order to portray Lucy's creaturely embrace of animal life. Coetzee also demonstrates how realism engenders textual sacrifices – harassment, rape, assault, and the euthanasia of dogs – which motivate the plot towards its redemptive closure. I have suggested that *Disgrace* prompts us to ask: what would a novel without sacrifice look like? Or, how could novels think sacrifice differently?

Elizabeth Costello is an answer to these questions, albeit an answer which ultimately generates its own problems. Coetzee turns towards metafiction in the hope of finding a form that is not as tainted by anthropocentrism as the dull realism of *Disgrace*, a form that would not need to end with the sacrifice of the animal. But while *Elizabeth Costello* has been characterised as 'a novel of pure ideas' and a 'novel of thinking',[118] and while the novel's metafictional signposts appear to puncture the steady flow of realism, I want to suggest that Coetzee finds – in writing *Elizabeth Costello* – that realism's imaginative capacity for embodiment is, as he says, 'pivotal' (p. 9). For although Coetzee repeatedly draws attention to the broken 'word-mirror' of realism, he also cannot accept the abstracted debating of ideas found in philosophical discourses. The novel's return to embodiment ultimately affirms the power of fiction to register that feeling of 'being-overwhelmed' that Coetzee described in *Doubling the Point*.[119] This is why Gareth Cornwell writes that despite *Elizabeth Costello's* constant interrogations of realism, the novel ends up realising 'the inevitability of realism'.[120] But *Elizabeth Costello* is not 'realist' in the same way that *Disgrace* is. *Elizabeth Costello* self-consciously tests out realism's potential for accommodating animals not through a single plotted journey, but through Costello's embodied encounters with animality. *Elizabeth Costello* deforms the novel so as to engage with fiction's ability to encounter animal life. But these encounters never present easy solutions to animal suffering, and they generate an aesthetics of failure that is produced by and testifies to the overwhelming scale of animal suffering: 'A way out?', Costello remarks. 'It's not for me to offer you a way out' (p. 50). Coetzee's creaturely form cannot propose an easy route out of anthropocentrism, but it nevertheless inclines towards resistance: 'I don't know what I want to do', Costello says. 'I just don't want to sit silent' (p. 104).

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[118] Herron, p. 470; Martin Puchner, 'J. M. Coetzee's Novels of Thinking', *Raritan Review*, 30 (2011), 1–12 (p. 5). See also: Flanery, p. 75.

[119] Coetzee, *Doubling*, p. 248.

[120] Cornwell, 'The Inevitability of "Realism"', p. 359.

Chapter Three—Mahasweta Devi's Double Task: Creaturely Commitments in *Imaginary Maps* and Beyond

Introduction: Mahasweta Devi's 'Double Task'

In the closing pages of Mahasweta Devi's 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' (1989; henceforth, 'Pterodactyl'), a drought-stricken adivasi community immerse themselves in a cleansing oil bath, the first of many rites they will perform in order to leave behind a long period of collective mourning.[1] Mahasweta's readers witness this scene through the eyes of the story's protagonist and primary focaliser, Puran Sahay, a well-meaning but naïve journalist.[2] Puran is bathed by a taciturn adivasi child, Bikhia, whose reported sightings and wall engravings of a mysterious winged creature – the story's eponymous pterosaur – had attracted Puran to Bikhia's remote and immiserated village at the text's beginning. Arriving in Pirtha with his camera and notepad, eager to document and report on Bikhia's en-

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[1] Adivasi, which translates as 'earliest resident' or 'first inhabitant', is a collective noun and functioning political identity, first coined by activists in the early twentieth century in order to express their claim to being the indigenous people of India. Although Mahasweta herself tends to use the word 'tribal' rather than adivasi, I follow the work of David Hardiman, Ajay Skaria and others by only invoking 'Tribe' as a purely politico-administrative category, or when quoting Mahasweta herself. I follow all of these researchers by not italicising adivasi. For foundational research on these concepts and their genealogies, see: David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasi Assertion in Western India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1995), pp. 15–16; and Ajay Skaria, *Hybrid Histories: Forests, Frontiers and Wildness in Western India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 277–281. For more recent critical reflections which trace how the concept of 'adivasi' has been differently taken up in the past few decades, see: Meena Radhakrishna, ed., *First Citizens: Studies on Adivasis, Tribals and Indigenous Peoples in India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016); and Alpa Shah, *In the Shadows of the State: Indigenous Politics, Environmentalism, and Insurgency in Jharkhand, India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 31.

[2] Owing to the fact that 'Devi' (literally, 'goddess') is a common Hindu matrilineal honorific, Mahasweta Devi – born Mahasweta Ghatak in 1926 – is referred to across scholarship by her personal name, Mahasweta. I retain this denomination here.

gravings, Puran is immediately met with the hostility, hunger, and desperation – described in Mahasweta's compound-accumulating *dvandva* style as the 'skeleton men-women-boys-girls' – of an impoverished indigenous community sounding their emergency drums.[3] For these adivasis, we are told, the pterodactyl is a living embodiment of their ancestors' restless souls. They read the pterodactyl as an ancestral spirit, risen from the dead in profound anger at its living descendants, who have all too easily acquiesced to the postcolonial government's plans to build 'broad arrogant roads' (p. 109) over their sacred burial grounds (p. 120). The adivasi community sees the pterodactyl as a monstrous omen, a demonstration of their looming extinction, and in turn they nosedive into fatalistic mourning practices. But as 'Pterodactyl' reaches its conclusion, there are reasons for hope. Rain has come, the now lifeless pterodactyl has been laid to rest, and Puran is due to leave Pirtha and return to the city. Mahasweta's story will even end with a call to arms: the text's third-person narrative voice insists that Puran must open himself up to a 'tremendous, excruciating, explosive love' (p. 196), a love sufficient enough to sustain a political commitment to adivasi life. This closely relates to what Mahasweta describes, in an interview with her translator, Gayatri Spivak, as 'our double task […] to resist "development" actively and to learn to love'.[4]

Before this call to arms, Puran bathes with the adivasis. And in doing so he reflects on his experiences in the village:

> Puran realises that the crisis of the menaced existence of the tribals, of the extinction of their ethnic being, pushed and pushed them toward the dark.
>
>   Looking at Bikhia's tawny matted hair, freshly shaven face, he understood that they were being defeated as they were searching in this world for a reason for the ruthless unconcern of government and administration. It was then that the shadow of that bird with its wings spread came back as at once *myth* and analysis. (p. 193; Mahasweta's emphasis)

With this sudden explosion of anagnorisis, Mahasweta dramatises Puran's recognition of the deepening 'crisis' of adivasi 'extinction' and 'defeat' at the hands of the 'ruthless unconcern of government and administration'. 'It was then', upon this realisation, that the shadowy memory of the now-departed pterodactyl returns to the forefront of Puran's mind 'as at once *myth* and analysis'. For the adivasis, Mahasweta implies, the story of the pterodactyl will become folded into their 'oral tradition' as a 'new myth' (p. 193). But it will also provide them with a mode of analysis, a 'message' incorporated into their collective memory that re-

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[3] Mahasweta Devi, 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha', in *Imaginary Maps*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 95–196 (p. 136). All further references to this particular text will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[4] Mahasweta, 'The Author in Conversation', in *Imaginary Maps*, pp. ix–xxii (p. xxii).

veals the systemic destruction of a 'continent in the name of civilisation' (p. 195). The pterodactyl offers guidance towards future survival.

I begin with this passage from 'Pterodactyl' in order to foreground some of the key questions which undergird this thesis' third and final chapter: Why is it that, in a story about Indian postcolonial governmentality's abandonment and 'defeat' of adivasi life, Mahasweta decides to not just incorporate but structurally hinge her plot on 'the shadow of that bird'? Why is this 'bird' not figured as a bird at all, but as an extinct Mesozoic reptilian which pre-dates humanity by around one hundred and fifty million years? Why does Mahasweta draw on different nonhuman creatures at pivotal moments throughout her fiction? How do these nonhumans call on us to rethink the putatively human horizon of postcolonial politics, and how does this relate to her 'double task' of resisting development and learning to love? Finally, how does Mahasweta's literary project – especially her use of the short story form – offer us a different articulation of creaturely form?

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Up until her death in 2016, Mahasweta Devi remained committed to an emancipatory and redistributive political project for subaltern autonomy, land sovereignty, and ecological survival across the Indian subcontinent.[5] As an investigative journalist, a commissioning editor at the journal *Bortika*, and an organiser with the bonded-labourers movement in Palamau in the 1960s, the *Adim Jati Aikya Parishad* (Tribal Unity Forum) in the 1980s, and later the Denotified and Nomadic Tribes Rights Action Group (DNT-RAG) in the 1990s, she spent much of her lifetime working with and for India's historically marginalised, dispossessed and displaced classes. While her activism involved dalits ('untouchables'), low-castes, and bonded-labourers, she devoted most of her efforts to the struggle for adivasi justice. Her activism thus sided with those heterogeneous social groups who, according to the 2011 census, total around 8.6% (some 100 million people) of the national population. Officially designated 'Scheduled Tribes' by the post-independence constitution, adivasis are those communities who – according to the historian Ramachandra Guha – 'have gained least and lost most from sixty years of political independence.'[6] Virginius Xaxa, a leading adivasi scholar and member of an Or-

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[5] Following the Subaltern Studies Project, I use the term 'subaltern' to invoke the marginalised and disenfranchised, whose structurally unrecognised presence *within* historiography and society reveals particular epistemological, historical, and representational limits *about* historiography and society. For a diverse critical interrogation of Subaltern Studies and its premises, theoretical implications, and contested legacies, see: Vinayak Chaturvedi, ed., *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the Postcolonial* (London: Verso, 2012).

[6] Ramachandra Guha, 'Adivasis: Unacknowledged Victims', *Outlook*, April 14 2010 <http://www.outlookindia.com/article.aspx?265069> [Accessed 17/05/2018].

aon community, writes that 'what seems to be critical to the shaping of this identity is the aspect of experience of domination through colonization', as well as adivasis' 'extreme marginalisation in the economic, political, social, and cultural domains' of the postcolonial nation.[7] The concept of the 'postcolonial' thus struggles to account for the ways in which adivasis have been newly colonised in independent India. As adivasis negotiated the newly postcolonial state, and fought political battles for *Jal-Jungle-Jameen* (water, forest, land), Mahasweta became 'an extremely active *facilitator* of tribal unity'.[8]

Mahasweta's literary project is shaped by and inseparable from these political commitments. As Madhurima Chakraborty puts it, Mahasweta is 'understood in leftist communities in India, as well as in global literary circles, as one of the few writers whose literary and political endeavours are coterminous'.[9] In her earlier work, written in the first two decades after India's independence, Mahasweta mobilises a 'documentary impulse' in order to re-write nationalist historiography and reclaim the previously colonised Indian archive.[10] From *Jhansir Rani* (1956) to *Amrita Sanchay* (1964), she narrates flashpoints of collective resistance to colonial British settlements in the long century leading up to independence. Yet from the mid-1960s onwards, Mahasweta began directly addressing the unfulfilled promises of the newly independent nation. Over three long decades, her fiction grappled with the unfolding crises of the post-Nehruvian era in the late twentieth century, including the Green Revolution, the spread of the Naxalite insurgency, Indira Gandhi's authoritarian turn, the resultant State of Emergency (1975–1977), the inadequacy of Gandhi's twenty-point development and redistribution program, the 1984 Union Carbide gas disaster in Bhopal, and later the consolidation of globalisation. Mahasweta's writing 'cannot be fully understood except through the idioms of crisis inaugurated by these watershed events', Parama Roy writes.[11] Her fiction documents and protests against what she calls the 'class trouble' of postcolonial India: adivasi exploitation and casteism, the privatisation of the commons

[7] Virginius Xaxa, 'Formation of Adivasi/Indigenous People's Identity in India', in *First Citizens*, pp. 33–52 (pp. 49, 51).
[8] Judy Burns, Jill MacDougall, Catherine Benamou, Avanthi Meduri, Peggy Phelan and Susan Slyomovics, 'An Interview with Gayatri Spivak', *Women & Performance*, 5 (1990), 80–92 (p. 82); Spivak's emphasis.
[9] Madhurima Chakraborty, '"The Only Thing I Know How to Do": An Interview with Mahasweta Devi', *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50 (2014), 282–290 (p. 282).
[10] Jennifer Wenzel, 'Forest Fictions and Ecological Crises: Reading the Politics of Survival in Mahasweta Devi's "Dhowli"', in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literature of the Environment*, ed. by Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George B. Hadley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 136–155 (p. 136).
[11] Parama Roy, *Alimentary Tracts: Appetites, Aversions, and the Postcolonial* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 121.

and indigenous land, famine, deforestation and ecosystem devastation.[12] Critics
have also noted Mahasweta's sensitivity to the dynamics of gendered subaltern
subjectivity, and throughout this chapter I will demonstrate how she thematises
postcoloniality's continued articulation of gender-based violence.[13] Mahasweta
links these themes to the Indian nation state's teleological development as a 'mod-
ernising' economic force. She writes: 'India makes progress, produces steel, the
tribals give up their land and receive nothing. They are suffering spectators of the
India that is travelling toward the twenty-first century'. In short, Mahasweta uses
her fiction to represent how 'decolonisation has not reached the poor' in late-
twentieth-century India.[14] Indeed, she imagines her fiction as a tribunal: 'I believe
in documentation', she writes. 'The sole purpose of my writing is to expose the
many faces of the exploiting agencies', to 'place this India, a hydra-headed mon-
ster, before a people's court'.[15]

Ever since her entrance into the Anglophone postcolonial canon in the 1990s, crit-
ics have analysed how Mahasweta's mode of documentation harnesses an admix-
ture of literary forms. Neil Lazarus, for example, demonstrates how Mahasweta's
writing reflects, refracts, and passes judgement on the material inadequacy of the
Indian postcolonial project, utilising 'the resources of literary realism' in order to
hurtle 'between diegesis and sociological analysis'.[16] While Lazarus foregrounds
Mahasweta's documentary style, other critics explicate how her work ironises and
satirises the failures of successive Indian governments.[17] Others note that her texts
– when read in their original Bengali – adopt a playfully 'unfixed' multilingual-
ism, a sentence-by-sentence combination of vernacular Bengali, English bureau-
cratic 'officialese', poetic Sanskrit, as well as quotations from Marx and Shake-
speare.[18] In recent years, critics have devoted increasing attention to Mahasweta's
methods for writing the nonhuman. While Jennifer Wenzel and Parama Roy both

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[12] Gabrielle Collu, 'Speaking with Mahasweta Devi: Mahasweta Devi Interviewed by Gabrielle
Collu', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 33 (1998), 143–148 (p. 145).

[13] See: Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Woman in Difference: Mahasweta Devi's "Douloti, the
Bountiful"', *Cultural Critique*, 14 (1990), 105–128.

[14] Mahasweta, 'The Author in Conversation', pp. xi, xx.

[15] Mahasweta Devi, '"Palamau is a mirror of India": Introduction', in *Bitter Soil*, trans. by Ipsita
Chanda (Calcutta: Seagull, 1998), pp. vii–x (pp. vii, ix, x).

[16] Neil Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011),
pp. 42–43.

[17] Sumanta Banerjee, 'Translator's Note', in Mahasweta, *Bait: Four Stories*, trans. by Sumanta
Banerjee (Calcutta: Seagull, 2009), pp. vii–xxiii (p. xxii).

[18] Minoli Salgado, 'Tribal Stories, Scribal Worlds: Mahasweta Devi and the Unreliable Transla-
tor', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 35 (2000), 131–145 (p. 132); See also: Alan Johnson, 'Sa-
cred Forest, Maternal Space, and National Narrative in Mahasweta Devi's Fiction', *ISLE*, 23
(2016), 506–525 (p. 508).

argue for gothic readings of her literary project,[19] the Warwick Research Collective (WReC) and David Farrier contend that Mahasweta's 'in-mixing of the imaginary and the factual' can be counted as a form of 'critical irrealism' which registers the systemic crises – both ecological and epistemic – of the capitalist world-system.[20]

We can augment these ecologically-attuned analyses by turning to Amitav Ghosh's recent lectures on literature and environmental disaster, *The Great Derangement* (2016), which I discussed in my introduction. Throughout, Ghosh argues that contemporary fiction is failing to think the 'unthinkable' of climate change. More specifically, Ghosh argues that the 'mansion of serious fiction' – the novel in its most dominant, celebrated, and consecrated forms – is structurally discouraged and perhaps even formally obstructed from comprehending the scale of climate change.[21] Nonetheless, Ghosh also identifies a number of authors who confront the urgency of climate catastrophe. Unlike the supposed anthropocentrism of prize-winning contemporary novels, which, for Ghosh, follow what Dipesh Chakrabarty critiques as the 'secular code of historical and humanist time', Mahasweta's fiction is said to recognise that human communities are coeval with nonhuman ecologies.[22] In Ghosh's words, creatures such as nonhuman animals 'have never been absent' from her work.[23] Mahasweta's writing of the nonhuman challenges the normative, secular and Western-centric rationalisation of the human as an ontologically singular and exceptional life form exempt from climatic changes.

Building on these analyses, I argue that Mahasweta's poetics presses up against the boundaries of normative humanity in order to reflect on the interrelated political and ecological consequences of India's postcolonial development. But rather than adopting the gothic or critical irrealism to describe this literary process, I will instead turn to the creaturely. I do this because – as I have demonstrated across this thesis – the concept of the creaturely performs its own double task: on the one hand, it identifies those dynamic anthropological machines which structurally exclude particular humans from the domain of personhood or political humanity;

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[19] Roy, p. 127; Jennifer Wenzel, 'Grim Fairy Tales: Taking a Risk, Reading Imaginary Maps', in *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*, ed. by Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj (London: Routledge, 2000), pp. 229–251 (p. 230).

[20] WReC, *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 19, 70; David Farrier, 'Disaster's Gift: Anthropocene and Capitalocene Temporalities in Mahasweta Devi's *Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha*', *Interventions*, 18 (2016), 450–466 (p. 464).

[21] Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2016), p. 66.

[22] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 76, 16.

[23] Ghosh, p. 80.

and on the other hand, it productively envisions the interconnectedness of human and nonhuman life. Thus, this chapter sees Mahasweta's literary works as being creaturely because they repeatedly thematise – as well as create formal strategies for dramatising – both the political exclusions of the human *and* the inseparability of the human and the nonhuman in postcolonial India. More precisely, I will argue that her work complicates and enlivens these two valences of the creaturely, thematising the failed actualisation of rights in the postcolonial nation-state while also formalising the thin and thick ecologies, the friction and mutuality, the tensions and solidarities, between different human and nonhuman communities in postcolonial India. Her fiction thus interrogates the gaps between political humanity, excluded humanity, and animality, as well as the borderlands between law and justice. By doing so, Mahasweta's fiction constellates politically-excluded humans and nonhumans into a creaturely zone, a zone created and then obliterated by the nation-state's developmental agenda. In other words, her fiction dramatises how adivasis and forests are jointly rendered expendable by the postcolonial pursuit of human rights and developmentalism. When Mahasweta writes about the spraying of DDT chemicals, for example, she reveals how India's so-called Green Revolution intensifies ecological problems for humans *and* nonhumans: the bodies of marginalised humans and nonhumans both house the toxins. Mahasweta's fiction is also creaturely because of the ways she brings different creatures – whether conservation-area elephants or prehistoric pterodactyls – from the peripheries to the centre of her texts. Her writing of nonhumans opens up questions about justice beyond the human, linking together human-to-nonhuman responsibility with the political fight for adivasi justice. In sum, Mahasweta writes about forms of adivasi survival and nonhuman animality that challenge what has been critiqued as the anthropocentric doctrine of postcolonial developmentality.[24]

To more rigorously clarify what I mean by this latter point, I want to return to Mahasweta's self-designated 'double task': to resist development and to learn to love. By 'development', Mahasweta has in mind the material and ideological practices of Indian nation-building, increasingly intertwined with corporate interests, which in the words of Partha Chatterjee are demonstrative of 'the self-definition of the postcolonial state'.[25] *Materially*, Indian development connotes the uneven alleviation of poverty, the acquisition of often resource-rich land, the forced displacement of adivasi communities, the bulldozing of the commons, and thus the destruction of ecosystems. And this is presented *ideologically* by the postcolonial state as a regrettable but necessary means to achieve the economic growth re-

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[24] Debal Deb, *Beyond Developmentality: Constructing Inclusive Freedom and Sustainability* (London: Earthscan, 2009), pp. 15, 23.

[25] Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), pp. 1, 203.

quired to modernise a supposedly 'backward' nation. Development is thus a project which has historically enriched some while pauperising adivasis. Development severs adivasis' relationships with their surrounding environment and ancestral lands, enforces unwanted migration and resettlement, produces 'developmental refugees',[26] and proletarianises entire communities into an informal work force. Indeed, adivasi communities are disproportionately affected by developmental projects: adivasis account for over 40 percent of all those people displaced by development projects to make room for dams and mines.[27] In India, development has therefore been termed 'the scourge of adivasi lives'.[28]

We can sharpen our theorisation of development by thinking about it in more prototypical terms. For at its core, development is a 'strategically ambiguous term'.[29] In this chapter, I will consider development as an *ambivalent technology* or apparatus. Following Vinay Gidwani's suggestion that development is 'one of the most powerful anthropological machines of the past two centuries', I view development as a machine which in principle, but by no means in practice, '*reorganises the conditions – or ecology – of human life for its betterment*', driving 'human actors into new relations with other human *and* nonhuman actors'.[30] Viewed this way, development is not inherently or necessarily doomed to be the scourge of adivasi lives. Rather, it has – as Akhil Gupta writes – played 'a central role in the legitimation strategies of postcolonial regimes', motivated by a capitalist growth agenda that prioritises the extraction of value over and above life itself.[31] Thus capitalist development produces 'wasted humans', according to the late sociologist Zygmunt Bauman.[32] But as an anthropological machine, development not only excludes certain humans, but also excludes nonhumans by reorganising and appropriating ecologies.[33] In the Indian context specifically, numerous commentators have pointed out that the policies and programmes of development 'appear to be in direct

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[26] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), p. 152.

[27] De Debasree, 'Development-induced Displacement: Impact on Adivasi Women of Odisha', *Community Development Journal*, 50 (2015), 448–462 (p. 453).

[28] Radhakrishna, 'Epilogue: Violence of "Development" and Adivasi Resistance – An Overview', in *First Citizens*, pp. 370–408 (p. 372).

[29] Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010), p. 27.

[30] Vinay Gidwani, *Capital, Interrupted: Agrarian Development and the Politics of Work in India* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), pp. 70, 77, 136–137. Gidwani's emphasis.

[31] Akhil Gupta, *Postcolonial Development: Agriculture in the Making of Modern India* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 35.

[32] Zygmunt Bauman, *Wasted Lives: Modernity and its Outcasts* (Cambridge: Polity, 2004), p. 5.

[33] Sutapa Chattopadhyay, 'Postcolonial Development State, Appropriation of Nature, and Social Transformation of the Ousted Adivasis in the Narmada Valley, India', *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 35 (2014), 1–20 (p. 70).

conflict with [the] safeguarding [of] species, ecosystems and local people.'[34] Development therefore signals a new colonisation of life, producing what Rob Nixon calls a 'socioenvironmental fallout'.[35] Thus, when Mahasweta positions her literary project as a kind of writing which resists the nation-state's developmental agenda, she also positions her fiction against a system which displaces and pauperises adivasis while also destroying nonhuman habitats. To resist development is, then, to struggle against the forced reorganisation of life. And as I will show over the course of this chapter, Mahasweta's texts imagine various strategies for resisting development, including legal and institutional channels of politics on the one hand and more insurgent, often violent retributive actions on the other.

But I want to do more than simply argue that Mahasweta's texts *represent* this resistance to postcolonial development. Under my reading, Mahasweta's fiction also develops an aesthetics of refusal that refuses India's development. To use the catachrestic phrasing from her short story 'Draupadi' (1981), her fiction formally 'kounters' development.[36] Mahasweta's utilisation of plotting and endings in her short stories, her metaphorics of animality, her strict adoption of focalising lenses, and her strategies for incorporating nonhumans within her narratives all differently work to arrest the anthropological machine of postcolonial development. At the very same time, these formal choices destabilise and de-develop the anthropological machine of literature. For if, as Joseph Slaughter shows, there is a sociohistorical alliance between the novel form and developmentalism, an alliance that is co-constituted alongside the promotion of a mutable but narrow concept of the human person, then I will uncover how Mahasweta's stories formally nullify this stable developmental logic, disempowering the anthropocentrism of development.[37]

At the same time, though, Mahasweta's stories are not simply oppositional. Following the negation and proposition of Mahasweta's stated 'double task', I suggest that Mahasweta's creaturely forms reanimates and reconfigures development, generating in its place a radical love that locates humanity within the planet. Mahasweta's turn towards a multispecies or creaturely love is not conceived of as a sentimental plea for a liberal empathy with the other, whether human or nonhuman. Nor can Mahasweta's invocation of love be accused of being 'antipolitical' and 'unworldly', 'destroy[ing] the in-between which relates us to and separates us

[34] Ashish Kothari and Neema Pathak Broome, 'Conservation and Rights in India: Are We Moving Towards Any Kind of Harmony?', in *First Citizens*, pp. 337–369 (p. 337).

[35] Nixon, p. 41.

[36] Mahasweta, 'Draupadi', *Breast Stories*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Calcutta: Seagull, 2014), pp. 19–37 (p. 37).

[37] Joseph Slaughter, *Human Rights, Inc.: The World Novel, Narrative Form, and International Law* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), pp. 8, 328.

from others', as Hannah Arendt writes critically of love.[38] Instead, Mahasweta mobilises a mode of 'tremendous, excruciating, explosive love' (p. 196), as she terms it in 'Pterodactyl', a love which must verge on the edge of catastrophe in order to militate against the ideology of development. I will suggest that this love is creaturely because it explodes the narrowness of anthropocentrism. It acknowledges a creaturely vulnerability and thus conjures up a horizon of multispecies planetary politics. This creaturely love does not collapse the differences between human and nonhuman, just as it does not elide the differences between the politically included Indian citizens and politically excluded adivasis. As I will demonstrate, Mahasweta's 'explosive love' preserves the crucial differences – what Arendt calls the 'in-between' – that separate and relate the privileged citizen to the marginalised adivasi, and the human to the nonhuman. Mahasweta's 'tremendous, excruciating, explosive love' is at heart a political mode of love, a 'minimal communism' between those humans and nonhumans who are disregarded by the postcolonial state.[39]

Put simply, this chapter builds the argument that in Mahasweta's fiction, politics is always already eco-politics. Much like many adivasi groups' and indigenous rights activists' own political demands, Mahasweta's writing conceives of the fight for adivasi recognition and redistribution as being inextricable from a fight to arrest environmental destruction.[40] This is why critics such as Neel Ahuja have suggested that Mahasweta's texts can be read as a form of 'postcolonial critique in a multispecies world'.[41] Mahasweta's commitment to adivasi life entails a commitment to nonhuman life, and her fiction's poetics is codetermined by her ecopolitical concerns for adivasi life. I have divided this chapter into two halves which consecutively track the contours of the creaturely as a term which helps us make sense of the anthropological machine's decision between human and nonhuman. The first half of this chapter explores the ways in which Mahasweta thematises a biopolitical anthropology of humanity; the second half considers her strategies for writing about nonhumans and exposing personhood to its constitutively excluded others. More specifically, in the first half of this chapter I theorise and investigate the concepts of inhumanity, animality and indignity. In doing so, I ask: how does Mahasweta highlight adivasis' systematic exclusion from the law by drawing on the figure of the inhuman, that is, the human who is not considered human, the

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[38] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, trans. by Margaret Canovan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), p. 242.

[39] Alain Badiou, *In Praise of Love*, with Nicolas Truong, trans. by Peter Bush (London: Serpent's Tail, 2012), pp. 38, 90.

[40] On this, see: Savyasaachi, 'Primitive Accumulation, Labour, and the Making of "Scheduled Tribe", "Indigenous" and Adivasi Sensibility', in *First Citizens*, pp. 53–76 (p. 64).

[41] Neel Ahuja, 'Postcolonial Critique in a Multispecies World', *PMLA*, 124 (2009), 556–563.

'impossible paradox of a human who is no human', as Judith Butler puts it?[42] My analysis of three short stories argues that Mahasweta condemns the Indian constitution for confirming a biopolitics of desubjectivation which casts adivasi peoples as outcasts from the realm of human personhood. In these texts, the polyvalent figure of the inhuman comes to demonstrate the paradoxes of political humanity, the gendered dimensions of adivasi oppression, and the adivasi rejection of being identified as inhuman. This interrogation of adivasi and low-caste subalternity is conducted in the short story form. Mahasweta utilises some of the particularities of the short story, such as its episodic temporality and narrative futurity, in order to imagine escape-routes out of the constitution's exclusionary conception of human citizenship, and to complicate literary form's relationship with character development. In turn, Mahasweta gives retributive power to those who were never perceived as fully human by the developing postcolonial state.

The second half of this chapter examines Mahasweta's utilisation of nonhuman figures. I argue that in 'Pterodactyl' Mahasweta uses the eponymous pterosaur to force her protagonist, Puran, to confront his complicities with indigenous cultural genocide and nonhuman ecocide. The pterodactyl deconstructs the protagonist's anthropocentrism, and in the wake of this destabilisation of the human Mahasweta proposes a new, active form of political accountability, a kind of accountability that begins from a creaturely horizon of planetary love. In this regard, Mahasweta's writing goes beyond Sebald's melancholia and Coetzee's aesthetics of failure in that it imagines a more political and propositional avenue for creaturely life. I arrive at these conclusions by suturing together three keywords: the asymptote, planetarity, and alongsideness. If the asymptote is a line which approaches but never intersects with its object, then it can be described as a *difference-preserving category*. In the conclusion of this chapter I reflect on how Mahasweta draws on the figure of the asymptote in 'Pterodactyl', and in doing so I suggest that Mahasweta's narrative is asymptotic: her narrative approaches, but does not absorb or appropriate indigenous and nonhuman lives. The asymptote becomes, for me, a creaturely form of writing in that it can glimpse – or, put better, *formalise* – an ethics beyond the normative human: it imagines a planetary alongsideness and interspecies love in which the human becomes interrelated with other species not in spite of but because of their difference.

Before proceeding, it is important to note that Mahasweta's advocacy for and authoring of adivasi lives has received notable criticisms. While her fiction has been praised for documenting adivasi communities' ongoing marginalisation, thus utilising literature's capacity to 'make audible as speaking beings those who were previously heard as noisy animals', as Rancière showed us in the introduction to

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[42] Judith Butler, *Frames of War: When is Life Grievable?* (London: Verso, 2009), p.76.

this thesis,[43] her writing has also been criticised for exhibiting a paternalistic and sentimental inclination that depicts adivasis as passive victims.[44] In an essay on postcolonial studies' ongoing trouble with the category of indigeneity, for example, the Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver contends that postcolonial writing is 'oddly detached when discussing indigenous peoples and their lives. It often displays – as in the works of Mahasweta Devi about and on behalf of tribal peoples in India – the same sense of patronising care reflected by those in the dominant, Western culture.'[45] Elsewhere, critics suggest that Mahasweta's literary promotion of adivasi causes is weighed down by her writing's occasional reproduction of an image of adivasis as being morally and spiritually rooted to forest lands. When, for instance, she discusses how deforestation erodes adivasi life – 'now that the forests are gone, the tribals are in dire distress'– she risks depicting adivasis as wholly reliant on forests.[46] As Alpa Shah has demonstrated in her ethnography of adivasis in Jharkhand, this kind of rhetoric develops an 'aesthetics of poverty' which not only contributes towards an image of adivasis as 'eco-savages', as 'natural' guardians of the forest, but also traps adivasis within a kind of 'eco-incarceration', in which their claims to indigeneity are only taken seriously if they continue to live off and cultivate the land.[47] My readings will, I hope, be sensitive to these critiques. But I also aim to convince readers that Mahasweta's fiction is often cognisant of these tensions surrounding the limits of representation, paternalistic advocacy, and 'eco-incarceration', and that, rather than simply repeating these problems, her writing attempts to work through and destabilise their pervasiveness.

It is also important to acknowledge that Mahasweta is not a pro-animal writer in the same ways that I have argued Sebald and Coetzee to be. So far, this thesis has explored how Sebald and Coetzee develop different formal techniques – what I have been calling creaturely forms – for disrupting the anthropocentrism of literature. These creaturely forms call into question the exceptionalism of the human and express a concern for nonhuman life. While my chapter on Sebald set out to excavate his understudied ethics towards the nonhuman, and while my chapter on Coetzee sought to re-read the most widely discussed author in the animal studies canon, this chapter traces how the creaturely is differently articulated in – as well as complicated by – Mahasweta's fictional representation of postcolonial India. In her texts, the industrial slaughter and consumption of animals fades into

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[43] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, trans. by Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 3–5.

[44] Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xxxiii.

[45] Jace Weaver, 'Indigenousness and Indigeneity', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed. by Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (Malden: Blackwell, 2000), pp. 221–235 (p. 224).

[46] 'The Author in Conversation', p. x.

[47] Shah, pp. 69, 188.

the background, as do questions of individualised animal rights and ethics. Her poetics and politics cannot be easily squashed into a posthumanist shape. But this is precisely why a creaturely reading of her literary project remains vital. Rather than arriving at the question of the creaturely via animal rights or animal ethics, as Sebald and Coetzee often do, I want to argue that Mahasweta approaches the creaturely via her commitment towards and engagements with adivasis' own lived experiences, histories, cosmologies, and resistance movements. Thus, while it would be too strong to claim Mahasweta as an ecological activist, it would also be misleading to claim that her adivasi activism overlooked the terrain of ecology. This chapter demonstrates how crops, forests, and habitats are all major political concerns of Mahasweta's literary project.

Mahasweta's writing also reframes the creaturely in *planetary* terms. As I demonstrate in the conclusion to this chapter, Mahasweta shares with Sebald a thematic preoccupation with biodiversity, extinction, and environmental devastation across a deep temporality. Both authors consider multiple temporalities in order to call into question the singular timeline of the 'human'. But while Mahasweta's texts sometimes echo Sebald's vision of human history as a continual piling up of ruins, her texts are rarely weighed down by the melancholia that sits on the shoulders of Sebald's autodiegetic narrators and characters. In fact, Mahasweta's consistent use of a third-person and focalised perspective, and her command of a powerful, acerbic, and committed narrative voice, might even formally evade the introspective melancholia of Sebald's first-person narrators. This dedication to politics is, furthermore, one of the key features which separates her work from Coetzee's. While both authors destabilise and deform their characters, their literary strategies diverge: Mahasweta's texts refuse Coetzee's aesthetics of failure. Her works are more openly committed to a political horizon beyond the text itself. A creaturely reading of Mahasweta's literary project is therefore vital because of the different literary forms and epistemes that she writes within. Mahasweta takes the creaturely into different generic territories, using the episodic intensity of the short story form in order to militate against the steady emplotment of postcolonial development projects, and to engender a non-anthropocentric genre of character development. Thus, while Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta are all undoubtedly invested in the novel form as a tradition, I use this chapter to discuss how the shortness of Mahasweta's stories both extends and challenges the creaturely forms that I have analysed throughout this thesis.

A final word on translation and *littérisation*, Pascale Casanova's word for that process in which structurally peripheral texts become perceived as 'literary' by the

dominant literary authorities.[48] Anyone who writes about Mahasweta must confront the fact that it is because of Spivak's translations, framings, and interpretations that her writing has gained a foothold in the postcolonial canon. Although Mahasweta spoke positively of Spivak's involvement in translating her work,[49] critics have warned that her texts have been deliberately (mis-)translated so that they reflect Spivak's critical concerns.[50] If Mahasweta has come under considerable scrutiny for ventriloquising adivasi voices, then so too has Spivak been scrutinised for ventriloquising Mahasweta. As Wenzel writes, 'reading Mahasweta in English is, to some degree, reading Spivak'.[51] Spivak, for her part, has written reflexively about her responsibility as the so-called 'doorkeeper' of Mahasweta's literary project, about the methodological constraints of translating Mahasweta's work, and about the 'ravenous hunger for Third World literary texts in English translation'.[52] Even so, studying and writing about Mahasweta in translation requires a careful approach to this problem of authorship and translation. Such is the conclusion of Minoli Salgado's even-handed analysis of various translations of Mahasweta's work. For Salgado, Mahasweta's translated works are not just contested documents within the world-literary market and its desire for what Graham Huggan terms 'the postcolonial exotic',[53] but also have significant formal and stylistic differences that risk smoothing-out Mahasweta's peculiarly 'unfixed' poetics in Bengali.[54] While my chapter does not focus exclusively on texts translated by Spivak, the three stories that make up *Imaginary Maps* – written in Bengali in 1989 and published in English in 1995 – nonetheless occupy a significant part of this chapter. Without sufficient comprehension of the Bengali language, though, I acknowledge that my analysis is centred on the partial version of 'Mahasweta' which exists in the postcolonial studies canon.

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[48] Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. by M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: Harvard University Press), p. 136.

[49] Collu, p. 143.

[50] See: Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, pp. 155, 250 fn. 66; Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation, and the Transition to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 3.

[51] Wenzel, 'Grim Fairy Tales', p. 230.

[52] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 349; see also: Spivak, 'Translator's Preface' and 'Translator's Note', in *Imaginary Maps*, pp. xxiii–xxxi (p. xxvi). Here, Spivak likens her role to Coetzee's 'compromised position' in South Africa.

[53] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 28.

[54] Salgado, pp. 143, 132. Salgado's emphasis.

Narratives of the Inhuman: Constituting Creatureliness

In 1998, in response to the death in police custody of a young adivasi man, Budhan Sabar, Mahasweta co-authored and submitted to the United Nations a damning report about the failings of India's post-independence constitution. 'On behalf of 60 million tribals', Mahasweta writes, 'we wish to draw your attention to the violation of [adivasis'] basic human rights and to request your immediate intervention in the matter in accordance with Clause XXII of the UN Charter of Human Rights.'[55] Mahasweta situates these contraventions of national and transnational law within the socio-historical context of India's colonial past, including the 1857 rebellion against the British East India Company, the British counter-revolutionary crackdown of the Criminal Tribes Act of 1871, and the Act's subsequent extensions beyond the northern regions in 1911 and 1924. Mahasweta thereafter traces their effects in the postcolonial present, noting how even the full repeal of the Criminal Tribes Act in 1952 failed to adequately actualise adivasi rights. Worse still, she argues, the law which replaced the Criminal Tribes Act, the Habitual Offenders Act, exacerbated rather than ended discrimination, allowing police forces to 'hold on to the old concept of branding […] whole communities as born criminals'. India's post-independence statutory reforms therefore produced little more than a symbolic and strictly politico-administrative transformation; although 'Criminal Tribes' became 'Denotified Tribes', the material conditions endured. 'It is unthinkable', Mahasweta concludes, 'that a section of people who are among the earliest occupants of this subcontinent, constituting about 6 per cent of its population, should be deprived of a dignified life, and persecuted in the most inhuman manner even after half a century of independence.' 'Possessed of no resources and little programmatic help, there is little possibility of social redemption for them or their children for generations to come.'[56]

On the face of it, Mahasweta's short stories present something of a fictional counterpart to these political arguments. For in 'Fundamental Rights and Bhikari Dusad' (first published in English in 1996; henceforth 'Fundamental'), for example, Mahasweta registers in satirical prose the ways in which India's constitution mistranslates from theory to practice. Set on the outskirts of Noagarh, 'Fundamental' explores the poverty, hunger and regular police beatings of a lowly goatherd and outcast, Bhikari.[57] 'Nobody gave a damn about Bhikari Dusad. They were not meant to', Mahasweta writes (p. 93). 'An extremely timid and harmless soul. His

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[55] The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of India, 'Appeal for Justice and Struggle for Rights', *Interventions*, 1 (1999), 590–604 (p. 591).

[56] Ibid., pp. 592–593.

[57] Mahasweta, 'Fundamental Rights and Bhikari Dusad', trans. by Subhransu Maitra, *Index on Censorship*, 4 (2006), 92–108 (p. 92). All further references to this particular story will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

flock of goats his only livelihood – taking them here and there, in search of pasture. The goats his only means. Goats' (p. 94). With no land and no family, 'All he's got are his goats. Just the goats to tend, sell, tend, sell. And the police, destroying that very method of survival every time' (p. 96). The centrepiece of this story is a conversation between Bhikari and a school teacher, Sukhchand, who disseminates to Bhikari by counting on his fingers the seven new 'fundamental rights in free India' (p. 101). These include the right to equality, to freedom, against exploitation, to freedom of religion, to cultural and educational rights, and to property. That Bhikari is oblivious of these rights is illustrative enough of the gap between the fiction and the reality of the new 'free India'. But even more demonstrative are the contradictions that Bhikari himself identifies. After he is maliciously beaten and left disabled by the police – 'an efficient, thoroughly professional beating, approved by the law and administration'; 'He'll never stand straight again' (pp. 106, 107) – he questions the constitution's efficacy: 'A lie, every syllable Sukhchandji spoke is a lie! […] And the Indian Constitution guarantees that fundamental rights cannot be violated? Lies, all lies!' (pp. 106–107).

But 'Fundamental' is not just a damning indictment of the constitution's disintegration as it meets the mutually reinforcing relationship between landlordism and the police state. For although Mahasweta is doubtless preoccupied here with the inconsistencies of the Indian constitution, as the DNT-RAG report demonstrates, her fiction also pushes beyond the normative enshrinement of the citizen as a rights-bearing person. In doing so, Mahasweta critically reflects on the paradoxes of human rights in the Indian subcontinent, thus destabilising the humanist political ontology of personhood. Mahasweta dramatises this in the way she ends 'Fundamental': Bhikari unknowingly discovers a loophole in the constitution when he decides to leave Noagarh. For although the police have forced Bhikari to give up his seventh right, the right to property, he can still unknowingly activate his third right, the freedom to pursue any occupation. This 'freedom', though, means giving up goat herding, fleeing to the jungle and taking up the occupation of begging. In so doing, Bhikari will not only evade the police – 'they'll never beat up a beggar dusad', he thinks to himself – but will also become part of a new community, 'a member of a large, large society' of homeless beggars (p. 108). Perversely, then, the new 'fundamental rights' of India's constitution encourage dusads to seek freedom in homelessness, outside of the jurisdiction of rights, thus abandoning their claims to the political status of the person. Mahasweta shows how Bhikari, if he is to survive, must turn himself into 'a creature of the forest' (p. 97).

Mahasweta augments these perversities and paradoxes by her use of the short story form, a genre of compression, intensity and 'reiteration through pattern' in which characters typically confront 'a crucial event or crisis rather than slowly de-

veloping over time'.[58] Within the compressed story-world of 'Fundamental', Mahasweta adopts the short story form's necessarily partial plot and character development in order to challenge personhood and postcolonial development. The story's self-conscious narrative voice, for example, repeatedly insists that the very story we are reading is predetermined. On four occasions, Mahasweta writes that 'This has been, this will be. Such occurrences are as old as the ancient soil of Noagarh'; 'This has been, this will be. The fable of rich landlords poor peasants share croppers bataidars is never any different. *Nobody can alter the plot*' (pp. 93, 94, 99; my emphasis). The law is presented here as circumscribed and entrenched. It is an impenetrable fortress which produces a fatalistic common sense, infecting both the story's characters *and* the narrative itself. Thus, by mimicking Bhikari's restricted, policed, and ultimately abandoned life, Mahasweta's repetitions transform 'Fundamental' into a polemical fiction of generic inevitability which treads and retreads the predestined plot-paths to which adivasis are currently bound. If the mission of human rights is to transcend predestination, and to constitute the human person's autonomous pursuit of life, then 'Fundamental' uncovers how human rights in postcolonial India denote little more than a secularised predestination. India's postcolonial development actually *prevents* Bhikari's development. And the 'plot' of Bhikari's life, condensed within the short story form, remains foreclosed and undeveloped, already written.

It is precisely this relationship between the short story, subjugated humanity, and the paradoxes of rights that I will pursue throughout this section. Here, I wish to home in on how Mahasweta's short stories thematise the hard borders that permit some humans' entrance into the fortress of political humanity while excluding other humans altogether. By doing this, I will interrogate the ways in which Mahasweta depicts abandoned characters as having uniquely felt relationships with the putatively human *polis* and its negated other, animality. Throughout, I explore how Mahasweta differently takes up this trope across the short story form: in some stories, her characters internalise their exclusion from citizenship as proof of their insignificance and animality; in others, such as 'Fundamental', her characters reject this equivalence and pursue life outside of the constitution's theorisations of the human person; and in others, her protagonists weaponise their supposed creaturely animality against the violence of the state, rejecting their gendered subjugation in the process. In all of these stories, Mahasweta utilises the concentrated and yet elliptic potential of the short story form – that which György Lukács describes as 'a human life expressed through the infinitely sensual force of a fateful hour' –

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[58] Charles E. May, 'The Short Story's Way of Meaning: Alice Munro's "Passion"', *Narrative*, 20 (2012), 172–182 (pp. 181, 176).

so as to represent and rupture postcolonial development.[59] In these 'fateful hours', Mahasweta imbues her characters with the energy to retaliate against their exclusion from the law.

Thus, while Mahasweta's activism with the DNT-RAG retains a pragmatic confidence in institutional politics, pressuring 'state actors to fulfil their constitutional responsibilities by providing meaningful accommodation to DNT populations within the strictures of formal governance',[60] her short stories ultimately break free from the state and envision spontaneous moments of extra-institutional action which militate against the nation. Mahasweta sets her short stories on the peripheries of the state, in zones of exclusion – both geographical and ontology – in which subjugated humans and the lands they inhabit are exploited by the postcolonial nation. By focusing on the 'lonely voices' of abandoned and excluded humans, as short stories have been shown to do so well,[61] and by continually drawing attention to threatened ecosystems, Mahasweta identifies a deep grammar of governmentality which structurally relies on political exclusion in order to assert its sovereign postcolonial development. In response, she takes up the narrative temporality of the short story form, namely its structural tendency towards what Terry Eagleton calls a 'single bizarre occurrence or epiphany of terror whose impact would merely be blunted by lengthy realist elaboration',[62] in order to imagine individual and collective resistance to postcolonial development's production of an exclusive political humanity.

To capture these different literary animations of political humanity, I turn here to the figure of the 'inhuman'. By inhuman, I mean to draw attention to forms of human life that are constitutively excluded from the orbit of human rights. Numerous twentieth-century thinkers have, in the words of Giorgio Agamben, sought to 'bear witness to the inhuman'.[63] Judith Butler, for example, insists that humanness is an expandable and contractible categorical norm, 'allocated and retracted, aggrandised, personified, degraded and disavowed, elevated and affirmed'. Because of this, Butler writes, 'wherever there is the human, there is the inhuman'.[64] Allen Feldman has further sought to conceptually differentiate the inhuman from dehumanisation. Unlike *dehumanisation*, which presupposes a hu-

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[59] György Lukács, *Soul and Form*, trans. by Anna Bostock, ed. by John T. Sanders and Katie Terezakis (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), p. 92

[60] Caleb Johnston, 'The Political Art of Patience: Adivasi Resistance in India', *Antipode*, 44 (2012), 1268–1286 (p. 1274).

[61] Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice: A Study of the Short Story* (Cleveland: World, 1963), p. 20.

[62] Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p. 150.

[63] Giorgio Agamben, *Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive*, trans. by Daniel Heller-Roazen (New York: Zone Books, 1999), p. 121.

[64] Butler, p. 76.

manity to be lost, stolen, or torn apart, the *inhuman* accounts for those who never had rights to lose, or those 'who could make few or no claims whatsoever to political humanity'.[65] According to Dipesh Chakrabarty, the concept of the inhuman is central to India's advent as a partitioned nation-state. For him, the inhuman names the logics of 'thingification' and killability which sanctioned the bloodshed of Partition.[66] The inhuman also helps us make sense of the ongoing political exclusion of those castes who were never fully cast as human persons.[67] And it offers a way of thinking about how gendered and racialised forms of subjugation in colonial and postcolonial regimes of power are tied up with logics of animality and de/inhumanisation. These are precisely the logics which perceive adivasis to be matter that does not matter. 'Few recognise them as living creatures', Mahasweta argues.[68]

At the same time, the term 'inhuman' is always shapeshifting. When operating as an adjective, inhuman yokes together and violently separates both the agents *and* recipients of biopolitical violence. Thus while the paragraph above focused on the recipients of exclusion, inhumanity also describes the cruel violence to which they are subject to. In the words of Mahasweta's DNT-RAG report, the Denotified are 'persecuted in the most inhuman manner'.[69] We will see below how Mahasweta draws on this in order to not only describe a predatory timber contractor's development plans, but to also metamorphose the contractor into a killable animal. I also adopt the category of the inhuman because it signals the creaturely indeterminacy of a bare humanity which, in being cast as the abnegated other of the human, also 'perennially threaten[s] anthropological plenitude as an uncontainable negativity'.[70] The characters rendered inhuman within Mahasweta's works also possess an explosive energy which threatens the very inhuman treatment that they receive. Therefore, this section will show how Mahasweta draws on her characters' supposed inhumanity in order to catalyse narrative situations in which the

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[65] Allen Feldman, 'Inhumanitas: Political Speciation, Animality, Natality, Defacement', in *In the Name of Humanity: The Government of Threat and Care*, ed. by Ilana Feldman and Miriam Ticktin (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), pp. 115–150 (p. 115). My emphasis.

[66] Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), p. 142.

[67] Following Vinay Gidwani's synthesis of prominent theories of caste – including Louis Dumont, G. S. Ghurye, Gerald Berreman, and Nicholas Dirks – I take caste to be a mutable and 'overdetermined entity, enabled by historically and geographically contingent articulations of class, gender, political, and religious elements'; following Partha Chatterjee's work on caste in contemporary India, I also think of caste as an increasingly 'secular and politically charged category of social identity'. See: Gidwani, p. 38; Chatterjee, 'There is an Indian Ideology, But it's Not This', *Constellations*, 21 (2014), 175–185 (p. 182).

[68] Mahasweta Devi and Ratnottama Sengupta, 'Badge of All Their Tribes', *Times of India*, 5 January 2000, p. 14.

[69] The Denotified and Nomadic Tribes of India, p. 593.

[70] Feldman, p. 118.

normativity of political humanity meets its own limits, and she utilises plotting and endings which point to a justice beyond the political anthropology of the state. By analysing Mahasweta's work through this double valence of the creature-ly – the vulnerable *and* the vengeful, the passive and the active – I will show how Mahasweta's short stories formally document and retaliate against the constitution as an anthropological machine of development.

Let us return to the formulation from 'Fundamental': 'Nobody can alter the plot.' This signals the perverse sense in which the law seizes both the story's characters *and* the narrative itself. But Mahasweta also undermines this refrain, and in doing so uses her plotting to jam the clockwork of development. In turn, she makes room for the possibility of an escape. The spread of political agitation against the landowning classes leads to a rebellion: 'Nobody can alter the plot. But this time somebody did. As they were beaten up […] they yelled out slogans'. The slogans are rendered in an indented verse which punctures the story's steady para-graphing: 'We have | A fundamental right | To one half | Of the product of our labour!' (p. 94). Mahasweta thus identifies political struggle for wages as one strategy for contesting, negotiating, and 'altering the plot' of caste domination. The story's final passages crystallise this tussle between an open and a closed plot:

> Leaning on his stick, Bhikari walks away. Slowly. Unhurriedly. Free of all fears. No longer scared even of the police […]
> He does not feel lonely either […]
> Bhikari Dusad walks away, dragging his feet painfully, slowly disap-pearing round a bend down the road. He has nothing left to lose. (p. 108)

Here Bhikari partly resembles Coetzee's Michael K, whom I discussed in my pre-vious chapter. Like Michael K, Bhikari ends his story poised on a threshold be-tween the present and the future, having to discover – however impossibly – how 'one can live' *outside* of the political institution of the human as a rights-bearing subject.[71] But unlike Coetzee's future-oriented proleptic tense, Mahasweta's end-ing keeps Bhikari in the present, and tethers him to the very fortress of citizenship from which he is locked out. While Bhikari's unhurried walk appears to be a walk towards freedom, his autonomy can only be guaranteed if he remains a beggar. Sukhchand ponders whether Bhikari could ever be helped 'to a better standard of living, to a better occupation'. Mahasweta's narrative voice abruptly rebuts Su-khchand: 'The Constitution will never tolerate such a blatant violation of a fun-damental right. No matter where in India such an injustice occurs, the constitu-tional machinery will at once deploy the police, reserve police, military police, the military, tanks and combat aircraft, everything.' Mahasweta satirises the Indian

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[71] J. M. Coetzee, *Life and Times of Michael K* (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 184.

nation-state by escalating the deployment of the constitutional machinery's armature. The effect is not simply to point out the state's militarisation and heavy policing, but also to highlight how Bhikari's agency is still overshadowed by the constitutional apparatus. In sum, Mahasweta's story gestures to Bhikari's agency at the very point at which it cannot be actualised. The story ends ambiguously, contained inside this contradiction; Bhikari's future depends on whether readers understand 'nothing left to lose' as signalling the barest denomination of vulnerability or as a subversive negative potentiality which might yet find a way to live.

As I have continually alluded to throughout this close reading, Mahasweta's activist commitments with the DNT are also bound up with notions of the human, the animal, and the creaturely. This politics of creaturely inhumanity operates throughout 'Fundamental' far beyond Bhikari's transformation into a 'creature of the forest' (p. 97). The pernicious landlords of Noagarh, for instance, find that 'nothing enrages them as much as those *dusads* who try – as the goatgrazer Bhikari Dusad tried – to live like human beings in the land of their birth.' (p. 108). Earlier in the story, Mahasweta also describes the abusive police as 'Meateaters. Big strong men. Who may have looked at Bhikari but never really saw him' (p. 95). Their carnivorous consumption of meat becomes a potent symbol of upper-caste masculine strength, dominating other forms of life; and Bhikari is rendered inhuman – emasculated by this logic of gendered power – because he *gives life to* rather than *takes life from* the goats. The goats are Bhikari's 'very method of survival' (p. 96), not his source of pleasure or ingestion. And finally, when the police leave Bhikari 'battered, bloodspattered […] sprawled on the ground', and 'triumphantly [take] all four adult goats', Mahasweta has Bhikari cry like an animal: 'Bhikari cries like an animal, cries. His limbs paralysed with pain, he sobs over this loss, this cruel deprivation' (p. 106).

What does it mean for Bhikari to cry like an animal? As I have shown in my previous chapter's interrogation of Coetzee, 'likenesses' with animals play a significant role in the metaphorics of the creaturely, particularly so in postcolonial fiction. In an important essay on postcoloniality, gender, and the troubled concept of 'dignity', Ranjanna Khanna notes that the phrase 'like a dog' seems 'literally to haunt postcoloniality'. By closely reading Coetzee's re-working of Franz Kafka in *Disgrace* (1999), Khanna argues that 'like a dog' pertains to forms of 'desubjectivation' on the one hand and acts of grace and resistance on the other. 'Like a dog' uncovers in both colonialism and postcolonialism the material and discursive approximation of the destitute inhuman with the nonhuman. For Khanna, therefore, postcolonial criticism must proceed from an understanding of subjectivity as being 'inscribed through its relation to the state, to conceptions of the international, and

to the question of species.'[72] As such, Bhikari's cries simultaneously signal his positive and negative proximity to the nonhuman. Bhikari's cries return him to a form of elevated humanity insofar as the simile implies that he is not an animal, only like one; and yet his cries also mark him out as inhuman insofar as they render him on the level of the animal. Mahasweta's readers are thus asked to see Bhikari from a sympathetic perspective as a human mourning for his goats, and from the perspective of the police – those who 'may have looked at Bhikari but never really saw him' – as an inhuman who resembles the very animals he cries for. Both of these ultimately indict the state as responsible for 'this loss, this cruel deprivation'.

Bhikari's animal-like cries signify his disposability to the postcolonial nation-state. And it is this category of disposability – as opposed to dignity – that Khanna considers to be a less historically tarnished baseline for measuring politics and ethics in the postcolony. Khanna writes: 'The history of dignity in modernity is entirely different for the countries that were former colonial powers than for the colonised'. As 'the category through which bodies attain humanness', dignity 'is held in high esteem and becomes the source of indignant defense [*sic*] of the subject and the resistance to the questioning of its boundaries.'[73] Like Mahasweta, Khanna takes aim at the UN and the Indian constitution. In turn, she argues that we must 'challenge dignity as a primary category of analysis as the basis of the human', not least because it neglects the logic of inhumanity: 'Is dignity a form of recognition that actively denies the struggle or the labour that lifts the inhuman out of the animality associated with that labour?'[74] Mahasweta's satire of the seven new fundamental rights shares Khanna's suspicions about dignity. 'Fundamental' is thus a 'fiction of dignity', to use Elizabeth Anker's terminology; it is a work of fiction which shows dignity to be a fiction.[75] Here Mahasweta treats the constitution's enshrinement of dignity as a symbolic quick-fix which avoids the hard work of redistribution and its attendant political humanisation of *dusads* such as Bhikari. Until this work happens, Mahasweta's story implies, Bhikari will only escape the inhumanity of the state if he lives out his life as a 'creature of the forest'.

Mahasweta further explores questions of inhumanity, citizenship and likeness with nonhuman animals in 'Douloti, the Bountiful' (first published in 1985; henceforth 'Douloti'). Set in 1975, a few months into India's nationwide State of Emergency, 'Douloti' focuses on the themes of gendered violence and sex trafficking as its eponymous teenage protagonist is forced into a decade of indentured sex work in order to re-pay her father's debts. Douloti performs this labour until her ex-

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[72] Ranjanna Khanna, 'Indignity', *Positions*, 16 (2008), 39–77 (pp. 43–45).

[73] Ibid., pp. 45–46.

[74] Khanna, p. 54.

[75] Elizabeth S. Anker, *Fictions of Dignity: Embodying Human Rights in World Literature* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012).

hausted body simply gives up. In the story's closing passage, Douloti drags herself out into the streets, where she stumbles and collapses onto the floor.[76] Douloti dies on the twenty-eighth anniversary of India's independence, and her dying body slumps into a chalk map of India that has been 'carefully drawn' onto the concrete floor of a schoolyard: 'Filling the entire Indian peninsula from the oceans to the Himalayas', Mahasweta concludes, 'here lies *bonded labour* spread-eagled, kamiya-whore Douloti Nagesia's tormented corpse, putrefied with venereal disease, having vomited up all the blood in its desiccated lungs'.[77] 'Douloti' thus ends by re-writing the gendered nationalist mythos of Mother India, or *Bharat Mata*, in which the Indian subcontinent is imaginatively carto-graphed and patriotically visual-ised as an anthropomorphic goddess. As Sumathi Ramaswamy comments, Dou-loti's dying body obscures the 'anthropomorphic-sacred' pictorial cartography of Mother India, ironising 'a century of […] cartographic practice in which the excep-tional female form of the mother/goddess has been deployed to supplement the cartographic configuration of the nation'.[78] Consequently, 'Douloti' uproots the notion that 'the event of political independence can be automatically assumed to stand between colony and decolonisation as an unexamined good', demonstrating synecdochically how the gendered subaltern remains internally colonised and in-human within the symbolically decolonised nation.[79] Importantly, Mahasweta's concluding passage hinges on her figuration of Douloti's 'tormented corpse' as an 'it'. This figuration evokes the two sides of this creaturely inhuman that I have been discussing throughout this section, as someone who is rendered powerless and yet still possesses a residual but haunting power to 'kounter' and expose the logics of dehumanisation. 'Douloti is all over India' (p. 93), the story ends, testify-ing to state-sponsored gender-based violence of the bonded labour system while also depicting Douloti's corpse as haunting India's celebratory commemorations of independence.

Moreover, the lesser-discussed first half of 'Douloti' also foregrounds the relation-ship between inhumanity, animality and disposability. Mahasweta uses four key representational strategies for invoking this relationship: first, she shows how

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[76] Feminist analyses reveal that 'Douloti' showcases the hollowness of independent India's stat-ist rhetoric as its institutions continually pauperise subalterns into bonded labour and sex traf-ficking. See: Sara Ahmed, 'This Other and Other Others', *Economy and Society*, 31 (2002), 558–572 (p. 566); Laura Barberán Reinares, *Sex Trafficking in Postcolonial Literature: Transnational Nar-ratives from Joyce to Bolaño* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 78; Nivedita Majumdar, 'The Nation and its Outcastes: A Reading of Mahasweta Devi's *Douloti the Bountiful*', *South Asian Review*, 30 (2009), 157–171 (p. 151).

[77] Mahasweta, 'Douloti, the Bountiful', in *Imaginary Maps*, pp. 19–73 (p. 93). All further refer-ences to this particular story will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[78] Sumathi Ramaswamy, *The Goddess and the Nation: Mapping Mother India* (Durham: Duke Uni-versity Press, 2010), pp. 9, 284.

[79] Spivak, 'Woman in Difference', pp. 106–107.

bonded-labourers are conceived of as animals; second, she shows how they are also conceived of as less valuable than animals; third, how they in turn internalise these conceptions and conceive of themselves as animals; and fourth, how they simultaneously reject this identification with animality. Thus 'Douloti' has a broader and more ambivalent recourse to animality than 'Fundamental', and uses its own plotting of inhumanity to lead towards Douloti's eventual imprisonment in sex trafficking. In the story's first half, Mahasweta narrates the events leading up to Douloti's prostitution, scrutinising the bonded labour system (the kamyouti) which, as she explicates elsewhere, is a consequence of the 'feudal land-system' which was left largely in place after independence: 'The poor of Palamau have no choice. Between death by slow starvation and bondage, they will choose the latter.'[80] Mahasweta focuses on the district of Seora village and the devastating effects of bond-slavery on Douloti's father, Ganori Nagesia. Ganori is pushed into life as a bonded-labour (a kamiya) after falling into debt with Seora's rich landowner, Munabar Singh. Trapped in the servitude of endlessly repaying his debt, Ganori's job becomes infinite: 'Everything is his job. [He] can't reckon what is and is not his job.' Ganori focalises: 'I am everything. I am his chattel slave.' (p. 20). Even the manual labour that nonhuman animals are made to perform is included in this 'everything': 'The big *officer's* Dad, the big landowner of the area, Munabar Singh Chandela, has put the axle of the carriage on the shoulders of a human being and is screaming his abuse, shaking his whip' (p. 34). Ganori is crushed under the carriage's weight, hospitalised and thereafter disabled, 'broke into a crooked mis-shape' (p. 20). Like Bhikari, 'he will never be able to stand straight in his life' (p. 37). Ganori thus becomes known as 'Crook Nagesia', and begins to associate his disability and slavery with a form of animality: 'We are all animals. It's good that the master beat me and made me crooked. What should he do with an animal but beat it?' (p. 34). He thinks of a member of his community, Bono Nagesia, who has escaped bond slavery and moved to the city: 'if there is a real human being in Seora, it is Bono' (p. 34); '[Bono's] seen the world. How brave he is. Not an animal like us' (p. 35). Crook's inhumanity is augmented by Paramananda Mishir, the self-proclaimed compassionate philanthropist who eventually sells Douloti into sex trafficking. Paramananda shouts at Crook: 'Idiot, pig, old goat!', labelling him a 'dumb beast' (pp. 45–46).

When discussing the story's origins, Mahasweta remarks that she 'saw with [her] own eyes the brutalities of the existing land-system.' One such brutality is the land-system's ready exploitation of bonded labourers, who are rendered less valuable than bullocks. 'I saw this man, whose right side, from arm to ankle, was de-

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[80] Mahasweta Devi, *Dust on the Road: The Activist Writings of Mahasweta Devi*, ed. and trans. by Maitreya Ghatak (Calcutta: Seagull, 1997), pp. 26, 10. Across her writing, Mahasweta uses interchangeably 'Palamau' and 'Palamu'.

formed.' His landlord 'made him lift a paddy-laden cart to take to the village market. He fell and his right side was crushed under the heavy cart. I asked the malik [landlord], Why not use bullocks? He answered, If a bullock dies in this heat, I lose a thousand rupees. He is just a bonded labourer. His life is of no value'.[81] Mahasweta thus frames her story as representing a political and economic situation in which bonded labourers are more expendable than nonhuman labour. Just as Crook Nagesia is figured by upper-castes as being an animal, and just as he himself internalises this figuration and self-identifies as an animal, his landlord also exploits him because he is instrumentalised as less valuable than a work animal. But 'Douloti' also shows how adivasis reject their equation with animality. When a government census taker arrives in Seora, the adivasi communities adamantly reject his attempts to gain information. 'At this point, unsettling everyone, arrived the body count or census of 1961. Mohan Dusad knows the various disasters that can happen if human beings are counted like cows and sheep' (p. 31). In the adivasis' collective memory, being counted like cows and sheep portends hunger and famine: 'It is most unnatural to count human beings.' 'You count people, you are asking for famine. There was a census at the time of my father's father. And right away a big Hunger, a real famine. All the new babies were deaf and dumb.' (p. 31). Although the government employee understands the census as an affirmative biopolitical instrument – a classificatory system that would, in principle, allow the government to equitably allocate resources to its population – the adivasis associate the census only with a form of what Achille Mbembe describes as 'necropolitics', the genocidal negation of biopolitics.[82] For them, as for Mbembe, the census is an anthropological machine of knowledge production, inherited from nineteenth-century colonial anthropology, which collects, categorises and colonises life in order to render it expendable to the advance of the state. To be counted like animals is, for the adivasis, a confirmation of their abandonment to inhumanity rather than an entrance into the state's purview of concern: 'Everything will be as before. Delhi's rules will not work in Palamu' (p. 40). By mining these contradictory aspects of adivasi 'likeness' with animals, Mahasweta highlights how maliks put their bond-labourers to work *as* and as *less than* animals; she also has adivasis reject their conceptual proximity with animality, testifying to how inhumanity drives subjugated humans to lay claim to their humanity against the animal. This builds a complicated picture of how animal metaphorics operate within the discourse of development.

To close this section I want to examine one more of Mahasweta's narratives of inhumanity. In 'The Hunt' (1978), Mahasweta has her protagonist, Mary Oraon, re-appropriate her own perceived inhumanity in order to redress the private pur-

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[81] Mahasweta, 'Introduction', in *Bitter Soil*, pp. viii–ix.
[82] Achille Mbembe, *On the Postcolony* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), p. 26.

chase and development of adivasi forest land. In doing so, she re-sacralises a de-sacralised hunting ritual, hunts the hunter, and inverts the gendered economy of inhumanity. Set in and around the sal forests of Kuruda, 'The Hunt' stages a collision of community and capital via the bloodstained meeting of its adivasi protagonist, Mary, and the corrupt lumber contractor, Tehsildar Singh, whose arrival brings a storm to Kuruda's 'quiet and impoverished existence'.[83] Narrated in three parts, the story begins by characterising Mary, the mixed race, illegitimate daughter of an adivasi woman, Bhikni, and the son of a colonial patriarch: 'Mary's mother looked after the Dixons' bungalow and household. Dixon's son came back in 1959 and sold the house, the forest, everything else. He put Mary in Bhikni's womb before he left. He went to Australia' (p. 2). The implication here is that Bhikni was raped, with Dixon's son colonising her body a decade after India declared independence. Now at 'eighteen years old, tall, flat-featured, light copper skin', Mary has countless admirers and propositions of marriage. Nevertheless she intends to marry Jalim, a Muslim. 'Many men had wanted to be her lover', but '[w]ho can tell that they wouldn't leave her, like Bhikni [her mother] was left with a baby in her belly?' (p. 3) Mahasweta thus characterises Mary as a knowing product and bearer of a sexually violent and gendered (neo-)colonial history.

Just as Mahasweta depicts Mary as the product of colonisation, so too does she conceive of the sal forest that surrounds Mary's village as being inseparable from colonial history. Spivak's translation registers this in her translation by consistently italicising imported English words which linguistically highlight the intimacy of the colonial encounter:[84] 'Once upon a time whites had *timber plantations* in Kuruda' (p. 2). After independence, these plantations were sold to landowners, whose goal continues to be 'to sell the trees at the highest price' (p. 6). 'The Hunt' can therefore be counted among Mahasweta's 'forest fictions', a term Wenzel uses in order to group together those stories which 'attend to the fact of deforestation in India'.[85] Such deforestation, 'The Hunt' shows, is both a legacy of colonial domination and a specific articulation of post-independence agro-industrial development strategy. For although sal forests were 'thoroughly intertwined with the precapitalist communal economy and social relations of the tribes', Spivak writes, the forest was transformed under colonialism into a timber plantation.[86] In the late twentieth century, the forest's raw materials were further commercialised and the commons privatised anew in the so-called Green Revolution, which was well into its second decade by the time Mahasweta composed 'The Hunt'. Vandana Shiva

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[83] Mahasweta Devi, 'The Hunt', in *Imaginary Maps*, pp. 1–17 (p. 6). All further references to this particular story will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

[84] *Imaginary Maps*, p. xxxi.

[85] Wenzel, 'Forest Fictions', p. 138.

[86] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education in the Era of Globalization* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 69.

explains that the Green Revolution was a 'techno-political' experiment in agricultural transformation which promised the alleviation of poverty and starvation, but quickly became 'conflict-producing instead of conflict-reducing', eventually culminating in the declaration of a forest crisis in 1984.[87]

Mahasweta plots 'The Hunt' so that Tehsildar Singh's brokering of the sal tree deal coincides with the Oraon annual hunting festival, a celebratory hunt in which men from neighbouring communities hunt together, drink and eat, sing and dance, and, crucially, 'bring offenders to justice' (p. xviii). Every twelve years, though, this yearly hunt becomes the *Jani Parab*: here women, rather than men, perform the ancestral ritual, thus reversing the gender dynamics of the community and constructing a ritualised space for female assertion.[88] 'For twelve years men run the hunt. Then comes the women's turn. It's Jani Parab. Like the men they too go out with bow and arrow. They run in the forest and hill. They kill hedgehogs, rabbits, birds, whatever they can get' (p. 12). But Mahasweta sets 'The Hunt' in a world where the ancestral festival has been colonised and emptied of meaning. 'Once there were animals in the forest, life was wild, the hunt game had meaning. Now the forest is empty, life wasted and drained, the hunt game meaningless. Only the day's joy is real' (p. 12). 'The Hunt' therefore depicts commercial logging as creating hunger, social inequities and ecological crises. The developmental drive not only exposes ecosystems to new threats, but in doing also desecrates – which is to say, desacralises – adivasi sociality. Both the biodiversity of the forest and the social memory of tribal ritual are emptied of meaning.

How to put right these desacralised rites? Mary first encourages her community to resist Tehsildar's plans. She petitions the village elders to forbid the community from selling their labour for the paltry sum of 'Twelve annas and eight annas! No porter carries gentlemen's *cases* for this price' (p. 9). Mary also urges the elders to think about the consequences: not only will Tehsildar fell the forest, but in doing so he will also build a road which will conclusively sever the adivasis' relationship with the forest. But her failure to persuade leads her to pursue a different course of action. Throughout the story, Mahasweta depicts Tehsildar as embodying a repulsive overlap of lusting capitalism and masculinity. To use Stacy Alaimo's

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[87] Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Agriculture, Ecology, and Politics in the South* (London: Zed Books, 1991), pp. 14–15. For further research on the Green Revolution's history, see: Raj Patel, 'The Long Green Revolution', *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 40 (2013), 1–63.

[88] For more on the transformative potential of the *Jani Parab* as a space for assertion, see the conclusions of Anju Oseema Maria Toppo, 'Jani Shikar and its Contemporary Relevance', *Journal of Adivasi and Indigenous Studies*, 8 (2018), 16–28.

phrase, Tehsildar signifies an aggressive 'carbon-heavy masculinity'.[89] On first encountering Mary, for example, Tehsildar remarks 'Wow! What a dish!', before thinking to himself euphemistically that 'Mary can make his stay profitable in the other sense as well' (p. 9). The story thus builds to its crescendo: on the night of the hunt, Mary exploits the festival's state of exception in order to enact justice. And she does this by conceiving of Tehsildar as an animal:

> Mary caresses Tehsildar's face, gives him love bites on the lips. There's fire in Tehsildar's eyes, his mouth is open, his lips wet with spittle, his teeth glistening. Mary is watching, watching, the face changes and changes into? Now? Yes, becomes an animal.
> —– Now take me?
> Mary laughed and held him, laid him on the ground. Tehsildar is laughing, Mary lifts the machete, lowers it, lifts, lowers.
> A few million moons pass. Mary stands up. Blood? On the clothes? […
> S]he throws Tehsildar in the ravine. (pp. 16–17)

Playing with the proximity between sex and death, Mahasweta turns the masculine sovereign into the beast, the hunter into the hunted. Tehsildar thus becomes the eponymous '*Shikar*' – which translates as 'the hunt', 'the victim' and 'the prey' – of the story's Bengali title, and Mary bags the 'biggest kill' of all (p. 17). By Mahasweta's own account, Mary's slaying of Tehsildar 'resurrect[s] the real meaning of the annual hunting festival day by dealing out justice for a crime committed against the entire tribal society' (p. xviii). Mary's response to Tehsildar's 'Now take me?' is to lift her machete, using it as a gavel for proclaiming Tehsildar's death sentence.

How do we interpret this explosive act of retribution? Following Rob Nixon's theorisation of slow violence – namely, that environmental violence tends to occur 'gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space'[90] – critics have suggested that Mahasweta 'implores her audience to measure Mary's act of rapid violence against the slow violence of neocolonialism, which depletes and poisons the ecosystems upon which tribal life depends'.[91] We might also follow Spivak's argument that Mary is a compelling figure for postcolonialism as such. 'If we think of the postcolonial, figuratively, as the

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[89] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), p. 94.

[90] Nixon, p. 3.

[91] Baron Haber, '"We destroyed it undiscovered": Slow Violence, the Gothic, and Neocolonialism in Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps*', *darkmatter* (2016) <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2016/04/02/%e2%80%9cwe-destroyed-it-undiscovered%e2%80%9d-slow-violence-the-gothic-and-neocolonialism-in-mahasweta-devi%e2%80%99s-imaginary-maps/> [Accessed 08/01/2018].

living child of a rape, the making of Mary is, rather literally, its figuration.' Mary thus 'defeat[s] this continuous narrative of exploitation' by becoming a 'vigilant and alert critic of what is violating the land and the people'.[92] 'Mahasweta shows an individual activating ritual into contemporary resistance'.[93] Mary's sacrifice of her would-be rapist thus re-enchants the desacralised ritual, enacting a form of anticolonial resistance which uses the hunt's 'Law-*bir*' (p. xviii), or forest law, in order to create a kind of justice outside of the postcolonial state: 'Let us hunt this way every year', Mary quips triumphantly (p. 17). Mary thus envisions a yearly *Jani Parab*, a yearly festival in which adivasi women invert the gendered processes of dehumanisation by which they are marginalised, performing ritualistic violence against neo-colonial aggressors.

Moreover, Mary's reinscription of the ritual rejects the imposition of inhumanity and re-projects the concept of animality onto Tehsildar. Mary deliberately pictures Tehsildar as the beast to be hunted. By mouthing the word to herself, 'A-ni-mal' (p. 13), Mary absorbs the exploitative contractor into what Spivak calls 'the script of Oraon performance'.[94] Neel Ahuja theorises this appropriation of animality with the term 'animal mask', a process in which 'animality' can be utilised to expose rather than reproduce logics of species and racial subjugation.[95] The animal mask names the ways in which Mary moves the inhuman logic of animality away from adivasi populations, away from nonhuman animals themselves – the forest's dwindling hedgehogs, hares, and partridges – and onto the capitalist figure of Man. Against what Etienne Balibar calls the 'systematic "bestialisation" of individuals and racialised human groups', Mary constructs Tehsildar as the 'big beast' (p. 15).[96] Thought of alongside Jacques Derrida's work on the uncanny proximities between the beast and the sovereign, we might say that Mahasweta depicts Mary's inhumanity as being *below and without access to the law*, and Tehsildar's sovereignty as being *above the law*.[97] Because of this, Mary repurposes her community's law – the forest law – as a form of salvific justice which allows her to slay the sovereign.

Mary therefore boomerangs back Tehsildar inhuman act. She inverts the economy of sexual violence via the metaphorics of the species border, uses the *Jani Parab* to turn him into an inhuman, into an animal. Mary's retributive actions thus appear

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[92] Spivak, 'Who Claims Alterity?', pp. 67–71.

[93] Spivak, 'Afterword', in *Imaginary Maps*, p. 202; Burns and others, p. 90.

[94] Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education*, p. 52.

[95] Ahuja, p. 558.

[96] Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, trans. by Chris Turner (London: Verso, 1991), p. 56.

[97] Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign*, vol. 1, ed. by Michel Lisse, Marie-Louise Mallet, and Ginette Michaud, trans. by Geoffrey Bennington (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), p. 17.

to take the form of what Frantz Fanon describes as the 'cleansing force' of liberatory counter-violence.[98] We can read Mary's gendered and decolonial cleansing ritual in line with Fanon's idea of counter-violence as an attempt to restore a stolen humanity back to the colonised subject. But this ritual is also performed in the service of the ecologically emptied forests themselves. Thus while we might read Mahasweta's adoption of species metaphors as a form of anthropocentrism which buys into the killability of nonhuman life, we must also keep in mind that Mary *discursively* appropriates the semiotics of the beast in order to *materially* preserve the life of the ecosystem in the long term. On the day of the hunt, Mary cautions a frightened hare: 'Go back! No fear!' (p. 15). This chance encounter is altogether different from the human-hare encounter we saw in Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn*. In contrast to Sebald's unnamed narrator, Mary is not stunned into pensive introspection by the petrified and darting hare. Instead, she instructs the hare to move out of the way and return to the forest. Mary's violence against Tehsildar must consequently be read alongside her love for the long term health of the forests. And the story ends thus: 'Today all the mundane blood-conditioned fears of the wild quadruped are gone because [Mary] has killed the biggest beast' (p. 17). Mary is not a model of pro-animal ethics, nor is she sympathetic to animals in the ways that Sebald's and Coetzee's characters often are. After all, the hunt is usually exactly that: a hunt. But Mary can nevertheless be claimed as pro-animal insofar as she understands that development dispossesses both human and nonhuman populations. More than this, Mary also takes up action based on this understanding. By boomeranging back the metaphoric category of the 'inhuman' away from those deemed inhuman – such as Bhikari, Crook Nagesia, and the Denotified Tribes – and *onto* those figures of sovereignty whose claims to personal, political and economic development structurally rely on decimating adivasis and their land, Mary's violence reinscribes animality in order to resist the anthropogenic obliteration of human and nonhuman life.

Across the three short stories analysed above, Mahasweta writes narratives of the inhuman which focus on characters who are structurally constituted as creaturely outcasts by the post-independence constitution. As a coterminous but different project to her political work with the DNT-RAG, Mahasweta's short stories tease out the immanent paradoxes of governmental sovereignty in the postcolonial nation. By pushing up against the confines of institutional politics, these short stories pinpoint the breakdowns, loopholes and limited reach of the law, as well as the gendered dynamics of power that operate within this empty space. Mahasweta's narratives of the inhuman thus show, on the one hand, how adivasis and low-casts are abandoned, dispossessed, exploited and constituted as creaturely by

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[98] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. by Constance Farrington (London: Penguin, 1990), p. 74.

postcolonial governance. But at the same time, Mahasweta also imagines different ways in which her subaltern characters assert their autonomy, however ambivalent and circumscribed their actions might be rendered within the narrative's endings. Mahasweta's short stories thus develop their own concentrated temporalities in order to depict explosive energies which resist the often violence of development.

'Entering Life': Writing the Pterodactyl

I now want to turn from Mahasweta's figurations of the inhuman to her figurations of the nonhuman. In 'Pterodactyl', Mahasweta writes another literary work which pushes back against the developmentalism of postcolonial India. But the story's resistance to development is also accompanied and *determined by* the textual presence of an explicitly nonhuman figure. This section consequently analyses the relationship between these two aspects. By closely reading Mahasweta's plotting and narrative on the one hand, and her literary strategies for representing the pterodactyl on the other, I argue that 'Pterodactyl' calls into question its protagonist's autonomous humanity and instantiates a form of human-to-nonhuman responsibility closely intertwined with the fight for adivasi survival. Focusing in particular on what I will call Mahasweta's *literary de-extinction* of the pterodactyl – by which I mean the specific representational strategies she employs to write the extinct nonhuman – I interrogate how 'Pterodactyl' destabilises the anthropological machine of agro-industrial development, undermines the drives of 'human' character development, and salvages a form of ecologically-attuned survival via the alterity of the nonhuman. Ultimately, 'Pterodactyl' is creaturely because it calls on its protagonist to 'enter life' (p. 158).

'Pterodactyl' is a longer work than the short stories analysed above, and has been described variously as a long short story, a novella, and a short novel (*uponyash* in Bengali). This generic indeterminacy works in the story's favour, as Mahasweta appropriates and subverts some of the narrative motifs of the coming-of-age, third-person narrated, ostensibly humanist novel which negotiates between private autonomy and social responsibility. Structured in seven parts and set during the fortieth anniversary-year of India's independence, 'Pterodactyl' follows a 'self-reliant' (p. 14) and dispassionate journalist, Puran Sahay, who travels to a famine-ravaged and agro-chemically polluted village located in the heart of *Madhya Bharat*, or Middle India (p. 101). Puran journeys to Pirtha in order to report on how the postcolonial state has disregarded Pirtha village to starvation, enteric fever, corruption, and police violence. More than this, Puran also arrives with a humanitarian ambition: by investigating the rumoured sightings and wall-engravings of a

peculiar winged creature, drawn by an adivasi child, Bikhia, Puran intends to write a captivating story that will put Pirtha 'on the *map*' (p. 137) of national concern attention, drawing attention to Pirtha's starving community. Mahasweta characterises Puran as being 'untroubled by the maelstrom of political moves in Bihar or the pre-historic warfare of casteism' (p. 97). Puran 'gives money to all political parties' and treats the intractability of caste in the Indian subcontinent as a mere business opportunity: 'The newspaper is a business to him. If reporting caste war keeps his paper going, so be it. Nothing will touch him' (p. 97). By witnessing the impacts of agro-industrial development on adivasi lives, which have turned Pirtha village into a 'place of perennial starvation' (p. 104), Puran must 'develop' across the story's one-hundred pages into a more committed citizen, no longer a disinterested observer of history.

But if Puran starts off as a character who cannot be touched, Mahasweta plots 'Pterodactyl' in such a way that Puran finds himself affected by what she calls 'the touch of our times' (p. 140). On first sight, Mahasweta frames Puran's development as revolving around a desire to become a *more fully human subject*. Puran 'considers himself half-human at forty-five', 'merely floating in the everyday world' (p. 97); 'a half-man, a rootless weed' (p. 160). Thus Pirtha village represents a staging ground for Puran to perform a kind of humanitarian work which would solipsistically expand his own sense of his humanness. Mahasweta reinforces this by describing Puran's preparations for his research trip. Puran packs lightly in order to assimilate himself to what he presumes to be the adivasis' sleeping and eating habits. When he arrives in Pirtha, Puran insists that he will sleep on the floor, and asks only for simple food (pp. 107–108). But Shankar, the village's representative, rebuts Puran's 'urban-mentality': 'you people understand nothing. Will our hunger lessen if you don't eat?' (p. 136). These scenes puncture Puran's 'humanitarian fetishism'. According to Julietta Singh, humanitarian fetishism diagnoses the 'good intentions' of an egoistic liberal empathy which prides itself on being 'inherently nonmasterful'.[99] Shankar's retort shatters this. Shankar cautions Puran to give up his claims to imitating the customs of adivasi sociality, and to acknowledge rather than disavow his complicity with adivasis' systemic marginalisation.

In turn, Puran's development becomes not so much an entrance into fully formed personhood, but more of a stumble into creaturely relationality and vulnerability. When Puran is confronted on his first night by the figure of the pterodactyl, he becomes irrevocably touched by the *dactyl*, or finger, of a nonhuman history which India's modernising developmentalism is bulldozing over. The pterodactyl arrives

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[99] Julietta Singh, *Unthinking Mastery: Dehumanism and Decolonial Entanglements* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), pp. 97, 102.

'half claw scratching, half floating', crossing the '*passageway*' into Puran's room as he and Bikhia prepare to sleep. In this moment, what Mahasweta describes as the 'touch of our times' becomes conceptualised as a touch which is also entirely out of time. It is contemporaneous with the present 'now', but it is also a transhistorical touch *across* time which engages temporalities that exceed the human:

> From the other side of millions of years the soul of the ancestors of Shankar's people looks at Puran, and the glance is so prehistoric that Puran's brain cells, spreading a hundred antennae, understand nothing of that glance. […]
>
> The creature is breathing, its body is trembling. Puran backs off with measured steps. (p. 141)

The pterodactyl's prehistoric gaze is incomprehensible, destabilising Puran to the point that water 'streams from his eyes' (p. 142). Significantly, though, he quickly determines the stakes of what he has just experienced, and he proleptically imagines what the consequences would be if he were to report this 'explosive discovery' (p. 143). He imagines a scene in which 'Newspapers and scientists from the world over are pouring into Pirtha, extinguishing the tribals altogether' (p. 142). He adds later that 'all the countries of the world will conduct investigations out of Pirtha everywhere, into the last forest, the last cave, to see where the prehistoric time and creature are still hidden. That invasion will be inevitable' (p. 162). Against the anticipated 'invasion' of adivasi forest lands, which would turn Pirtha into a paleontological digging site and tourist destination, Puran decides to conceal the pterodactyl, to omit it from his final report, and to no longer archive the pterodactyl within the national imaginary. Because the forest lands have been already been 'invaded and devastated' (p. 161), Puran realises that it is he who must shoulder the 'intolerable burden' (p. 143) of the discovery: 'You are now invaded' (p. 182), Mahasweta's omniscient narrator tells him. Against the archival imperative to catalogue life, Puran abandons his original goal to put Pirtha 'on the *map*' (p. 137). He recognises the need to keep the pterodactyl's presence a secret: 'I won't go near, I won't touch you, I will not take your picture with the flash bulb of my camera' (p. 155). Puran thus learns how to be touched by – and yet not himself touch – the nonhuman:

> I do not wish to touch you, you are outside my wisdom, reason, and feelings, who can place his hand on the axial moment of the end of the third phase of the Mesozoic and the beginnings of the Cenozoic geological ages? That is a story of seventy-five million years. […] Have you left the pages of some picture book, taken shape so that you can give some urgent news to today's humans, have you come here because Pirtha is also endangered, its existence under attack for other kinds of reasons? […]
>
> There is no communication between eyes. (pp. 156–157)

Puran recognises but resists mastering the 'axial moment' of history. Put in the Benjaminian register with which I began this thesis, Puran takes off the gloves of anthropocentrism. Cautious of the pterodactyl's broken wing, Puran and Bikhia bring it moss, rice, kodo millet, dead gnats, mud, a small fish and a bowl of water (p. 154). But the pterodactyl does not eat. Puran consults dinosaur encyclopaedias, but comes away from these books in further confusion. Soon enough, the pterodactyl dies. Puran and Bikhia decide to conceal the pterodactyl's body even after its death: they covertly bury the pterodactyl in the nearby caves, and Puran omits the pterodactyl from his final report. The report buries the pterodactyl linguistically in order to concentrate on the reasons for Pirtha's 'persistent famine' (p. 188).

All of this is to say that Puran's 'self-reliant' (p. 140) humanity gives way to a kind of cross-species relationality which is prompted by the nonhuman. Puran's character 'development' is thus confirmed by his safeguarding of the pterodactyl. Come the closing pages of the novel, the narrative voice asserts that Puran 'cannot remain a distant spectator anywhere in life' (p. 196). Importantly, this notion of 'life' has something to do with a life beyond the confines of the human. For as Mahasweta writes, 'the human being, modern man[,] is afraid to know life by entering life' (p. 158). Mahasweta inculcates Puran to transform his narrow conception of life. Puran must 'know life by entering life', accepting his non-identification with and non-knowledge of the other. 'One has to leave finally without knowing many things' (p. 180), Mahasweta writes. To put this in more theoretical terms, while 'Pterodactyl' appears on first glance to formally recapitulate linear structures of humanisation and personality development, Mahasweta in fact plots her story so that such humanisations are transformed rather than uncritically reproduced. We can therefore read 'Pterodactyl' in conversation with Joseph Slaughter's analysis of the literary form, developmentalism, and what he calls postcolonial *Bildungsromane*.[100] If the prototypical *Bildungsroman* follows a protagonist's development and subjectivation as they become an autonomous yet responsible citizen of the *polis*,[101] and if a consequence of this is that the *Bildungsroman* functions as a genre of *humanisation*, in which the (predominantly male) protagonist 'undergo[es] *Bildung* [in order] to identify with humanity',[102] then Slaughter reads postcolonial interpretations of the *Bildungsroman* as both expanding and troubling the form's generic logics. 'Postcolonial *Bildungsromane*', Slaughter writes, reveal that 'the atomistic, self-sufficient individual is a hyperbole […] an effect of fiction and its figurative technologies.' Postcolonial *Bildungsromane* are thus texts 'of disil-

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[100] Slaughter, p. 32.

[101] Jerome Hamilton Buckley, *Season of Youth: The Bildungsroman from Dickens to Golding* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 17.

[102] Marc Redfield, 'The Bildungsroman', in *Oxford Encyclopedia of British Literature*, ed. by David Scott Kastan (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 191–194 (p. 193).

lusionment, in which the promises of developmentalism and self-determination are revealed to be empty'.[103]

'Pterodactyl' is not a *Bildungsroman*. But Slaughter's analysis of the novel form sharpens our understanding of what is at stake when Mahasweta's story comes to an end:

> Now Puran's amazed heart discovers what love for Pirtha there is in his heart, perhaps he cannot remain a distant spectator anywhere in life.
> Pterodactyl's eyes.
> Bikhia's eyes. […]
> A *truck* comes by.
> Puran raises his hand, steps up. (p. 196)

If character development tends to be most visible in crescendos of anagnorisis, in which a given protagonist is hailed into humanity as they negotiate self-enclosed autonomy and community-bound citizenship, then Puran's realisations denote less his entrance into full humanity and more an accidental encounter with creaturely responsibilities. Puran 'steps up' into what Spivak calls 'action within the post-colonial new nation',[104] but he does so with his gaze turned towards the two irreducible alterities of the nonhuman and the inhuman. 'Pterodactyl' therefore ends by looking to a horizon of responsibility, activism and love that evolves out of an affinity with the other, exceeds the borders of 'modern man', and thereby frustrates the trajectories of anthropocentric developmentalism. I will discuss the implications of this in the conclusion below, but before I do so it is imperative to consider the specific textual role the pterodactyl plays in prompting Puran's transformation.

Since their discovery in the nineteenth century, dinosaurs have repeatedly appeared in the cultural imaginary as surrogates for human preoccupations. In 'Pterodactyl', Puran's emerging creaturely responsibilities hinge on the textual presence of a dinosaur. So why does Mahasweta's story pivot on this nonhuman figure? Taken in sum, the prevailing scholarship on 'Pterodactyl' articulates an antinomous reading of the story's prehistoric figurehead. For some readers, the pterodactyl's paradoxical presence as an extinct-yet-living being intensifies Puran's fall into responsibility. The pterodactyl's radical alterity – a sort of alterity-beyond-alterity – makes an impossible demand of hospitality, stupefying Puran's 'brain cells' (p. 142). The pterodactyl therefore acts as a test of commitment that undergirds the plot. Thus for Spivak, it is a figure of singularity with 'the peculiar

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[103] Slaughter, p. 215.
[104] Spivak, 'Afterword', in *Imaginary Maps*, pp. 197–205 (p. 205).

corporeality of a spectre' that beckons Puran into responsibility.[105] And for Filippo Menozzi, the pterodactyl encourages a form of 'postcolonial custodianship' from its guardians.[106] For other critics, however, Puran's commitment to this pterosaur exposes a fetishistic obsession with nonhuman alterity *over and above the human.* Neil Lazarus notes, for example, that 'it is presumably easier for the 'modern' consciousness to rest with the absurd suggestion that the creature is an extant pterodactyl than with the idea – diegetically framed as true – that it is the embodied form of the soul of the ancestors of the inhabitants of Pirtha.'[107] Read this way, 'Pterodactyl' ironises its protagonist; it suggests that it is easier for Puran to cathect to this Late-Jurassic alterity-beyond-alterity, this lost object, rather than the 'mere' alterity of adivasis. In much the same way, Lazarus also implies that Mahasweta's Anglophone readers have fixated on the pterodactyl and forgotten the adivasis of Pirtha. At once, then, Mahasweta's pterodactyl operates as a call into the ethics of alterity and as an ironic indictment of the ethics of alterity.

Yet what often goes unexplored in these debates is the question of *how* these antimonies are made possible. *How* does Mahasweta formally write the pterodactyl into the text? If we want to understand why some readers consider the pterodactyl to be little more than Puran's hallucinatory projection, others read it as a mere symbol for adivasi extinction, and others take it to be a 'literal symbol' and 'undeniable fact', then we must identify the particular literary strategies that Mahasweta adopts when incorporating the pterodactyl.[108] In what follows, I will describe these representational techniques under the banner of *literary de-extinction*. If de-extinction names a divisive bio-technical regeneration of previous extinct species – predominantly charismatic megafauna, such as woolly mammoths and thylacines – then I will adopt the formulation *literary de-extinction* in order to describe a mode of writing which reanimates extinct life forms within a given text's diegetic present tense. But while de-extinction projects are driven by both a melancholic attachment to the sublimity of the lost object and a biocapitalist archive fever, I will show how Mahasweta's literary de-extinction undermines this logic of mastery by dwelling in ambiguity, smallness, and vulnerability. In other words, Mahasweta taps into the indeterminate semiotics of the dinosaur-sign, but without reproducing the narrative tropes of de-extinction as in, say, the *Jurassic Park* franchise. Instead she adopts representational techniques which cloak and obscure the pterodactyl's presence, portraying it as small, minor, and fragile.

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[105] Spivak, *An Aesthetic Education*, p. 210.

[106] Filippo Menozzi, *Postcolonial Custodianship: Cultural and Literary Inheritance* (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 62.

[107] Lazarus, *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, p. 250 fn. 67.

[108] Caroline Rooney, *African Literature, Animism and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 110.

From the outset, it is clear that Mahasweta mines the dinosaur-sign for many of its abiding significations. Think, for example, of some of the key semantic associations which readers might bring to dinosaurs: prehistory, extinction, discovery, and excavation. Mahasweta thematises these keywords not only to depict the deep sense of temporality that stretches between Puran and the pterodactyl, in the process troubling the division between the human present and the nonhuman past, but to also index the position of adivasis within the Indian subcontinent. This is dangerous terrain, as by doing this Mahasweta risks equating dinosaur and adivasi life, thus presenting adivasis as being 'prehistoric' like the pterodactyl. Under this reading, the pterodactyl would merely serve as a metaphor for adivasi life as premodern and static, as *fossilised*, thereby recapitulating a dangerously nostalgic and fetishised representation of adivasis as primitive communities, outside of time and harmoniously tethered to nature. But I want to argue that Mahasweta commits to this possible conflation precisely because she intends to critique the false equivalence of adivasis and premodernity. She draws on the figure of the pterodactyl because – as an actual prehistoric being – it confirms by its difference the adivasis' contemporaneity to the text's twentieth century setting. The pterodactyl's disjunctive temporality reveals the 'now' of adivasi life. But at the same time, she is committed to adivasi claims to contemporaneity *and* indigeneity. Mahasweta understands that adivasis advance a political claim to indigeneity which rejects the hegemonic 'now' of postcolonial India. By turning to the figure of the pterodactyl, then, Mahasweta attempts to reappropriate a form of prehistory which is not tarnished by the history of anthropocentric developmental modernity.

Mahasweta also quilts today's anthropogenic extinctions with the mass-extinction events which marked the beginning and end of the Mesozoic period. In doing so, Mahasweta's readers are asked to identify how today's 'obliterated' and 'murdered nature' as a geological, continental, and multispecies 'crime' (p. 157), a crime against life which rivals the scale of devastation in former mass extinctions. In effect, then, 'Pterodactyl' anticipates the recent conceptualisation of the 'sixth extinction' as a slow and anthropogenically-produced mass-extinction event in which the rate of species diversity loss is similar in intensity to the event around 65 million years ago which wiped out the dinosaurs.[109] 'Pterodactyl' shows us that extinction is a constituent feature of planetary life. But it also reveals how extinction is not just an organic process or an outcome of spectacular events, such as an asteroid hurtling into the earth, but also an anthropogenic 'process' (p. 174) hastened by modernity's development programmes. Therefore, Mahasweta does not collapse into sameness the 'unnatural' extinction of adivasi life and the 'natural' extinction of pterosaurs. Instead, 'Pterodactyl' reflects on different kinds of extinction over planetary history, exposing the contrast between the mass extinctions of

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[109] Ashley Dawson, *Extinction: A Radical History* (New York: OR Books, 2016), pp. 11–12.

the past and the anthropogenic extinctions of the present. The figure of the pterodactyl thus appears to guard against any easy equivalency between adivasi and nonhuman. And yet at the same time it metaphorically links their shared vulnerability together into one creaturely relationship. As Puran reflects, 'both your existences are greatly endangered' (p. 156). Puran knows that the pterodactyl and the adivasis are both facing their own specific extinctions. This prospect of double-extinction is bolstered by Mahasweta's utilisation of cartographic metaphors. The survey map of Pirtha is described as looking *like* an animal, 'like some extinct animal of Gondwanaland. The beast has fallen on its face […] It is as if some prehistoric creature had fallen on its face' (p. 99). The shadow of the pterodactyl is thus read as being literally imprinted on the cartography of the adivasi village; at the same time, it is as if the cartographic technologies of modernisation have produced the pterodactyl itself.

The pterodactyl also opens up space for Puran to consider the prospect of his own extinction. Puran recognises in the pterodactyl's 'wordsoundless message' (p. 155) that he 'is a newcomer in the history of the earth's revolution. The human being is only a few million years old' (p. 154). As a paradoxical living fossil, the pterodactyl conjures up a pre-human memory of the planet that destabilises the apparent sovereignty and uniqueness of the human species, alerting us to an epochal sense of time marked by extinction:

> What does [the pterodactyl] want to tell? We are extinct by the inevitable natural geological evolution. You too are endangered. You too will become extinct in nuclear explosions, or in war, or in the aggressive advance of the strong as it obliterates the weak, which finally turns you naked, barbaric, primitive, think if you are going forward or back. (p. 157)

Mahasweta thus stages Puran's attempt to decode the message hidden behind the pterodactyl's prehistoric eyes, to listen to its extinction speaking back to him. Indeed, Mahasweta's narrative momentarily inhabits the perspective of the pterodactyl itself, thus creating a kind of nonhuman narration which speaks back to the human. The pterodactyl's apostrophic formulations directly address Puran, calling on him to 'think', to witness, and carry the responsibility for the 'aggressive advance' of the human epoch. Puran thus recognises his complicity with human genocide and nonhuman ecocide. The anaphoric repetition of 'you too' also insists that Puran is comparably vulnerable. By listening to the pterodactyl's paradoxical 'wordsoundless message', Puran begins to conceive of human history as contingent. Humanity is not exempt from extinction, but is as potentially finite and vulnerable as the pterodactyl itself. To draw on the concepts of vulnerability, community and ethics articulated across Jacques Derrida's and Judith Butler's work,

we might argue that Puran reads the fragile pterodactyl as a 'radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life'. The pterodactyl, as the 'possibility of the impossible', therefore derives its force from its 'nonpower'.[110] Consequently, the pterodactyl's 'vulnerability' establishes a common corporeal vulnerability, a 'shared condition' of life that, by contesting the 'anthropocentric conceit' of the 'monadic individual', hails Puran into a creaturely community.[111]

Later, Mahasweta intensifies these themes of vulnerability, extinction, and deep time when she imagines the pterodactyl as a witness to planetary history. In one striking passage which surveys the increasing militarisation of human life, Mahasweta uses Puran's encounter with the pterodactyl in order to contest the technological reason of the Cold War era:

> Having seen history from beyond pre-history, continental drift, seasonal changes after much geological turbulence, the advent of the human race, primordial history, the history of the ancient lands, the Middle Ages, the present age, two World Wars, Hiroshima-Nagasaki, holding under its wing this entire history and the current planetary arms race and the terror of nuclear holocaust, it came to give some sharply urgent news. (p. 180)

While Coetzee's and Sebald's work draws on the Holocaust as a paradigmatic touchstone for meditating on anthropocentric thought, here Mahasweta draws on the invention of nuclear weaponry as a decisive twentieth-century event which positions the human as anticipating – even precipitating – its future extinction.[112] In doing so, Mahasweta pushes the debate on the creaturely away from its mostly European imaginary, away from the preoccupation with industrial agriculture, for example, and towards the question of how life itself – both human and nonhuman – is 'endangered' in the late twentieth century. For the pterodactyl, the 'present age' of the twentieth century is marked by the planetary horror of two World Wars and the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. 'Having seen history from pre-history', the pterodactyl therefore delivers its 'urgent' message because the human species is heading towards a planetary 'nuclear holocaust'. This prompts Puran to recalibrate his relationship with the planet. Puran asks: 'Have you come

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[110] Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 28.

[111] Butler, pp. 13, 23.

[112] Steve Brusatte's *The Rise and Fall of the Dinosaurs: The Untold Story of a Lost World* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2018) explores the connections between paleontology and nuclear science. He reveals how the accepted theory of dinosaur extinction – a six-mile-wide asteroid smashing into the planet 66 million years ago – was developed by a major contributor to the Manhattan Project, Luis Alvarez, who flew alongside the Enola Gay when 'Little Boy' was dropped on Hiroshima.

up from the past to warn us, are you telling us that this man-made poverty and famine is a crime, this widespread thirst is a crime, it is a crime to take away the forest and make the forest-dwelling peoples naked and endangered?' (p. 157). 'Pterodactyl's' metaphorics of extinction therefore creates the space for Puran to see how his life, while different, is nevertheless knotted together with adivasi life. This is also a challenge to Puran's anthropocentrism: the pterodactyl disabuses the ideology of the human as the pinnacle of evolution by opening up a plurality of other nonhuman worlds and times. As Puran confesses, 'if we acknowledge the pterodactyl, where will homo-sapiens-mapiens be?' (p. 159). The pterodactyl is a crystallisation of deep time, a reminder of the process of extinction, and an endling that suffers its own extinction. The pterodactyl's exorbitance and incommensurability reveals that human is not *the* species, but one species among many others similarly vulnerable to extinction.

It is clear, then, that the pterodactyl is assigned an accumulating textual responsibility. Indeed, the pterodactyl is so weighed down by all of its competing significations that it crumples and disintegrates as the text progresses: 'The body seemed slowly to sink down, a body crumbling on its four feet, the head on the floor, in front of their eyes the body suddenly begins to tremble steadily' (p. 180). We might thus say that the pterodactyl is an *overburdened animetaphor*. According to Akira Mizuta Lippit, the 'animetaphor' names the irreducible but generative tension that cleaves animality and metaphor together: 'a metaphor made flesh, a living metaphor that is by definition not a metaphor, antimetaphor – "animetaphor"'. [113] To think of Mahasweta's pterodactyl as an animetaphor is to acknowledge its status as a kind of ambivalent literary *technē*, a sign both metaphorically nebulous and corporeally specific. The concept of the animetaphor thus applies to Mahasweta's pterodactyl more than it does to the other animals we have encountered across this thesis, such as Coetzee's dogs and sheep, or Sebald's racoons, pigs, and hares. The pterodactyl is deliberately figured so that its presence oscillates between the corporeal *and* the metaphorical.

So what sort of animetaphor is a dinosaur? For W. J. T. Mitchell, the figure of the dinosaur is symbolically ingrained in the Americanised global culture of late twentieth-century capitalism. The dinosaur is even 'the totem animal of modernity'. As 'a symbolic animal that comes into existence for the first time in the modern era', the dinosaur 'epitomises a modern time sense – both the geological "deep time" of paleontology and the temporal cycles of innovation and obsolescence en-

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[113] Akira Mizuta Lippit, *Electric Animal: Toward a Rhetoric of Wildlife* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), p. 165.

demic to modern capitalism'.[114] Writing almost half a century earlier, Theodor W. Adorno's *Minima Moralia* (1951) similarly reflects on dinosaurs' uncanny relation to modernity. 'Some years ago', Adorno writes, 'American newspapers announced the discovery of a well-preserved dinosaur in the state of Utah', prompting a fervour of sightseeing and tourism.[115] Adorno speculates that the modern fascination with dinosaurs might have something to do with bourgeois culture acquiescing to its domination by the 'monstrous total State':

> The desire for the presence of the most ancient is a hope that animal creation might survive the wrong that man has done it, if not man himself, and give rise to a better species, one that finally makes a success of life. Zoological gardens stem from the same hope. [...] The rationalisation of culture, in opening its doors to nature, thereby completely absorbs it, and eliminates with difference the principle of culture, the possibility of reconciliation.[116]

Earlier in this thesis, I introduced this quotation to help make sense of Sebald's representation of zoological gardens. Here, Adorno's words become useful for exploring what is at stake in Mahasweta's literary reanimation of dinosaur life. Both Mitchell and Adorno are suspicious of how modern culture fetishes the alterity of dinosaurs as irrecoverable lost objects; they suspect that dinosaurs are symbolically tethered to the sublime aesthetics of fascism and global capitalism; and they caution that the 'possibility of reconciliation' between humanity and nature is eliminated by bourgeois culture's melancholic misanthropy, that which guiltily hopes for 'a better species' to survive the ongoing destruction of the planet. For them, modernity erects the dinosaurs as a totem and, in doing so, loses sight of the animals that are perishing in the present.

Mahasweta's figuration of the pterodactyl refuses these representational problematics. Rather than reproducing the fascistic bigness of the dinosaur-sign, or the melancholic fascination with long-extinct charismatic megafauna, Mahasweta imbues her pterodactyl with a kind of anti-sublimity. Furthermore, by conceiving of the pterodactyl as a new totem for Pirtha village, the 'unquiet soul' of Shankar's ancestors (p. 120), Mahasweta snatches the dinosaur away from a century and a half of 'dinomania' that, as Boria Sax argues, has gripped the western cultural imaginary between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[117] The pterodactyl's mi-

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[114] W. J. T. Mitchell, *The Last Dinosaur Book: The Life and Times of a Cultural Icon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 5, 77.

[115] Theodor W. Adorno, *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*, trans. by E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 2005), pp. 115–116.

[116] Ibid.

[117] Boria Sax, *Dinomania: Why We Love, Fear and are Utterly Enchanted by Dinosaurs* (London: Reaktion, 2018), p. 182.

nor status is integral to Mahasweta's turn towards a creaturely reconciliation between 'modern man', adivasi, and nonhuman. For although, in the opening pages, the pterodactyl is portended as a 'monstrous shadow' with a 'gaping mouth' (pp. 102–103), and although Puran, when visiting Bikhia's stone engraving, further observes how the outline depicts the pterodactyl as having wings that are 'webbed like a bat's, the body like a gigantic iguana, four clawed feet, no teeth in the yawning terrible mouth' (p. 128), it turns out that these prefigurations hyperbolically betray rather than portray the pterodactyl. In fact, when the pterodactyl arrives in the text, it does so as little more than a 'quivering' body with 'faded eyes' (p. 143), a homeless and 'unknown tired bird' (p. 193). Mahasweta's literary reanimation thus subverts the spectacular and fascistic dinosaur sublime by constantly foregrounding the creature's smallness and fragility. The de-extinct pterodactyl is thus better thought of as a *minor literary animetaphor*, an anti-fascist, anti-sublime and radically passive creature that commands its own kind of passive literary power.

We can further think through these problems of nonhuman representation by taking a brief detour through another of Mahasweta's short stories. Set within a forest reserve, 'Salt' (published in *Bitter Soil* (1998)) depicts the shifting antagonisms between government forest management, landowning sarkars, poor adivasis, and protected elephants in conservation and reservation areas.[118] The story revolves around the sarkars' decision to withhold salt distribution from the local food markets, and the demeaning but innovative ways in which the adivasis attempt to escape this 'saltless darkness' (p. 135). The adivasis, considering salt to be 'indispensable for life' (p. 131), begin stealing dirty, blackened 'salt-earth' from the salt-licks shared by deer and elephants. Mahasweta describes these elephants as 'very intelligent animals' (p. 137) who understand the 'show business' (p. 135) of human tourism, gladly meandering over to bamboo to pose for photos with visitors. Yet Mahasweta's elephants are also calculated and vengeful. When a young adivasi, Purti Munda, begins stealing the elephants' salt, he is confronted by an '*irresponsible*' elephant, an 'old tusker' and 'rascal' who has been 'exiled from leadership and from the herd' (pp. 136–138). When the villagers discover that Purti is stealing from the reserve's elephants, the elders prompt him to 'remember what happened': years ago, when an adivasi child shot an arrow and accidentally killed an elephant calf, 'the elephants, furious, encircled the dead calf, walking around him as if taking an oath incomprehensible to man.' Thus began a 'war of revenge', a three-year period in which the elephants ransacked villages and killed inhabitants (pp. 136–137).

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[118] Mahasweta Devi, 'Salt', in *Bitter Soil*, pp. 124–145 (p. 124). All further references to this particular story will be provided in parentheses after the given quotation.

'Salt' thus partly utilises its nonhuman characters in order to guard against an un-critical ideological representation of adivasis as being 'eco-savages' who are harmoniously interconnected with nature.[119] Rather than reproducing this questionable 'ecological romanticism', as Archana Prasad calls it, Mahasweta depicts adivasis and elephants as competing with and even killing one another in the struggle for scarce resources.[120] At the story's end, the rogue elephant embarks 'on a hunt for the guilty' (p. 140). 'The elephant is the largest animal that walks the earth'. 'But when a rogue elephant starts a battle of wits with man, then, if he so desires, he can make less noise than an ant. He carefully side-steps each dried leaf.' Knowing that elephants walk on their tiptoes, an elder warns Purti that 'An elephant is an ant – an elephant is a butterfly – an elephant is the breeze! Such a huge body, but when it wants, it can creep up unnoticed and squash your head with its foot' (p. 141). And so it does: 'The elephant attacked in silence, but the three men shrieked and shrieked' (p. 143). Mahasweta thus builds the short story towards an argument about adivasi rights and ecological justice, in which government-sponsored conservation policies have overtaken the adivasi struggle for redistribution and autonomy. While the adivasis soberly accept the elephant's retribution as a reminder of 'how difficult it is to protect wild animals from the greed of humans', and as a marker of their ongoing negotiation with nonhuman life, the Forest Department declare the elephant a rogue and commission a hunter to shoot the elephant dead. A village elder, staring at the elephant's corpse, recognises the systemic problems that led to this moment: 'The apparent truth is that the elephant died because it killed Purti and the others. But the underlying truth seems to be something else' (p. 144). In this 'something else', Mahasweta alludes to how adivasis and elephants are mutually afflicted, as well as pitted against each other in the struggle for the scarce resources of space and food. They are squeezed between privatised farmland and the state's commitment to conservation. Mahasweta posits as much when she writes that elephants and adivasis are 'both are expendable to the system.'[121]

Unlike the elephants of 'Salt', the pterodactyl is textually passive. It remains peripheral, rarely anthropomorphised, and depicted exclusively from Puran's outsider focalisation. The pterodactyl is only partially or indirectly observed, and, when glimpsed, it shakes and deteriorates in front of our eyes as we read the book: 'his body was quivering non-stop' (p. 143). When Puran consults dinosaur encyclopaedias, reading about the 'pterosauria class from the Mesozoic era' in the hope of gleaning more information about how to care for the pterodactyl, he finds

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[119] Shah, p. 107.

[120] Archana Prasad, *Against Ecological Romanticism: Verrier Elwin and the Making of an Anti-Modern Tribal Identity* (New Delhi: Three Essays Collective, 2011), p. 3.

[121] 'Introduction', in *Bitter Soil*, p. ix.

himself questioning whether the creature he is hiding is in fact a pterodactyl at all: 'Their earlier editions, e.g. the Rhamphorhynchus, still had the long tail of a reptile and innumerable teeth. [This creature has no teeth. It does not have a long tail, Puran is certain, for he has taken a good look in the half-light.]' (pp. 154–155). Puran's reflections, rendered here within square brackets, trouble the reader's understanding of the text's nonhuman figure. Mahasweta also carries this over into the plot. Throughout the text, the pterodactyl remains silent as Puran agonises over its declining health. Its body merely shakes in the corner of his room. Mahasweta reinforces the pterodactyl's passivity when she repeatedly reformulates descriptions of its non-communicative eyes: 'There is no communication between the eyes'; 'The dusky lidless eyes remain unresponsive'; 'the eye says nothing'; 'the grey eye does not respond' (pp. 157–158). Mahasweta thus leaves the pterodactyl's alterity intact by refusing to 'develop' the pterodactyl into a character that we can assimilate and understand. The pterodactyl does not eat, it does not move, and it merely waits out its life, a 'dusky waiting, without end' (p. 157). Even the pterodactyl's death is described ambiguously. When Puran whispers 'Gone' to Bikhia (p. 180), the reader understands that this denotes the pterodactyl's passing. But when Bikhia walks out of the room with a basket 'covered in acacia leaves and grass' (p. 181), the reader is forced to assume that the pterodactyl's body is resting beneath the leaves. And when Mahasweta writes on the same page that the 'darkness opened its mouth', the reader must think metaphorically: that Puran and Bikhia are burying the pterodactyl in the cave.

These ambiguous formulations cloak the pterodactyl's textual presence. But it is precisely through these cloaked representations that the pterodactyl becomes such a powerful literary figure. By rendering the animetaphor in such ambiguous terms, Mahasweta ensures that the pterodactyl remains unincorporated into the orbit of human understanding. By preserving its alterity in such a way, Mahasweta's text demands that Puran accept the pterodactyl as unassimilable to modernity, just as it demands that readers accept the pterodactyl's incommensurability with longstanding forms of representation. In other words, both Puran and the reader are tasked with relinquishing any claims they have to the pterodactyl. By doing this, Mahasweta activates a kind of history which is no longer anchored to the human subject, nor to the anthropocentric drives of development. The pterodactyl's textual passivity speaks to a history which is both invisible to and yet also being crushed by developmentalism:

> Forests are extinct, and animal life is obliterated outside of zoos and protected forest sanctuaries. What will you finally grow in the soil, having murdered nature in the application of man-imposed substitutes? Deadly DDT greens, / charnel-house vegetables […] The collective being of the ancient nations is crushed. Like nature, like the sustaining earth, their sustaining ancient cul-

tures received no honour, they remained unknown, they were only de-
stroyed, they are being destroyed (p. 157)

These apostrophic questions show that, rather than searching for a 'better species',
as Adorno warns against, 'Pterodactyl' resolutely 'stays with the trouble' of 'mod-
ern man'.[122] Mahasweta does not want to wind back the clock – 'Listen, man, I
can't turn the clock back by five hundred years' (p. 120), Pirtha's Block Develop-
ment Officer, Harisharan, says to Puran – but instead asks serious questions of Pu-
ran's complicities with postcolonial development and the anthropogenic extin-
guishing of human and nonhuman life. Indeed, this is dramatised by the fact that
Mahasweta's literary de-extinction does not obey the logics of today's de-
extinction initiatives. The fragile pterosaur is not conceived of as a lost object that
must be incorporated into and preserved within the orbit of modernity. Instead,
Mahasweta's de-extinction is eclipsed by a re-extinction which appears to
acknowledge that extinction is a necessary condition of planetary living. Ma-
hasweta *lets the pterodactyl be*, which is to say, *lets it die*, so that 'the human being,
modern man' can 'enter life' again (p. 158). In other words, just as Puran rescinds
his claims to archiving the nonhuman, so too does Mahasweta relinquish her own
claims to narrate or write the pterodactyl.

I am reminded here of the final sentence of Coetzee's *Disgrace*. Puran and David,
as well as Mahasweta and Coetzee, all 'give up' their nonhumans in the service of
a more proximate relationship between the human and the nonhuman, so that the
'possibility of reconciliation' might be rekindled. But these two ambiguous scenes
of death are separated by their afterlives. For Coetzee, David's final act of giving
up is quite literally the end of the novel itself. Just as David appears to give up
Driepoot, Coetzee gives up *Disgrace*. The question of reconciliation must therefore
be infinitely deferred, glimpsed only in the indeterminacy of the space *after* the
novel. Unlike *Disgrace*, though, 'Pterodactyl' continues to follow Puran after the
death scene. 'Pterodactyl' traces what happens to the human protagonist after the
pivotal moment of nonhuman death. I am thus suggesting that 'Pterodactyl' relin-
quishes the lost object at the level of plot *and* at the level of the text. Puran learns to
give up the pterodactyl, reshaping his politics in the service of human and non-
human life, against developmental modernity. And Mahasweta's text itself, by
rendering the pterodactyl as small and minor, and by ultimately giving it up com-
pletely, similarly reconciles itself to letting go of the sublime aesthetics of the dino-
saur-sign.

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[122] Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke
University Press, 2016), p. 30.

In recent years, extinction has become an urgent topic of academic enquiry. But as Juno Salazar Parreñas reminds us in her study of Borneo's wildlife centres, well-intentioned initiatives to prevent extinction often occur hand-in-hand with new forms of colonisation and exploitation. What, then, if we 'experienced this present era of extinction without violent domination and colonisation over others, particularly nonhuman beings? Can we instead embrace the vulnerability of sharing our lives together[?…] In other words, how might we decolonise extinction?'[123] The close readings I have conducted in this section build towards the idea the 'Pterodactyl' decolonises extinction. By performing a literary de-extinction and re-extinction of its pterodactyl, 'Pterodactyl' mobilises the metaphorics of extinction and adopts a zoomed-out, planetary perspective. This creates the space for Mahasweta to reflect on how developmentalism destroys adivasi communities and nonhuman nature, to challenge the aggressiveness of human history itself, and to call on its protagonist to 'enter life'. Mahasweta thus utilises a prehistoric figure in order to mourn the unmourned across a scale of deep time, as well as hail Puran into a community that exceeds 'modern man'. Hence why Mahasweta writes that 'we have destroyed a continent that we kept unknown and undiscovered. The tribal wants human recognition, respect, because he or she is the child of an ancient civilisation.' Mahasweta continues: 'In what a death farce we are enthralled as we turn them into beggars, who are nowhere implicated in Indian education, development, science, industry, agriculture, technology. They remain spectators. India marches toward the twenty-first century' (p. 177). Written in anticipation of the millennium, 'Pterodactyl' demonstrates how the protracted destruction of adivasi life in the late twentieth century is nothing short than a destruction of a continent.

Conclusions: Asymptotes, Planetary Alongsideness, and the Horizon of Creaturely Love

To conclude this chapter, I want to return to where I started: with Mahasweta's self-designated double task, and my hypothesis that her works can be understood as creaturely forms. In particular, I want to end by analysing the asymptote as a formal and thematic node of 'Pterodactyl' which, to my mind, clearly illustrates the kinds of creatureliness that Mahasweta's literary works develop. Asymptotes are, in geometric terms, lines which always close in on – but never quite intersect with – a curve as it tends towards infinity. The asymptote thus always approaches zero, but is infinitely deferred from ever doing so. In 'Pterodactyl', Mahasweta directly invokes the asymptote and its attendant metaphorics in order to thematise a

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[123] Juno Salazar Parreñas, *Decolonizing Extinction: The Work of Care in Orangutan Rehabilitation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2018), p. 3.

seemingly infinite gulf which separates Puran from both the adivasis of Pirtha and the pterodactyl. But, come the end of the text, Mahasweta reconceives and re-enchants the asymptote as a constructive difference between life forms which must be recognised and harnessed rather than simply overcome, a form of 'post-colonial parabola' – to use Jay Rajiva's formulation – in which the deferral of touch becomes ethically invested in the non-domination of the other.[124] I will therefore end this chapter by claiming that, while Mahasweta's short stories sometimes emphasise the predetermined plot paths of adivasi lives within the postcolonial nation, 'Pterodactyl' turns to a kind of decolonial futurity which imagines other ways of being. In 'Pterodactyl', Mahasweta presents creatureliness as a continuous journey towards a multispecies horizon, a horizon which, in its asymptotic infinity, holds open a paradoxically asymptotic reconciliation between Puran, the adivasis of Pirtha, and the nonhuman.

In 'Pterodactyl's' first half, Mahasweta describes the asymptote as a destructive phenomenon which afflicts the postcolonial nation. When Puran talks at cross purposes with the SDO, misunderstanding his 'urgent message' at every turn, Mahasweta's omniscient narrator asks: 'Are the two placed on two islands and is one not understanding the most urgent message of the other, speaking with vivid gestures on the seashore? This asymptote is a contemporary contagion' (p. 102). Here, Mahasweta activates the image of the asymptote as a disease of untranslatability, in which even those people who speak the same language are predetermined to misinterpret one another. Later, Mahasweta elaborates on and consolidates this asymptotic affliction which contagiously passes from person to person: 'Puran's Hindi and theirs come from two different worlds […] There is no meeting-point. Language too is class divided' (pp. 162–163). 'Pterodactyl' thus positions the asymptote as an ontological by-product of India's rapid developmental modernisation, a disease which reinforces the abyssal 'communication gap' between classes, the 'tremendous (mental and linguistic) suspension of contact' (p. 102). The asymptote therefore thematises a political, linguistic, and ontological abyss which separates the cosmopolitan Indian citizen, 'Modern man', from the subaltern adivasi (p. xxii).

Mahasweta's critics argue that the figure of the pterodactyl is a narrative tool which bridges this unbridgeable gap between Puran and Bikhia. This is Spivak's ultimate understanding: the pterodactyl's death is 'no more than an occasion for "responsibility" between members of two groups that would otherwise be joined by the abstract collectivity of Indian citizenship: the Hindu and the aboriginal.'[125]

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[124] Jay Rajiva, *Postcolonial Parabola: Literature, Tactility, and the Ethics of Representing Trauma* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017), p. 47.
[125] Spivak, *Death of a Discipline* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 80.

Because the pterodactyl perishes after it has brought Puran and Bikhia together, Lawrence Buell concludes that Mahasweta actually brackets the question of an ethics beyond the human. For him, the pterodactyl is merely a literary device which is instrumentalised in order to foreground human concerns, ultimately 'marginalising the suffering of the other kind of other, the nonhuman other'.[126] Taken together, both of these readings conceive of the pterodactyl as a 'vanishing mediator', to use Fredric Jameson's term. The pterodactyl functions narratologically as a catalytic agent which 'disappears from the historical scene' after it facilitates an 'exchange of energies between two otherwise mutually exclusive terms'.[127] The pterodactyl perishes after it has brought Puran and Bikhia together; its death facilitates Puran's development into human responsibility.

However, Spivak and Buell both obscure the ways in which Mahasweta's text is concerned with asymptotes rather than intersections, missed encounters rather than encounters. Puran acknowledges that 'There was a *message* in the pterodactyl, whether it was a fact or not, and we couldn't grasp it. We *missed* it' (p. 195). The pterodactyl's message cannot be read, cannot be understood, and thus its apparent mediation of Puran and Bikhia remains incomplete. Mahasweta registers this partial mediation within the prose itself. When Puran and Bikhia jointly witness the pterodactyl's death, the text's two adjoining paragraphs depict their witnessing as asymptotic: 'Bikhia is witnessing that their ancestors' soul embodied itself and flew in one day […] Puran is witnessing his own futility' (p. 180). These anaphoric formulations approach each other, and each approaches an object, but they never quite touch one another – in language and in content, they remain asymmetrical. Thus, as Neil Lazarus puts it, Mahasweta's 'volatile focalising lens' expresses the distance between Puran and Bikhia's simultaneous perceptions of the pterodactyl's passing.[128]

But I want to suggest that Mahasweta reclaims this asymptotic distance between Puran, Bikhia, and the pterodactyl. Come the end of the book, the asymptote is newly thematised as a generative distance which forms the affirmative baseline of a decolonial future. The asymptote becomes an always reducing but ultimately irreducible difference, a productive untranslatability to be preserved rather than bridged. To be sure, Mahasweta's affirmative revision of the asymptote is closely associated with an authorial strategy that is conscious of its own positionality. By focalising only through Puran, and by not having Bikhia speak for the majority of

[126] Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge: Belknap, 2001), p. 234.

[127] Fredric Jameson, 'The Vanishing Mediator: Narrative Structure in Max Weber', *New German Critique*, 1 (1973), 52–89 (p. 78).

[128] Neil Lazarus, 'Epilogue: the Pterodactyl of History?', *Textual Practice*, 27 (2013), 523–536 (p. 527).

the text, Mahasweta guards against an authorial incorporation or appropriation of the adivasi. By maintaining this linguistic distance, Mahasweta – the caste-Hindu public intellectual – wants to avoid penning any kind of vulgar ventriloquism of adivasi voices. While we might be sceptical of the ways in which this tactic might accidentally silence or further relegate adivasi voices, it would be wrong to argue that Mahasweta portrays adivasis as unrepresentable, unapproachable, or incomprehensible. For in the end, Bikhia breaks his 'self-imposed silence' (p. 183) and instructs Puran to leave the village. Here, in the final passages of the story, Mahasweta imagines a form of a temporary solidarity between 'Modern man' and the adivasi:

> Now Bikhia's eyes explain that this strange situation had made them one but they were never really one. As if in a strange situation of war two people from separate worlds and lives, who do not understand one another's language, were obliged to cross some icy ravine, or to pass an unknown and violent desert, and then complete mutual help became necessary. A time of danger has brought them together. Although their hands were clasped at the end of the episode of danger they realized that they belong to two different worlds. [...] Life has not been linked to life, now Bikhia's eyes are bound to be distant. [...] You remain you, and I remain me, and after this heavy phase is over each will return to the orbit of his life. (p. 182)

In this world in which 'life has not been linked to life', a world resembling a 'strange situation of war', Puran's experience of the adivasis and the pterodactyl can only be asymptotic. Puran's relationship with Bikhia is presented as a temporary, fragile and conditional joining of hands during what I have been describing as modernity's war against animals. Amidst the wreckage of the 'heavy phase' of this war, Puran and Bikhia come together to fight on the side of life in the war against the animal.

'Pterodactyl' therefore refuses to simply treat its animetaphor as a vanishing mediator. Contra Spivak and Buell, Mahasweta's pterodactyl is not a triangulator of human concerns, but an animetaphoric presence which promises – to think back to Adorno's writing on the dinosaur – a paradoxical *asymptotic reconciliation* between humanity and nonhumanity, and between normative humanity and its constitutively excluded inhuman other. I am therefore arguing that the pterodactyl is a dynamic third-term, a creaturely figure who challenges Puran not merely to extend his ethical concern outwards, but to imaginatively 'explode' the heretofore anthropocentric logics of politics. For in the text's final passage Mahasweta writes that 'Only love, a tremendous, excruciating, explosive love can still dedicate us to this work when the century's sun is in the western sky [...] Love, excruciating love, let that be the first step' (p. 196). Mahasweta's invocation of love is by no means

redolent of a naïve sentimentalism. The intensity of those three adjectives – tremendous, excruciating, explosive – instead depict love as a barbed feeling, as an 'excruciating' emotion which affectively rips away Puran's humanistic solipsism. For this is not a love which is confined to the human subject. These affective attachments begin in opposition to the destruction of 'the primordial forest, water, living beings, the human' (p. 196).

Indeed, it is Mahasweta's insistence on a 'tremendous, excruciating, explosive love' that leads Spivak to claim that 'Pterodactyl' actively 'courts planetarity'. Writing in the late 1990s in resistance to the flattening globalisation of multinational finance and information technology – 'the gridwork of electronic capital' – Spivak proposes the term planetarity as 'a catachresis for inscribing collective responsibility as right. Its alterity, determining experience, is mysterious and discontinuous—an experience of the impossible.'[129] If, as Nancy Fraser has taught us, 'globalisation is changing the way we argue about justice', then Spivak's notion of planetarity can be thought as what Fraser would call 'transformative politics', a politics that reframes itself for meeting the challenges of a post-Westphalian world.[130] Planetarity gestures towards, but never finalises, a horizon of justice which countermands globalisation. It is a transformative reappropriation and reframing of the global, a kind of globalisation-from-below which prompts a form of solidarity beyond the nation state. More than this, planetarity imagines a form of solidarity that thinks beyond the confines of the atomised human: 'To be human is to be intended toward the other', Spivak writes. Although Spivak does not explicitly frame planetarity as a commitment to the nonhuman, it is clear that it has something to do with the creaturely: 'If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, *planetary creatures* rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us; it is not our dialectical negation, it contains us as much as it flings us away.'[131] Consequently, I want to think of planetarity as a form of love which reconstructs a creaturely relationship with the planet. The planetary is that which exceeds globalisation's developmental force, turning the human towards their vulnerable intimacy with nonhuman forces. Planetarity recognises, in Spivak's knotted phrase, that 'alterity remains underived from us' – both absolutely outside and constitutively inside.

A cynical analysis might suggest that Spivak, as Mahasweta's translator, knowingly re-presents 'Pterodactyl' as an a priori confirmation of her theorisation of planetarity's alter-globalisation. By attributing the collection the title of *Imaginary Maps*,

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[129] Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, pp. 77, 72.

[130] Nancy Fraser, *Scales of Justice: Reimaging Political Space in a Globalizing World* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), pp. 12, 23.

[131] Spivak, *Death of a Discipline*, pp. 102, 73. My emphasis.

Spivak consolidates planetarity as a kind of multitudinous geography which breaks with the cartographic practices of imperial knowledge production which, as Thomas Richards has shown, helped maintain the fantasy of empire's symbolic unity.[132] But this ambiguity need not mean that planetarity should be abandoned as a keyword. In fact, planetarity has a threefold salience: firstly, as Susan Abraham writes, planetarity reanimates the world, imbuing the 'mundane space-time' of globalisation with 'mutual belonging, trust, and love'.[133] Secondly, planetarity demonstrates one of the crucial differences between Mahasweta's fiction and her political activism with the DNT-RAG. While the DNT-RAG makes a 'very deliberate use of scale, decidedly focusing its efforts on the central Indian government to further the elusive rights of DNT populations', Mahasweta's fiction reaches for a form of justice which exceeds the normative confines of the postcolonial nation.[134] Thirdly, planetarity unlocks the sense in which Mahasweta's work foregrounds how 'modern man' is paradoxically interrelated with *and* asymptotically distinct from its human and nonhuman other. In this, we might say that they all stand *alongside* one another. I take the term alongside from Joanna Latimer, who writes that 'being alongside' stresses the interwoven but also intermittent and partial connections between life forms.[135] Alongsideness holds onto the ethico-political stakes of human/nonhuman relationality without recapitulating the discourse of hybridity, which risks collapsing the distinctions between the human and the nonhuman into a flat ontology. Alongsideness thus alters how we think about the creaturely: it can work as a difference-preserving and asymptotic category, articulating how humans and nonhumans always approach infinitesimally without necessarily 'touching' or becoming one another.

Let us therefore conclude with three keywords: the asymptote, planetarity, and alongsideness. Mahasweta folds these concepts together, and in doing so imagines the creaturely itself as a form of *asymptotic planetary alongsideness*. 'Pterodactyl' uses the image of the asymptote to imagine what postcolonial and ecological politics might look like if the citizen, the inhuman, and the nonhuman are related by their intertwined differences within the alterity of the planet. It is a way of describing how Puran, Bikhia and the pterodactyl all differently inhabit, and are differently responsible for, the same planet, while nevertheless acknowledging that – for now at least – they do not live in the same world: 'You remain you, and I remain me,

[132] Thomas Richards, *The Imperial Archive: Knowledge and the Fantasy of Empire* (London: Verso, 1993), p. 6.

[133] Susan Abraham, 'The Pterodactyl in the Margins: Detranscendentalising Postcolonial Theology', in *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality, and Theology*, ed. by Stephen D. Moore and Mayra Rivera (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), pp. 79–101 (pp. 97, 101).

[134] Johnston, p. 1272.

[135] Joanna Latimer, 'Being Alongside: Rethinking Relations amongst Different Kinds', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 30 (2013), 77–104 (pp. 93–95). Latimer's emphasis.

and after this heavy phase is over each will return to the orbit of his life' (p. 182). Mahasweta stresses this paradoxical inseparability *and* asymptotic disjunction because it preserves difference while maintaining commitment. This is both a thematic and formal commitment. Mahasweta's literary form includes the other, but keeps its alterity intact; it linguistically approaches without incorporating its object. In turn, we can identify an important difference between Mahasweta's sense of creatureliness and those other valences which I analysed in Sebald's and Coetzee's pro-animal literary forms. Whereas Sebald's and Coetzee's texts can be argued to sometimes flatten the differences between humans and nonhumans, a strategic relegation of the human to the level of the nonhuman animal in order to decentre anthropocentrism, Mahasweta's creatureliness resolutely holds onto and foregrounds the differences between humans and between species. Mahasweta's asymptotic form takes multispecies difference in a shared planet to be the baseline for political accountability. At the very same time, Mahasweta draws on the asymptote as a formula that tends towards infinity: its task is always unfinished, and it works in anticipation of a future horizon. Asymptotic planetary alongsideness thus promises a multispecies 'democracy to come'.[136] As 'Pterodactyl' ends with Puran 'stepping up', the text imagines a future possibility of reconciliation.

This chapter has argued that the double task of Mahasweta's fiction – resisting development, learning to love – expresses a creaturely commitment. I have shown that in Mahasweta's counter-narratives to the exclusionary rights-based logics of postcolonial India, and in her imagination of nonhuman passivity and vulnerability via the technique of a literary de-extinction, Mahasweta's fiction resists both the onward march of postcolonial development and fosters a kind of cross-species love. I made this argument by analysing Mahasweta's short stories' episodic articulation of postcolonial inhumanity on the onside, and her literary incorporations of the nonhuman on the other. By doing this, I demonstrated how Mahasweta's political and fictional preoccupations with normative questions surrounding constitutional rights, personhood, and its excluded inhuman others cannot be dissociated from realities which destabilise this normative territory altogether. Indigeneity and adivasi survival; bonded labour and trafficking; the murdering of nature by deforestation and chemical technologies; the de- and re-extinction of a prehistoric endling – all of these compel us to conceive of a planetary justice which would not seek its politics in postcolonial capitalist development, nor in a straightforward return to the humanist political ontology of anthropocentric subjectivity, nor still in a yearning for an extinct past. Against these anthropological machines, Mahasweta's double task resists the reorganisation of ecological life and, in its place, insists on a decolonial future: a multispecies horizon of creaturely love.

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[136] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, trans. by Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2005), p. 8.

Conclusions—From Anthropological Machines
to Creaturely Forms

This thesis has intervened into three major areas of enquiry: the creaturely, late-twentieth-century literature, and critical animal studies. By bringing these fields into conversation with one another, I have argued that literature can disrupt the ongoing reproduction and consolidation of anthropocentric thought. At the heart of this contention lies my analysis of how literary form is one of the key sites of discursive meaning-making when it comes to deciding between what is valued as 'human' and what is devalued as 'animal'. I began making this argument in my introduction, in which I explained how literature is political not just in terms of an author's stated politics, nor just in terms of a given text's representational content, but in terms of its formal repertoires and narrative strategies. Literature, as Jacques Rancière puts it, distributes the sensible. Each work of literature is a regime of visibility that decides between what is understood as human and what is merely heard as 'noisy animals'.[1] I thereafter sought to position literature's formal decision-making as a discursive and ideological technology within what Giorgio Agamben calls the anthropological machine. For Agamben, the anthropological machine is an apparatus 'or device for producing the recognition of the human', an ongoing process that splits humanity from animality and defines the process of humanisation or human speciation as a transcendence from the animal.[2] By bringing Rancière and Agamben together in this way, I explicated one of this thesis' working hypotheses: that literature can function as an anthropological machine, as an apparatus for producing and consolidating particular notions of the human in opposition to the animal.

It is from this foundational insight that I raised two of my major research questions: how does literature write *against* the anthropological machine and *for* differ-

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[1] Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Literature*, trans. by Julie Rose (Cambridge: Polity, 2011), pp. 3–5.

[2] Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal*, trans. by Kevin Attell (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 26.

ent relations between the species? And how do literary works written in the late twentieth century, at the end of a century of genocide and amidst rising ecological awareness, bear witness to and rewrite the relations between humans and other animals? My three author studies pose answers to these questions. My readings of W. G. Sebald, J. M. Coetzee and Mahasweta Devi demonstrate how late-twentieth-century writers use their fiction to unsettle any clear distinction between humanity and animality, to suspend the decisionist logic of the anthropological machine, and to consequently rewrite the relations between species. By analysing the ways in which Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta each stage affinities between humans and other animals, I have argued that their texts are creaturely forms: rather than writing works of literature which continue to decide between the human and the animal, they write in such a way that is formally and thematically attentive towards a shared animality. This shared animality arrests the elevation of the human over the nonhuman. This aesthetic attentiveness transforms literature from an anthropological machine into a creaturely form. In other words, the authors I have discussed across this thesis all write *as* animals; they write in the knowledge that they are human animals among other kinds of animals, sharing a planet together. Their creaturely perspectives endeavour – through the space of literature and literary form – to relinquish the violence of anthropocentric thought and to welcome what we saw Walter Benjamin describe as an 'affinity' with animality.[3] At their most powerful, then, creaturely forms encourage solidarities between life forms that unsettle the supposed fixity of the species borderline, interrupt the escalating 'war against the animal' at the end of the twentieth century,[4] and encourage new ways of living with and alongside animality.

Throughout this thesis, I have made these arguments by invoking and reimaging the 'creaturely'. In my introduction, I traced how the creaturely's meaning has shifted across the twentieth century. The term is first articulated in a critical context in the 1920s as part of a German-Jewish interfaith and socialist project. Through Walter Benjamin's writing especially, the creaturely comes to denote simultaneously those forms of life that are deemed less-than-human *and* a mode of receptivity and concentration – namely, an 'attentiveness' – towards those lives deemed less-than-human.[5] The creaturely is later developed by the Frankfurt School. After witnessing the profound horrors of the Second World War, Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer mobilised the vocabulary of the creaturely in order

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[3] Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: Verso, 1997), pp. 50–51.

[4] Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Louise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 101.

[5] Benjamin, 'Franz Kafka: On the Tenth Anniversary of his Death', trans. by Harry Zohn, in *Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934*, ed. by Michael Jennings, Howard Eiland, and Gary Smith (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 794–818 (p. 810).

to diagnose modernity's colonial domination, its racist and sexist projection of animality onto human others, and its foundational but intensifying eradication of nonhuman nature. Adorno and Horkheimer therefore help us make sense of how colonial mastery is conjoined with the domination of nature. At the same time, they also call for a future reconciliation between the species. They argue that humanity can remember its animality, relinquish anthropocentrism, and foster a solidarity with creaturely life. This builds on Benjamin's work by thinking of the creaturely as both the condition of marginalisation under modernity and a form of future solidarity that would interrupt this marginalisation. In more recent decades, the creaturely has re-emerged as key term in the tussle between humanist and posthumanist critical theory. For some critics, the creaturely denotes an exclusively human form of biopolitical animation and ontological vulnerability that distinguishes human from animal life. Others conceptualise the creaturely as a shared cross-species marker of corporeal vulnerability. Under Anat Pick's reading in particular, the creaturely connotes a universal ethics for the twenty-first century. It builds on Judith Butler's influential theorisations of corporeal vulnerability as the baseline for ethics by envisioning a vulnerability that is shared across the species border, and can therefore be counted, to adopt Mari Ruti's formulation, as part of 'the posthumanist quest for the universal'.[6]

Despite all of these shifting valences across the last century of intellectual thought, the creaturely remains a relatively stable term in two crucial aspects: it troubles the logic by which animality is cast as the human's other, and it calls for a new mode of relationality. And the texts I analysed across this thesis all differently engage with this notion of the creaturely, whether we think of their specific uses of the word 'creature' or their preoccupation with the relations between humans and animality. It is therefore important to think about the commonalities between my three authors. Here, I want to draw out two key creaturely motifs that my authors mobilise. First, Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta all tell stories about human characters who, when encountering animality, undergo overwhelming dehumanisations. In chapter one, I analysed how Sebald depicts his narrator-protagonists as 'prone bod[ies]',[7] bodies that are so uniquely sensitive and attentive to the destructive onrush of modernity that they come to melancholically identify with the nonhuman animals they encounter, whether those animals survive in Europe's zoos or are displayed as taxidermy specimens in British country houses, as we saw in *Austerlitz*. In my second chapter, I argued that Coetzee routinely abjects, diminishes and deforms his protagonists. My analysis of *Disgrace* contended that both David and Lucy Lurie become undone. But while David holds onto a humanist 'idea of the world', Lucy chooses to 'give up' the baggage of a narrow humanity defined

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[6] Mari Ruti, 'The Posthumanist Quest for the Universal', *Angelaki*, 20 (2015), 193–210 (p. 193).

[7] W. G. Sebald, *The Rings of Saturn,* trans. by Michael Hulse (London: Vintage, 2002), p. 79.

by colonial personhood, choosing instead to 'start at ground level': 'With nothing. No cards, no weapons, no property, no rights, no dignity'.[8] And I further showed how, in *The Lives of Animals* and *Elizabeth Costello*, Coetzee develops a character-persona who is so overwhelmed by the dizzying scale of industrial animal agriculture that she becomes less a fully recognisable 'human' and more a 'branded, marked, wounded animal'.[9] Lucy and Costello both embrace nonhuman animals, weakening anthropocentric modalities of subjectivity and becoming themselves more creaturely. My third chapter considered how Mahasweta's 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha' deconstructs its disinterested and bourgeois caste-Hindu journalist. Through encountering the adivasis and the dying pterodactyl, Puran breaks out of the solipsistic and 'self-reliant' anthropocentrism of 'modern man'. Similar to David Lurie in *Disgrace*, Puran realises that he must 'enter life'.[10] At the very same time, though, Mahasweta is interested in how numerous communities in India have never been fully perceived as 'human' citizens. In short stories such as 'Fundamental Rights and Bhikari Dusad', Mahasweta dramatises how rights-based models of postcolonial personhood, far from resolving questions of caste and subaltern domination, actually intensify the violence faced by India's marginalised communities. Bhikari Dusad is not simply barred from entering the fortress of citizenship, but is beaten by the police so severely that he will 'never stand straight again' – Bhikari's disabled body testifies to the ongoing marginalisation of low-castes in India, and he is left at the end of the story as a 'creature of the forest'.[11] For Mahasweta, postcolonial governmentality constructs some humans as inhuman. At one level, then, this thesis has drawn on the creaturely in order to examine how three authors differently dehumanise their protagonists. The creaturely stands here as a name for these authors' productive destabilisation and radical dehumanisation of the supposedly stable and autonomous category of the 'human', while at the same time signalling how marginalised humans are imagined as creatures.

Second, I have also demonstrated how Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta imagine modernity as an anthropological machine which reifies, instrumentalises, commodifies and deadens life – whether human or nonhuman. For these writers, modernity forces a wedge between humanity and animality. Across Sebald's literary project, modernity's 'relentless conquest of darkness' is revealed to be connected to and indeed predicated on the exhaustion of both human and nonhuman life. In *The Rings of Saturn*, Sebald comments on how trees are 'incessantly' reduced to

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[8] J. M. Coetzee, *Disgrace* (London: Vintage, 2000), pp. 146, 205.

[9] Coetzee, *Elizabeth Costello: Eight Lessons* (London: Vintage, 2004), pp. 70–71.

[10] Mahasweta, 'Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha', in *Imaginary Maps*, trans. by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 95–196 (p. 140, 158).

[11] Mahasweta Devi, 'Fundamental Rights and Bhikari Dusad', trans. by Subhransu Maitra, *Index on Censorship*, 4 (2006), 92–108 (pp. 107, 97).

charcoal, herring are pushed to the brink of extinction by over-fishing and scientific experiments, labourers in eighteenth-century Norfolk become 'wretched bodies' tortured by their weaving machines, and the architecture of Belgium is little more than a 'sepulchral monument erected over a hecatomb of black bodies'.[12] Sebald's melancholy narrators constantly alert us to how modernity extinguishes humans and other species, thereby throwing up historical connections between the logics of colonialism and anthropocentrism. Something similar is at play in Mahasweta's work, in which Indian development initiatives are shown to concomitantly pauperise adivasis and destroy nonhuman habitats. In 'Pterodactyl', both the adivasis of Pirtha and the habitats they live within are 'crushed' and 'destroyed' under the weight of India's developmental agenda: 'Forests are extinct, and animal life is obliterated outside of zoos and sanctuaries […] The collective being of the ancient nations is crushed. Like nature, like the sustaining earth […] they are being destroyed'.[13] We might also point out commonalities between 'The Hunt' and *Disgrace*, both of which suggest that gendered violence and anthropocentrism are imbricated. In a world which defines women by their biological and corporeal animality, both Mahasweta's Mary Oraon and Coetzee's Lucy Lurie affirm their own non-identical relations with and stewardship of nonhuman animals. (With this in mind, we might also be sceptical of the ways in which Sebald's texts centre homosocial relationships between men and, in the end, elide women.) Moreover, Sebald, Mahasweta and Coetzee are all preoccupied with the increasing industrialisation of agricultural and animal production. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* bears witness to late-twentieth-century industrial aquaculture, oceanic acidification, and the over-fishing of North Sea herring. Coetzee's writing is overwhelmed by the scale of animal production. As Elizabeth Costello puts it, factory farming is an 'enterprise without end, self-regenerating, bringing rabbits, rats, poultry, livestock ceaselessly into the world for the purpose of killing them'.[14] While Sebald's and Coetzee's texts foreground the politics and ethics of eating animals, Mahasweta is more concerned with the privatisation of the commons and the Green Revolution's 'murdering' of nature through the indiscriminate spraying of DDT chemicals. 'What will you finally grow in the soil?', Mahasweta's narrator asks.[15] For these authors, then, nonhuman life is continually being sacrificed for the development of modernity. Thus the creaturely also denotes the de-animating and instrumentalising forces of modernity. Modernity emerges across these texts as an anthropological machine which destructively relegates forms of life, whether human or nonhuman.

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[12] *Rings*, pp. 59, 170, 282, 122.

[13] 'Pterodactyl', p. 157.

[14] *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 65.

[15] 'Pterodactyl', p. 157.

Over the course of this thesis, I have also developed existing discussions of the creaturely by emphasising the centrality of literary form. If the creaturely is associated with a productive relegation of the human subject on the one side, and a preoccupation with the instrumentalising and hierarchising anthropocentrism of modernity on the other, then throughout this thesis I have consistently enquired into *how* literature formally approaches these themes. By underlining literary forms, I have argued that each of my chosen author's works are vigilant about literature's complicities with anthropocentrism. In chapter one, I argued that Sebald's signature stylistic motifs – his slow narrative temporality, his use of lists and hypotaxis, his texts' generic indeterminacy, and his ambiguously indexical images – all push back against what he calls the mechanical grinding of the plot-reliant novel. By transforming the novel into a digressive, unhurried, and peripatetic form, Sebald opens up space to concentrate on forms of life that would otherwise go unnoticed. In chapter two, I suggested that Coetzee's writing is deeply invested in using and ab-using the central tenets of the novel form. From this vantage point, I read Coetzee's animal turn as a kind of textual experiment in which realism and metafiction are tested out, at a sentence-by-sentence level, to see how far they can dramatise an affinity with animality. This is most dramatically witnessed in the final scene of *Disgrace*, in which Coetzee rearranges his novel's synchronic tense in order to indefinitely suspend the novel's ending, thereby not killing the dog that the plot is compelled to kill. And in my third chapter, I built on Mahasweta's own conception of her work as being a tribunal in which the 'exploiting agencies' of Indian developmentalism are placed 'before a people's court'.[16] I posited that Mahasweta's short stories refuse the steady build-up of character development – a humanist and caste-ist ideology which is deemed contiguous with the development of postcolonial India.

By reading the works of Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta in this way, I have nuanced the critical potential of literary animal studies. If animal studies has thus far tended to focus on the politics of representing animals, my readings develop the critical insight that literature creatively negotiates the pressures of anthropocentrism within the very boundaries of its own forms. More precisely, my analysis has uncovered how the very boundaries of literary form are continuously renegotiated and rewritten as authors strive to write in ways that are more attentive towards animality. At the same time, my thesis extends the ways in which animal studies rethinks and transforms the humanities. In the closing words of his book *Zoographies* (2008), Matthew Calarco writes that 'might not the challenge for philosophical thought today be to proceed altogether without the guardrails of the human-animal distinction and to invent new concepts and new practices along dif-

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[16] Mahasweta, '"Palamau is a mirror of India": Introduction', in *Bitter Soil*, trans. by Ipsita Chanda (Calcutta: Seagull, 1998), pp. vii–x (p. x).

ferent paths?'[17] My reinvention of the 'creaturely' marks one such attempt to con-structively blur the supposedly clear distinction between human and animal, a division which sanctions the war against the animal. My thesis therefore comple-ments a growing body of critical literature that interrogates the premises of the 'human' while simultaneously querying the ostensible neutrality of the 'humani-ties' as such.

At the same time, I have not simply used the creaturely as an optic for reading these texts. I have also considered how these texts' ambiguities, ambivalences, and contradictions complicate our sense of the creaturely's critical potential. Most pressingly, because the creaturely is principally concerned with accounting for the domination of life itself under modernity, with positing a joined-up way of think-ing about mastery, it carries the possibility of collapsing or forgetting crucial dif-ferences between the kinds of life that are historically dominated. I have argued across this thesis that Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta each come up with innova-tive literary techniques for productively linking nonhuman animals and marginal-ised humans. But at the very same time, each of these authors has received consid-erable criticism for portraying and formulating these connections through reduc-tive comparisons or analogies. Sebald and Coetzee have both been critiqued for uncritically associating the Holocaust with industrialised practices of animal slaughter. Sebald's images of the Holocaust and herring are said to provide the reader with no roadmap for understanding their connection. The images' visual resemblance thus conflates two very different types of suffering. Coetzee has been criticised for using the persona of Costello as a stand-in or puppet who he can hide behind when articulating 'strong opinions'. And Mahasweta has been re-proached for using the semantics of extinction to express the severity of adivasi famine. What's more, her figure of the pterodactyl potentially – and reductively – frames adivasis as pre-modern. Such criticisms remind readers to guard against the logic of equivalence, to be cautious about metaphorical or rhetorical impreci-sion, and to hesitate before associating historically subjugated and displaced hu-mans with nonhuman others. But if my analysis in this thesis has been persuasive, then I have revealed how Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta all strive for creative ways of articulating modernity's domination of animality. They want to discover ways of writing about the historical yoking of inhumanity and animality which cannot be easily reduced to the logic of comparative or analogous thinking. In turn, all three authors invent novel ways of linking humans and animals together without ever staging these linkages via direct or reductive comparisons. Through recourse to literature and literary forms, Sebald's non-identical images, Coetzee's metafictional auto-deconstruction of his own opinions, and Mahasweta's literary

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[17] Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008), p. 149.

de-extinction of the pterodactyl all come to stand as attempts to constructively approach the deep grammars of anthropocentrism which destroy creaturely life.

By making these arguments, this thesis has extended the existing critical commentary on Sebald's, Coetzee's and Mahasweta's literary projects. Over the past two decades in particular, critics across numerous disciplines – within and beyond literary studies – have routinely written about these authors. Never before, though, have Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta been brought together in one study. Doing so has allowed me to offer new interpretations of their writing based on the relationship between their innovative utilisation of literary forms and their thematic preoccupations with animality. At the same time, this thesis's individual author-study chapters have built on and challenged prevailing critical approaches, while also yielding fresh insights. In my first chapter, for example, I argued that W. G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz* melancholically bear witness to and remember the connections between humanity and animality. To do this, I focused my analysis on the relationship between Sebald's poetics of connection and his texts' representation of human-animal relations. While critics have often drawn attention to Sebald's poetics of connection, my analysis offers a new perspective on how Sebald's poetics of connection conceives of the human as being connected to the nonhuman. I argued that Sebald's literary project is situated 'after nature', or '*nach der Natur*'. By this, I meant to suggest that Sebald situates his texts in a world that materially draws from nature while at the same time imagining itself as having symbolically transcended nature. Sebald's poetics of connection can thus be read as an attempt to remember and reconnect – what I have called remembering – the affinities between different life forms. Sebald creates connections between humans and animality in a world which disarticulates and disavows their interconnectedness. I brought this analysis to bear on *The Rings of Saturn* and *Austerlitz*, in which I emphasised how Sebald's particular literary techniques – including first-person narration, the motif of *Unglück*, his natural-historical perspective, his critique of modernity and zoological gardens, and his use of hypotaxis, lists, and in-text images – all contribute towards a simultaneous resistance to modernity and restitution between species. This pushes criticism on Sebald in a new direction by emphasising how his critique of modernity is inseparable from his interest in nonhuman life.

Both of these texts are pervaded by what I have called a form of creaturely melancholia: Sebald melancholically bears witness to history as a series of catastrophes in which nonhuman nature is perpetually vanishing, extinguished, and forgotten. By staging encounters between humans and mostly scared, encaged, or dead animals, Sebald's writing remembers forms of life which modernity forgets. But Sebald's melancholic and connective approach also contains tensions and ambigui-

ties which are not easily resolvable. Most importantly, Sebald's melancholia remains a fundamentally scopic regime, in that his texts rarely go beyond looking and seeing. This distance between gazes connotes an ethical non-interventionist position, but it also leaves the world as it is, with animals forever being lost to history's acceleration. In other words, by merely witnessing modernity, Sebald's texts rarely imagine different relations between humans and animals. While Sebald himself maintained that 'melancholy, the rethinking of the disaster we are in, shares nothing with the desire for death. It is a form of resistance',[18] my reading of Sebald's creaturely form suggests that his archivist and essayistic style never fully overcomes a despondent outlook on modernity's war against animals.

This sense of 'disaster' is ever-present in Coetzee's fiction too, as his characters find themselves overwhelmed by the magnitude of animal suffering. By concentrating on this sense of being-overwhelmed, my second chapter built on Coetzee's own suggestion that his writing is a paltry defence mechanism that guards against, but is ultimately overwhelmed, distorted, and deformed by what he calls 'the fact of suffering in the world, and not only human suffering'.[19] I argued that Coetzee articulates this sense of being overcome by animal suffering in the 1990s, a time in which he not only began explicitly writing about animals but also deepened his literary project's deformations via the figure of the animal. My chapter conceived of Coetzee's so-called 'animal turn' fictions – *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace*, and *Elizabeth Costello* – as textual experiments: each of these works investigates to what extent different forms and genres can be attentive towards animality. My analysis of *Disgrace* revealed how Coetzee constantly ab-uses the tropes and forms of literary realism in order to destabilise the anthropocentrism of both his protagonist and of the very form of literature he is writing within. And my reading of *Elizabeth Costello* looked to how Coetzee adopts metafictional manoeuvres in order to reflect, within fiction, on the failures of fiction to 'think' animality. Although Coetzee has become the most written-about author in the burgeoning animal studies canon, my chapter's emphasis on form and genre develops the prevailing thematic discussions of Coetzee's animal ethics. My chapter also makes the case that animality is central to Coetzee's literary project, and that the figure of the animal actually adds to and intensifies his interest in colonial domination.

I also complicated the critical conversation surrounding Coetzee's animal turn by arguing that his work gets into all sorts of creaturely trouble. *Disgrace* reaches a formal limit, and has to end in the way it does in order to suspend David's eutha-

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[18] Sebald and Gordon Turner, 'Introduction and Translation of an Interview given by Max Sebald', *W. G. Sebald: History – Memory – Trauma*, ed. by Scott Denham and Mark McCulloh (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), pp. 21–29 (p. 24).

[19] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point: Essays and Interviews*, ed. by David Attwell (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 248.

nasia of the dog, *Driepoot*. And while *Elizabeth Costello's* metafiction appears to present a less anthropocentric mode for writing about animals, the text never completely abandons the logic of sacrifice that Coetzee identified through *Disgrace's* plot. Costello sacrifices herself – by which I mean, is textually sacrificed by Coetzee – in the place of animals. Moreover, Coetzee's work constantly announces its own troubles. His writing develops a reflexive aesthetics of failure in which the very creaturely positions his texts adopt are constantly challenged, devalued and placed under erasure. At its clearest, Coetzee's aesthetics of failure testifies to the weight of anthropocentrism as it bears down on our ability to express a commitment towards animality. And yet, as I have showed, we can also argue that Coetzee's texts are too absorbed with their own limitations. With the forthcoming publication of a new collection of short stories about Elizabeth Costello, already released in 2018 in French as *L'Abattoir de verre* [The Glass Abattoir] and in Spanish as *Siete Cuentos Morales* [Seven Moral Tales], it is clear that Coetzee is still preoccupied with the interrelation of storytelling and animal ethics. It remains to be seen, then, how Coetzee will continue his inclination towards nonhuman animals in these new works.

My third chapter proposed that Mahasweta Devi's political commitment to adivasi marginalisation carries with it a concern for the nonhuman. Following Mahasweta's claim that her writing carries out a 'double task', that is, of resisting the Indian developmental agenda and learning to love, I analysed the ways in which her writing conceives of this double task as challenging the anthropocentric technologies of development, constitutional law, and personhood, all of which systematically neglect adivasi communities and destroy nonhuman habitats. For me, Mahasweta's 'double task' stages how adivasis and forests are jointly rendered expendable by the postcolonial pursuit of human rights and developmentalism. I traced this line of argument through close readings of her short stories and her longer story, 'Pterodactyl'. Under my reading, Mahasweta's short stories dramatise the political exclusion of adivasis from the constitutional *polis* while also moving beyond a rights-based discourse. By teasing out the relationship between the short story form, subjugated humanity, and the paradoxes of rights, I also suggested that Mahasweta writes against the steady and unfolding emplotment of postcolonial development projects. I continued this analysis in my work on 'Pterodactyl', in which I paid close attention to how Mahasweta tells a story of human 'development' which troubles the narrative of postcolonial development. I argued that Mahasweta deforms Puran in much the same way that Sebald and Coetzee deform or distort their human protagonists, and I argued that Mahasweta makes this possible through her literary de-extinction of the pterodactyl. Finally, I turned to Mahasweta's use of the asymptote, and I formulated the idea of 'asymptotic planetary alongsideness'. I argued that in 'Pterodactyl', Mahasweta's narrative

approaches – without ever assimilating or appropriating – the kinds of human and nonhuman otherness that she writes about. The asymptote thus denotes a constructive distance which envisions relationality. By turning to Spivak's catachrestic formulation of 'planetarity' and recent conversations about difference-preserving 'alongsideness' in animal studies, I developed the argument that 'Pterodactyl' imagines creatureliness as a form of planetary alongsideness that, like the asymptote, constantly approaches but never eclipses the other. Asymptotic planetary alongsideness therefore looks forward to a paradoxical reconciliation between 'modern man', adivasis, and nonhuman nature. By reading the ending of 'Pterodactyl', in which Puran 'steps up' into an uncertain future, I concluded my chapter with the contention that Mahasweta's 'love' signifies a kind of multispecies accountability in a shared planet. This opens the concept of the creaturely to the future, and to a non-anthropocentric political community to come.

What is unique about Mahasweta's literary project, then, is that while her writing sometimes echoes both Sebald's melancholia and Coetzee's aesthetics of failure, her texts ultimately take a more political approach to creaturely life. This is all the more intriguing considering that her writing is not invested in the mostly Anglophone corpus of animal ethics, rights, and philosophical thought with which Sebald and Coetzee engage. This is to say, in other words, that Mahasweta's texts are not straightforwardly environmental or pro-animal. But as my chapter shows, her focus on low-caste and adivasi life actually ends up leading her towards an eco-politics, towards a kind of creaturely life to come in which 'modern man' dissolves his mastery over animality. Mahasweta's creaturely commitments therefore overcome some of the unresolved ambiguities and contradictions of Sebald's and Coetzee's writing. Her predominantly third-person-narrated stories structurally evade the first-person melancholia of Sebald's texts. Her emphasis on localised political organising and counter-violence to neo-colonialism, as shown in 'Fundamental Rights and Bhikari Dusad' and 'The Hunt' respectively, presents a more direct and active resistance to coloniality than Sebald's and Coetzee's stories. Indeed, when Coetzee discusses politics, he emphasises his lifelong ambivalence towards its demands: 'Sympathetic to the human concerns of the left, he is alienated, when the crunch comes, by its language – by all political language, in fact'. Adopting the standpoint of third-person narration, Coetzee tells us that he has always been 'ill at ease' with all language 'that is not provisional'.[20] This sharpens our understanding of how *The Lives of Animals*, *Disgrace* and *Elizabeth Costello* render animal ethics as provisional, in contestation, and ultimately indefinite. But when read alongside Mahasweta's creaturely commitments, Coetzee's comments also underscore how far Mahasweta's writing develops a creaturely form that is not weighed down by nor absorbed by its own limitations, its own alienation, its

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[20] Coetzee, *Doubling the Point*, p.394.

own provisionality. Mahasweta's eco-political coupling of planetarity with political commitment might therefore point the way forward for creaturely engagements. For if we have seen that the creaturely is often founded on a logic of negativity – shared vulnerability, affliction, destruction, and de-animation – then Mahasweta's texts powerfully rewrite the term as a future-oriented promise of a reconciliation between humanity and animality.

My analysis of literature's potential to suspend the decision between human and animal is far-reaching. Although I have been using the term 'creaturely forms' as a lens for reading Sebald's, Coetzee's, and Mahasweta's literary projects, I am also interested in how creaturely forms exist beyond these three authors. I hope that my research on late-twentieth-century texts provides the groundwork for further studies into deconstructions of anthropocentrism from different literary traditions, languages and aesthetic forms. I will gesture here to three possible avenues of further enquiry: poetry, modernism, and contemporary literature. In chapter one I suggested that Sebald's creaturely form begins with his prose-poem *After Nature*. And in chapter two I considered how Coetzee's *Elizabeth Costello* looks to poetry 'that does not try to find an idea in the animal, that is not about the animal, but is instead the record of an engagement with' the animal.[21] But how might a more rigorous and concentrated analysis of poetry itself – the specificity of poetry as opposed to the manifold prose forms analysed here – alter our perceptions of literature's participation in the war against animals? Because of its prickly exterior and vulnerable underbelly, Jacques Derrida famously described poetry as being akin to 'the *hérrison*, *istrice* in Italian, in English, hedgehog'.[22] How might poetry's animalistic resemblances themselves change our understanding of creaturely form? The same question can be asked of modernist aesthetics. My introduction framed this thesis as building on ongoing research into modernist literary posthumanisms. Although I have ultimately focused on a different and more recent historical moment of late modernist literary production, further research might still be conducted into modernism's transformation of human-animal relations. Going forward, then, we might ask: to what extent was early-twentieth-century modernist writing in conversation with the German-Jewish valences of the creaturely? In what ways do modernist literary forms stage an affinity between humanity and animality?

To give just one more indication of the usefulness of this thesis' central hypotheses, theories and methods of analysis, it is germane to trace how creaturely forms

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[21] *Elizabeth Costello*, p. 96.

[22] Jacques Derrida, 'Che cos'è la poesia?', in *Points...: Interviews, 1974–1994*, ed. by Elisabeth Weber, trans. by Peggy Kamuf and others (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp. 288–299 (p. 288, 297).

are being articulated in the increasingly environmental consciousness and experimental methods of contemporary literature. As contemporary authors negotiate the scale and urgency of climate change and extinction, they concomitantly bend and reshape existing aesthetic forms. Arundhati Roy's *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (2017) is just one recent example among many others that could be analysed from the perspective of creaturely form. Addressed to 'The Unconsoled', and dramatising both the Kashmir conflict and the rise of Hindu nationalism, Roy's novel adopts an all-encompassing narrative perspective which oscillates between timelines, focalisers, and narrative perspectives. In its final act, the novel asks 'How to tell a shattered story?', and answers its own question as follows: 'by slowly becoming everybody. No. By slowly becoming everything.'[23] Roy announces this 'everything' perspective in the novel's fragmentary opening paragraph: a short, scene-setting preface, typeset in italics, which tracks an ecological chain-reaction that begins with India's increasingly industrialised milk production and ends by endangering white-backed vultures:

> The vultures died of diclofenac poisoning. Diclofenac, cow-aspirin, given to cattle as a muscle relaxant, to ease pain and increase the production of milk, works – worked – like nerve gas on white-backed vultures. Each chemically relaxed, milk-producing cow or buffalo that died became poisoned vulture-bait. As cattle turned into better dairy machines, as the city ate more ice cream, butterscotch-crunch, nutty-buddy and chocolate-chip, as it drank more mango milkshake, vultures' necks began to droop as though they were tired and simply couldn't stay awake. Silver beards of saliva dripped from their beaks, and one by one they tumbled off their branches, dead.[24]

In prose which echoes Sebald's natural-historical and Mahasweta's planetary style, but which also develops Roy's own longstanding linguistic attention to Indian snack culture and the everyday, Roy begins her novel by mapping the ways in which globalisation and economic modernisation have transformed ecological life. The production of cows' milk now comes at the price of vulture extinction. *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* therefore develops this thesis' focus on the relationship between postcolonial literature and industrialised food production, inviting readers to consider how the technological manipulation of life rebounds onto other animals. Going forward, then, I wish to more extensively study the creaturely forms of contemporary writing.

This study's analysis of creaturely form also opens up two more questions for further research. First, how does literature attend to those creatures that are not usu-

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[23] Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (London: Penguin, 2017), p. 436.
[24] Ibid., p. 1.

ally or primarily foregrounded within animal studies? In other words, if animal studies and animal ethics more broadly have tended to focus on charismatic megafauna and companion animals, then how do creaturely forms conceptualise other kinds of nonhuman life? Sebald's natural-history of sericulture in *Rings* offers one pertinent example. Spread over twenty pages, Sebald's *longue durée* perspective traces how silkworms have been utilised across two millennia, from Chinese cultivation methods all the way to the 'entire killing business' of Nazi silkworm experimentation.[25] In doing so, Sebald's writing suggests that an awareness of silkworm exploitation is necessary for deepening our analysis of modernity and anthropocentrism. But further research is needed in order to analyse how other authors have turned literature into a space which discusses how modernity impacts upon, for example, insect life. How does Teju Cole's *Open City* (2011), for instance, utilise the figure of bedbugs in order to further critique the somnambulant *flânerie* of its first-person narrator, Julius? And what is at stake in Henrietta Rose-Innes's *Nineveh* (2011) when her protagonist, the daughter of a pest exterminator, starts a Painless Pest Relocation business in Cape Town? Second, how do literary texts written from the perspective of nonhuman animals rewrite the boundaries of literary forms? From Romanticism (E. T. A. Hoffmann) to modernism (Franz Kafka and Virginia Woolf) to contemporary world literature (André Alexis, Ceridwen Dovey, Barbara Gowdy, Alain Mabanckou, Yoko Tawada), authors have long experimented with what David Herman terms the 'animal autobiographies' of mice, dogs, elephants and polar bears.[26] As I have articulated it across this thesis, creaturely forms are not written from the position of the nonhuman, but are instead human narratives that trouble or relinquish anthropocentrism through an encounter with animality. Even so, future research might explore to what extent these animal-narrated stories challenge, nuance or consolidate this study's findings.

As I write today, the gap between humanity and animality seems abyssal. There are new extinctions every day. The demand for agro-industrially farmed animals is increasing. And the effects of climate change are devastating the world's poor in the global south. It is already late. We are, as Derrida put it, in a 'critical phase' in the war against the animal. What we must be demanding, then, is nothing short of 'a fundamental shift in power relations between humanity and the natural world'.[27] Anything less and we will continue to face the 'slow cancellation of the

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[25] *Rings*, p. 294.

[26] David Herman, *Narratology beyond the Human: Storytelling and Animal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 157.

[27] Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs The Climate* (London: Penguin, 2015), p. 340.

future'.[28] My conviction across this thesis has been that literature plays an active cultural, discursive and ideological role in reflecting and informing these power relations between humans and animals. Creaturely forms of writing are therefore essential if we are to think and act differently, redistribute power, and discover individual and – more crucially – collective means of living sustainably with and alongside animality. For as I have demonstrated throughout this thesis, literature not only represents the power relations between humanity and the natural world. It not only challenges these power relations. It can also imagine different kinds of relationality between humanity and the natural world. The kinds of creaturely life and attentiveness towards animality that Sebald, Coetzee and Mahasweta each imagine are vital for helping us make sense of the scale of anthropocentrism, the colonial impulse to obliterate forms of life deemed insufficiently human, and the urgent need for 'the human' to surrender its mastery. Through these encounters with animality, creaturely forms articulate new genres of the human. We will need these other genres of living if we are to call time on the war against animals and begin again.

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[28] Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *After the Future*, ed. by Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn, trans. by Arianna Bove, Melinda Cooper, Erik Empson, Enrico, Giuseppina Mecchia, and Tiziana Terranova (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), p. 18.

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