

The Existential Animal

**Phenomenology, Alterity,
and Contemporary Aesthetic
Approaches to the Nonhuman**

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October 2021



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University
Of
Sheffield.**



White Rose
College of the Arts
& Humanities

Universities of Leeds, Sheffield & York

A PhD research project funded by the White Rose College of the Arts and Humanities

Acknowledgements

A PhD is a long, arduous—and often lonely—road. There are many individuals without whom my own journey would never have been completed. My thanks go to everyone who has helped me, in any way, however small. All of you deserve to be thanked individually, but limits of time, space and memory mean I can name only a few of you. First, I thank my partner, Nadia for her unwavering encouragement throughout. You have been a voice of wisdom to me when my own reason was failing, a source of support when my strength was at its lowest, and a patient ear without which most of these ideas could never have borne fruit. Thank you. Second, I want to express my deepest appreciation for my supervisor Robert (Bob) McKay. Without your suggestions, feedback and support this project would have stumbled through blind alleys and dead ends, wallowed in quagmires, and foundered by the wayside long ago. To my secondary supervisors, Lourdes Orozco, Madeleine Callaghan and Sam Ladkin: heartfelt thanks for all your insightful suggestions, readings and comments, which helped make this thesis what it is. And special gratitude to Komarine Romdenh-Romluc, who was not even part of my supervisory team but generously shared her expertise with me, nonetheless. I have been incredibly privileged during my PhD tenure to participate in the Sheffield Animal Studies Research Centre (ShARC), and I wish to acknowledge its founding directors—Bob (again), John Miller and Alasdair Cochrane—for their creation of such a warm and welcoming scholarly environment. Likewise, thank you to my other fellow ShARCs for your companionship and generosity during the past four years, in particular Sarah, Pete, Danny, Mo, Ming, Rebecca and Joe. Two non-ShARCs also deserve a special mention in this regard: Xa and Emily-Rose. Without these colleagues' friendship and support (intellectual and emotional) I doubt I would have completed this research at all, and certainly would not have had the fun I did in doing so. To my mentor, Amy: my deepest thanks for all your wisdom, common sense and perspective. Finally, to my family—my two sisters, Esme and Charis, and my mum, Jane—thank you for all the help you have given me, not only during the past four years, but also the twenty-eight before that. I love you all very deeply. Finally, I dedicate this thesis to my dad, Phil, a man who, were he still with us, would appreciate more than anyone the absurdity of its undertaking.

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“We cannot look around our corner:
it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know
what other kinds of intellects
and perspectives there *might* be.”

Friedrich Nietzsche

Introduction

In his 1978 essay, ‘What is it like to be a Bat?’, Thomas Nagel suggests that ‘even without the benefit of philosophical reflection, anyone who has spent some time in an enclosed space with an excited bat knows what it is to encounter a fundamentally *alien* form of life’.¹ Nagel’s essay paints perhaps the most vivid picture of the problem facing any human who would attempt to imagine a nonhuman mode of being in the world. A human, he argues, can never think their way into the experience of a creature whose sensory experience and relation to its environment are so radically other. The problem is not a bat’s sonar, as such. After all, Western knowledge production finds itself quite capable of describing the physical, i.e. *objective* operation of such anatomy. The issue, for Nagel, stems from the corollary that there is something *it is like* for the bat to experience the world in the way it does, a *subjective* element occurring for/to it in an epistemologically inaccessible domain analogous to, but never synonymous with, humans’ experiences of subjectivity. The bat, for Nagel, is a perfect limit case, related closely enough to humans—humans and bats are both mammals—yet with a manner of relating to the world that is so different from the typical human case as to render it unimaginable from a human perspective. Even if one could be *transformed* into a bat, Nagel contends, one would not have a sense of what it would be like to have always been one, nor, indeed, would a human thus transformed reveal any trace of the previous self who undertook to imagine this alien mode of being in the first place.

Given his epistemological preoccupations, it is perhaps surprising that Nagel posits the problem of other minds as a question of neither analytic reasoning nor scientific inquiry, but one of faith and belief: ‘I have chosen bats instead of wasps or flounders’, he explains, ‘because if one travels too far down the phylogenetic tree, people gradually shed their faith that there is experience there at all’.² He later states that ‘we believe that bats feel some versions of pain, fear, hunger, and lust,’ even if ‘we believe that these experiences also have in each case a specific subjective character, which it is beyond our ability to conceive’.³ Whether we believe in other minds or not has profound ethical implications. We cannot know that nonhumans have subjective experiences in the same way that we can talk of knowing the operations of gravity upon apples, but certain humans—myself included—nevertheless

¹ Thomas Nagel, ‘What Is It Like to Be a Bat?’, *The Philosophical Review*, 83.4 (1974), 435–50 (p. 438), original italics.

² Nagel, p. 438.

³ Nagel, p. 439.

believe that bats have the capacity to experience ‘pain, fear, hunger, and lust’, that other animals are not the mindless automata of René Descartes, but creatures with their own capacities to flourish and to suffer, who are privy to their own rich lives, which should be valued and protected as far as possible from human harm. In other words, Nagel’s question of faith becomes a version of Pascal’s Wager: we choose to believe in what we cannot know empirically because, consequentially, it is better to believe than to disbelieve and to be wrong.

Yet whilst we take the *existence* of these other subjectivities on faith, Nagel is clear that any attempt to imagine the quality or content of these other experiences is a fool’s errand. The problem is not the inaccessibility of these other subjectivities, as such, for this applies likewise to human beings, who have no problem, Nagel argues, placing themselves in one another’s shoes: ‘the point of view in question is not one accessible only to a single individual’, but instead belongs to a ‘type’.⁴ Some ‘phenomenological facts’ are so universal within a type—e.g. human beings—that they ‘are perfectly objective: one person can know or say of another what the quality of the other’s experience is’.⁵ However, ‘the more different from oneself the experiencer is, the less success one can expect with this enterprise’.⁶ Human imagination, Nagel contends, is simply not up to the task: ‘Our own experience provides the basic material for our imagination, whose range is therefore limited’.⁷ ‘If extrapolation from our own case is involved in the idea of what it is like to be a bat,’ Nagel contends, then this extrapolation ‘must be incompletable’.⁸

And so, Nagel does not even try. Despite its titular aims, Nagel’s essay appears fundamentally unconcerned with the bat *qua* bat. Aside from the brief quote which began this introduction, in which Nagel considers the human experience of being actually in the presence of the flesh-and-blood animal, the bat in Nagel’s essay is less a bat in its own right than it is a figure for working through an onto-epistemological puzzle that has long plagued philosophers, scientists, and all manner of inquiring minds: the mind-body problem. Where does consciousness come from? How could such a thing as mind possibly derive from seemingly inert, inanimate matter, thusly arranged? The bat is Nagel’s way of showing the limitations of contemporaneous physicalist attempts to explain away what David Chalmers

⁴ Nagel, p. 441.

⁵ Nagel, p. 442.

⁶ Nagel, p. 442.

⁷ Nagel, p. 439.

⁸ Nagel, p. 439.

would come to call the ‘hard problem of consciousness’.⁹ The bat’s inaccessible, unimaginable interiority—the question of *what it is like* for a bat *to be a bat*—is the problematic remainder of any attempt to reduce subjectivity to a description of objective phenomena. To put this another way, Nagel’s bat is merely a fulcrum for another point entirely. Read in this light, Nagel’s bat may be the very picture of otherness, but it is stripped of all agency. How differently might Nagel’s essay read if it continued to be about the real bat? Would this bat, realistically represented, even hang about long enough for Nagel to leverage his point? Or would it flit around the dark corners of his essay, out of reach of human sight and philosopher’s pen, leaving Nagel without a place to stand?

There is nothing peculiar in Nagel’s reduction of a nonhuman animal to a trope. As Mario Ortiz Robles observes, this is how animals exist for human culture. Like Nagel, Ortiz Robles sees our capacity to know animals—on any level—as belonging to the imagination: ‘we seem to have only an inkling of the magnitude of the task ahead of us if we are determined, as a species, to give a full account of the complexity of life on earth, a quantity that baffles the imagination’.¹⁰ Put simply: ‘In a manner that may be more acute for science than for literature, but not for all that less figurative, we have to invent the animal in order to understand it.’¹¹ Ortiz Robles comments that whilst some might think it foolish to think of animals as *mere* tropes, given how precarious the lives of most animals are in our human epoch, such a reading underplays the importance of tropes: ‘to think of animals as mere tropes is [...] to understate the power of tropes themselves. Tropes are the cognitive referents on the basis of which we make sense of the world, and which, in doing so, help us shape it’.¹² Part of the business of speaking for animals, politically and ethically, therefore involves ‘carefully analyzing the ways in which animals have been described, portrayed, personified; in short, invented’.¹³

On the one hand, then, nonhuman subjectivities are unknowable, either empirically, or in the extrapolative mode in which Nagel suggests we understand other humans. On the other, all knowledge of nonhuman animals is always already refracted through a cultural lens. This thesis chooses to read these two—seemingly contradictory—starting assumptions not as constraining but as liberative. If we follow Nagel’s claim that imagination is the right tool for

⁹ David J. Chalmers, ‘Facing up to the Problem of Consciousness’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 2.3 (1995), 200–219.

¹⁰ Mario Ortiz Robles, *Literature and Animal Studies* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), p. 7.

¹¹ Ortiz Robles, p. 7.

¹² Ortiz Robles, p. 19.

¹³ Ortiz Robles, p. 18.

such undertakings—even if it may not be up to the task—then producers of imaginative works are as equipped to address themselves to this question as are writers and thinkers in any other mode. If all animals are tropes for human meaning-making, then producers of aesthetic texts are equal participants in the construction of knowledge about nonhumans. In short (and to reprise a literary-critical cliché), representations of nonhuman subjectivities really do matter.

At the same time, this liberating gesture throws up a particular quandary. Animals as tropes are inextricable from human culture, yet animals as agents are excluded from human meaning-making. When attempting to appraise a representation of the lifeworld of a human Other with whom artist, and perhaps audience, may share little by way of social positionality and life experience, one typically has recourse to language, even if marginalised voices who speak up against misrepresentations are heeded less frequently and forcefully than they ought to be.¹⁴ In the case of nonhumans, it becomes very difficult, perhaps impossible, to say what constitutes a misrepresentation of their experiences. This means that humans' desires for identification with, and/or representation of, nonhuman animals finds itself at odds with nonhumanness. Other animals are agents in their own rights, with their own heterogeneous modes of being, their own preoccupations and concerns, most of them entirely autonomous from those of humans. Claiming to speak for someone who cannot speak—at least not in a language we understand—or claiming to know what nonhuman animals might be feeling or thinking, always risks collapsing their alterity. This is the central representational dilemma that this thesis seeks to explore.

This research operates with the assumption that animals are Others, in the sense of being different to the human, but also of being profoundly unknowable from a human perspective. In this belief, I follow Jacques Derrida in his insistence that there are 'abyssal differences' between nonhuman and human animals.¹⁵ 'There is no interest to be found in debating something like a discontinuity, rupture, or even abyss between those who call themselves men and what so-called men, those who name themselves men, call the animal', Derrida argues: 'Everybody agrees to this; discussion is closed in advance; one would have to be more asinine than any beast [*plus bête que les bêtes*] to think otherwise.'¹⁶ It is not simply nonhuman animals' difference from the human that marks them out as our irresolvable Others,

¹⁴ On this, and other matters of (mis)representation between dominantly situated and marginalised human subjects, see Nadia Mehdi, 'Telling the Stories of Others', *Ergo*, 2021 [epub ahead of print].

¹⁵ Jacques Derrida, *The Animal That Therefore I Am*, ed. by Marie-Luise Mallet, trans. by David Wills (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), p. 34.

¹⁶ Derrida, p. 30, original italics.

however, nor is it their unknowability *as such*. Instead, this fact arises from nonhuman animals' status as subjects in their own right. Recalling his experience of standing naked before his cat, Derrida notes that 'it can allow itself to be looked at, no doubt, but also—something that philosophy perhaps forgets, perhaps being this calculated forgetting itself—it can look at me. It has its point of view regarding me'.¹⁷ This vantage is 'the point of view of the absolute other'.¹⁸ This alterity of the nonhuman arises from its otherness, which, for all its unknowability, is nevertheless also another point of view.

In the chapters that follow, the majority of texts I consider are poised between a desire to represent experiences and agencies radically other to the human, and a desire to acknowledge their ultimate unknowability. Many reflect not only Nagel's problems of imagination and extrapolation, but also transformation: not content with representing these nonhuman modes of being, some of these writers and artists imagine that they or another human become some other kind of animal. One question ties the research together: how have contemporary aesthetic texts sought to represent such transformations, or otherwise attempted to imagine nonhuman modes of being, whilst also apprehending nonhumans' alterity, their status as radical, unknowable Others? Most theoretical and critical inquiries into contemporary aesthetic representations of animal subjects have tended either to dodge the issue of subjectivity, or to emphasise human connection and identification with nonhuman animals over disjuncture and unknowability. Ron Broglio's *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (2011), for instance, whilst writing against the Western philosophical tradition of seeing animals as 'living on the surface', makes no attempt to analyse aesthetic works that represent animals in the imagined depth of their experiences. Broglio contents himself, instead, with the view that 'the surface can be the site of productive engagement with the world of animals'.¹⁹ 'If we cannot access what it is to live from the standpoint of the beast,' he contends, 'then our understanding of the animals and their worlds comes from contact with the surface of such worlds'.²⁰ Susan McHugh's *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (2011), meanwhile, focuses less on fiction's representations of nonhuman animals as such, more on the ways in which intersubjective (human-animal) relations are represented in fictional works,

¹⁷ Derrida, p. 11.

¹⁸ Derrida, p. 11.

¹⁹ Ron Broglio, *Surface Encounters: Thinking with Animals and Art* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. xvii.

²⁰ Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, p. xix.

and how this might inform a conception of ‘non-human-centered agency’.²¹ McHugh seeks to develop a ‘sense of embodiment as interconnecting species and social agency’, and to explore how this troubles ‘traditional notions that aesthetic forms follow from scientific thinking about animals,’ and ‘more reactionary views, for instance, that the novel gives form only ever to human subjectivity’.²² Timothy Baker’s *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering, and Animality in Twenty-First-Century Fiction* (2019) focuses on the (perceived) anthropocentrism of language, and upon experiences of precarity. Baker’s work offers a particularly clear example of the tendency within previous literary animal studies research to emphasise one or other of the two poles of *connection* and *unknowability*; Baker posits ‘the closely linked themes of suffering, grief, mourning, and indeed death [...] as central to all creaturely experience’, seeing these shared experiences as a means ‘to move past the irresolvable question of language’, i.e. the seemingly insurmountable barrier it establishes between human and nonhuman experiences.²³ Danielle Sands’ *Animal Writing: Storytelling, Selfhood and the Limits of Empathy* (2019) is perhaps most similar to this thesis in its attempts to chart a course between these two conflicting impulses. Sands argues that literature provides ‘a privileged space for developing and extending empathy’,²⁴ but also remains attuned to the tenuousness of such connections. As her title suggests, the work examines the limitations of literature for building empathy, and the limitations of empathy itself for fostering (equal) concern for (all) nonhumans. Like Sands’ work, this thesis opts to keep these two poles in productive tension. It also seeks, in part, to intervene in the empathy debate (more on which below). However, its primary focus is in the opposite direction, examining aesthetic explorations of empathy’s antithesis: alterity. It selects and analyses aesthetic works that draw connections between human and nonhuman modes of being whilst seeing their incommensurabilities, which acknowledge the unknowability of nonhuman experiences, and imagine them anyway.

To theorise this aesthetic innovation, I have developed new tools—or, rather, dusted off *old* tools—returning to a set of thinkers within continental philosophy who have been mostly overlooked by animal-studies researchers to date: Martin Heidegger, Simone de Beauvoir, Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Frantz Fanon. These philosophers were key thinkers in

²¹ Susan McHugh, *Animal Stories: Narrating Across Species Lines* (Minneapolis, MN; London: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 4.

²² Susan McHugh, p. 4.

²³ Timothy C. Baker, *Writing Animals: Language, Suffering, and Animality in Twenty-First-Century Fiction* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), p. 14, italics added.

²⁴ Danielle Sands, *Animal Writing: Storytelling, Selfhood and the Limits of Empathy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), p. 181.

and around the ‘existentialist’ tradition in continental thought, centrally—in the case of Beauvoir and Fanon—or at its peripheries—in the case of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty. As Jonathan Webber explains, the ‘existentialist’ label denotes a philosophical method and focus pioneered in the works of Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre, the coiners of the term (more on which below).²⁵ Although Sartre was the founding father of this movement, his lack of interest in nonhuman animals means he does not feature in the preceding chapters. Departing from Webber’s strict definition, I also include Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, two philosophers whose existentialist alignments Webber questions; both, he argues, are *existential* thinkers—concerned with the nature of (human) existence—without being *existentialist*, in the narrow sense that Sartre and Beauvoir employed this term.²⁶ In practice, Heidegger’s philosophy shares much with that of his successors, as we shall see, and he has typically been read as an at least proto-existentialist thinker.²⁷ He is also one philosopher from this period who *has* been subject to sustained analysis within and around animal studies, and my inclusion of him therefore grants me the opportunity to redress these oftentimes reductive readings of his work. I include Merleau-Ponty, meanwhile, precisely because his alternative view of human existence—and its difference, or lack thereof, from the existences of nonhuman animals—offers unique theoretical insights, whilst helping draw out the connotations and contradictions arising within the narrow church of existentialism. In other words, his role within this thesis echoes his real-world relationship with Beauvoir and Sartre: that of the argumentative interlocutor. In keeping with Webber’s characterisation, my titular use of the term ‘existential’ is intended to maintain a playful ambiguity, encompassing the range of philosophers who have proven most generative for my project. The ‘phenomenology’ of my title, meanwhile, denotes one thing these thinkers undoubtedly have in common, namely their adherence to a methodology developed by the philosopher Edmund Husserl. This mode will become clear as this thesis develops, but warrants a brief explication here: Husserl’s project of ‘transcendental phenomenology’ aimed to study how (human) attitudes toward the world present themselves to the subject, and may therefore enter into the subject’s awareness—to investigate, in other words, what it is *like* to be a human, and to attempt to understand *why*.

Animal studies has typically focused on what comes after this period in continental thought—poststructuralism, postmodernism, affect theory, for instance—with a particular

²⁵ Jonathan Webber, *Rethinking Existentialism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 1–3.

²⁶ Webber, pp. 7, 19.

²⁷ Webber, p. 7.

emphasis on the works of Derrida and Gilles Deleuze. Except for Heidegger, whose work has been enormously generative in terms of the strong reactions against it, the existentialists have largely escaped the discipline's attention. Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco's *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity: Essential Readings in Continental Thought* (2004), for instance, contains no readings from the three other philosophers this thesis considers: Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty and Fanon. H. Peter Steeves' collection, *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life* (1999), which Tom Regan describes as 'a volume where the tools of philosophy fashioned on the continent are used to explore the contours of our knowledge of, and encounters with, other than human animals', does feature one essay each on Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and a brief encounter with Beauvoir. These are key engagements upon which my research draws, in part. This thesis extends this scant critical engagement. It also refocuses it, adopting, adapting, and reinterpreting concepts whose relevance to animal studies has gone un- or misrecognised, even by the standards of an already overlooked movement.

Given its interest in post- and antihumanist philosophies, animal studies' relative lack of interest in existentialism is unsurprising; this tradition remains, on the face of it, firmly rooted in humanism. In other words, the thinkers I consider are concerned with sketching an existential conception of *the human*, defined to greater or lesser extent by its difference from nonhuman animals. This, in and of itself, provides one reason to engage these philosophers' works. As we know from Giorgio Agamben, the 'anthropological machine' of Western cultures constructs the human in opposition to the animal, and vice versa.²⁸ It is principally in this epistemological position that 'the animal' or 'animals' feature in existentialism, namely as the other half of a presumed dialectic, against which the human might be brought into sharper relief. At the same time, however, this discursivity cuts the other way: alternative conceptions of the human offer new starting positions from which to understand the nonhuman, as well as the relation between nonhuman and human animals. In Chapter Two and Chapter Four of this thesis, in particular, I find that attending to alternative genres of the human can break the hermeneutic circle of a dominant Western humanism, reterritorializing the concepts of human and animal, opening up new avenues for imagining the connections and differences between these two poles, and between all other forms of sentient life.

Another reason to return to this moment in continental thought is that—as with any era—it contains the seeds of what was to come after. The respective rejections and problematisations of identities that are found in Derrida and Deleuze are prefigured in mid-

²⁸ Giorgio Agamben, *The Open: Man and Animal* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), p. 37.

twentieth century existential(ist) philosophies, which see human identity, at least, as contestable and contingent. Sartre's tagline for the existentialist movement—the claim that 'existence precedes essence'—was meant to convey precisely this mutability. In a 1945 Paris lecture, subsequently published as *Existentialism is a Humanism*, Sartre claims that 'if God does not exist, there is at least one being in whom existence precedes essence—a being whose existence comes before its essence [...]. That being is man.'²⁹ By this maxim, Sartre explains, the existentialists mean that 'to begin with he [man] is nothing. He will not be anything until later, and then he will be what he makes himself.'³⁰ In other words, as Webber expounds, 'a human being has no inbuilt essence,' from an existentialist perspective, 'no innate or fixed personality, but instead creates their essence, or their character and outlook, through the values and projects they choose to adopt'.³¹ In the original existentialist framework, one is defined not *a priori* or from without, but by what one does, and identity is neither predetermined nor fixed, but must be continually vied for and reperformed. This thread of contestability and performativity wends its way through the philosophical works this thesis examines. Heideggerian *Dasein*, for instance, may essentialise humans' difference from nonhuman animals, but it simultaneously—and paradoxically—presents the human as a mutable category of being (a formulation laden with its own ethical dilemmas, as my analysis makes clear). In Beauvoir's formulation, humans are engaged in a continual *becoming human*, figured as a *becoming more than animal*, a struggle with particular contours for human women, whose full humanity is placed in doubt. For Merleau-Ponty, the notion of the human as a Cartesian rational subject proves to be its own performance, the pretence of which is revealed when we attend to the ways in which even the most complex behaviour occurs largely without the need for conscious direction. For Fanon, the struggle for (the recognition of) one's humanity is a defining aspect of the experiences of people of colour, and his paradoxical humanism defines the human as the only animal capable of experiencing its own non-humanisation. Turning their backs on essentialism in many of its guises (though certainly not all, as we shall see) these thinkers work to unsettle fixed notions of identity.

By and large, these thinkers reserve this open-endedness for humans, relegating nonhuman animals to immanence; accordingly, in the same breath as Sartre voices his pithy slogan, he insists that the ability to make one's own mode of being in the world is the sole

²⁹ Jean-Paul Sartre, *Existentialism Is a Humanism*, trans. by Carol Macomber (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 2007), p. 22.

³⁰ Sartre, p. 22.

³¹ Webber, p. 3.

purview of human existents. Those individual animals that do feature in these philosophies tend to appear in one specific guise: as *cipher*. As Tom Tyler observes, an animal is made to function as a cipher when it is chosen to fill a place, whilst having no worth in itself.³² Tyler contrasts this usage of animal figures with the animal as *index*, one chosen for a unique attribute, a use that preserves the animal's individuality and significance.³³ As Tyler notes, such cipherings are characteristic of the ways animals are typically made to feature within philosophical discourse. This, too, is the role forced upon Nagel's bat. Though Nagel appears to have chosen it for a unique sensory attribute, he also considered the examples of 'wasps or flounders', which, he suggested, would have made even greater exemplars if his readers' faith in their subjective experiences was assured. What Nagel was really reaching for was a stand-in for any and all animals whose modes of existence are radically other to that of the human. The bat's consciousness is not so much unplumbable depth as it is empty void, which Nagel makes no effort to fill—partly because he believes such efforts futile—but also because, for the purpose of the thought experiment, its subjecthood is by-the-by.

This is typical of how animals are figured in the existentialist tradition, as so much grist to the humanist mill. However, reading against the grain of these philosophers' analyses, unpacking the contradictions and paradoxes that their ideas throw up, this thesis reveals ways in which preconceived notions of animality are also destabilised. To put this another way: in my readings, I sometimes follow something approaching Tyler's methodology, refusing to read animals as ciphers—even if this may be how the philosophers mean them to be read—and instead attending to them as concrete, real animals. When we attend to the animals in question in this way, we see that they sometimes resist their own reduction to mere ciphers and tropes. Beauvoir's own analysis, for instance, contains at least one example of an animal that is itself engaged in a *becoming more than animal*, in the way that Beauvoir herself defines the term. To borrow a word from Mel Chen, these animals have a certain *animacy*,³⁴ taking on lives of their own, harbouring significations beyond those that these writers regard them as having, which often end up resisting these philosophers' attempts to lay claim to the human in distinction to the animal. In other words, these thinkers wind up saying a lot more about 'the animal' or 'animals'—and, indeed, about the 'human' animal—than they ever set out to do.

³² Tom Tyler, *Ciferae: A Bestiary in Five Fingers* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2012), pp. 22–28.

³³ Tyler, *Ciferae*, pp. 30–33.

³⁴ Mel Y. Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2012), p. 3.

Whilst existentialism provides the case studies that inform my readings of the aesthetic works, Deleuze remains a key touchstone for my more theoretical analyses. The notion of ‘becoming-animal’ represents the ultimate rejection of fixed identity, of gender, humanity, species, etc. This has been the source of his appeal for many previous researchers who have examined aesthetic representations of nonhumans: Broglio’s *Surface Encounters* and Steve Baker’s *The Postmodern Animal* (2000), for instance, both consider becoming-animal at length. McHugh similarly turns to Deleuze for his ‘deferral of the possibility of any absolute distinction between man and animal [which] activates an intellectual tradition that short-circuits dualistic and hierarchic structures with highly charged—multiple, intense, and lateral—points of connectivity to thinking through life itself.’³⁵

Deleuze’s philosophy alone is insufficient to the task I have set myself, however. This has to do with the kinds of aesthetic works this thesis seeks to understand. Though far removed in time, mode, form and genre, these texts are united in their efforts to represent nonhuman animals as subjects *for-themselves*. As David Farrier observes, Deleuze and Guattari’s flagship concept of becoming-animal is unconcerned with the question of nonhuman subjectivities.³⁶ Indeed, we can extend this disinterest to include any and all forms of subjecthood. Deleuze’s emphasis on the interconnectedness of all beings in milieus and assemblages marks a turning away from the notion of subjectivity as a philosophical focus, or, in its most extreme interpretation, constitutes a rejection of the bounded subject altogether. As Sands notes, such philosophies of entanglement and enmeshedness may be alluring, but will always be troubled by the problem of how we might ‘translate the demands created by interdependency into a political and juridical context that remains dominated by “bounded individualism”’.³⁷ At the same time, Claire Colebrook identifies an ironic remnant of Cartesianism in Deleuze’s concepts of becoming-animal, becoming-imperceptible and becoming-woman, which appear to seek an erasure of corporeality, to assume that ‘we could, indeed, annihilate the world, not accept the given, including even my body here and now that seems to be the condition or point from which the world unfolds’.³⁸ As Nagel’s consideration of a bat’s sonar highlights, though the problem of nonhuman subjectivities is never reducible

³⁵ Susan McHugh, p. 218.

³⁶ David Farrier, ‘J.A. Baker’s *The Peregrine* and Its Readers’, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, 22.4 (2015), 742–58 (p. 747).

³⁷ Sands, p. 16 (Sands is referring explicitly to Anat Pick’s writings on the nonhuman, but the import is clearly relevant to Deleuze, the interconnectedness philosopher, *par excellence*).

³⁸ Claire Colebrook, *Sex after Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: Open Humanities Press, 2014), p. 74.

to physiology, their experiences remain inextricable from the bodies with which they belong. Becoming-animal, then, is something of a false friend for a project that examines aesthetic attempts to inhabit imagined nonhuman subjectivities, and even those that imagine actual transformations *into another animal*. This is because subjectivity—insofar as it figures at all in Deleuze’s thought—is so unbounded and disembodied as to be unlocatable.

For the writers and artists whom I examine, on the other hand, there is *something that it is like to be a bear, a peregrine, a fox, a chicken, a dog*, and so on, even if such an atomised notion of subjecthood is often in tension with a parallel tendency to represent identities, including species, as mutable, transcendable and/or deconstructable. This is the most important reason for my return to existentialism. Whilst this movement’s model of the subject has its flaws—only some of which this thesis is able to unpack—it nevertheless remains deeply invested in bounded individualism, meaning that its concepts—with occasional modification—provide ideal tools for theorising aesthetic attempts to represent nonhuman animals as subjects *for-themselves*. At the same time, although these philosophers are often haunted by their own Cartesian ghosts—only some of which I have space to exorcise—they are also far less willing to dispense with corporeality as a basis for experience, be that of humans or nonhuman animals. Once I have followed the implications and contradictions of certain existentialist concepts, what remains occasionally bears remarkable similarity to a radically process-ontological philosophy, as epitomised in Deleuze’s becoming-animal, but one in which some notion of the self-contained and embodied subject is retained.

The chapters that follow bring aesthetic and philosophical works together according to the principle of *mutual illumination*. This is to say that the philosophical concepts this thesis adopts and adapts are not simply tools for reading aesthetic works. My analyses move backwards and forwards between the aesthetic and the philosophical, with the aesthetic sometimes providing a tool for (re)reading the philosophical material. This part of my methodology owes a lot to Baker’s *Postmodern Animal*, with its attempt ‘to read examples of the art and the philosophy in relation to each other, looking not only for correspondences but for ways in which each might test the other’.³⁹ Although existentialism supplies the theoretical basis for my close readings, the aesthetic texts I analyse occasionally pull the rug out from under a philosopher’s feet. This brings me to a related set of assumptions this research sought to explore: aesthetic and philosophical works offer unique modes for exploring the question

³⁹ Steve Baker, *The Postmodern Animal* (London: Reaktion Books, 2000), p. 18.

of nonhuman (and human) subjectivities; close reading aesthetic works versus philosophical material therefore leads us to different conclusions to the question of the animal; if both lead us to a similar location, they do so via different routes; reading aesthetic texts in dialogue with philosophical works can lead us somewhere else again. Existentialism marks a moment in continental thought during which this boundary between the philosophical and the aesthetic was frequently traversed, but nevertheless marked. As Steven Crowell notes, ‘existentialism was as much a literary phenomenon as a philosophical one’, with Sartre and Beauvoir both better known in their own day for their literary outputs than for their metaphysical treatises.⁴⁰ Many of the most important existentialist tenets were first narrativized through these literary innovations, with Beauvoir herself arguing that literary writing offers the more appropriate vehicle ‘to evoke the original upspringing [*jaillissement*] of existence in its complete, singular, and temporal truth’.⁴¹ For the existentialists, literature was not merely a stage on which to showcase philosophical insights, but a mode of inquiry in its own right: ‘it is not a matter of exploiting on a literary plane truths established beforehand on the philosophical plane, but, rather, of manifesting an aspect of metaphysical experience that cannot otherwise be manifested: its subjective, singular, and dramatic character, as well as its ambiguity’.⁴² In Beauvoir’s view, what separates the philosophical from the aesthetic is not, or at least not *only*, a question of mode—of literary language, formal experimentation, and so on—but primarily a difference in *focus*. If philosophy addresses itself towards the abstract and the general, and in so doing risks collapsing differences and overplaying its claims to a universalised knowledge, then literature is a site of ambiguity and singularity; it is the proverbial ground that rises up to meet the lofty philosopher, often with a bump. This difference in focus is apparent throughout the chapters that follow, with the breadth of existentialisms’ generalisations—and the depth of its contradictions—becoming most apparent when these branches of philosophical inquiry are examined alongside aesthetic works, whose producers delight in narrativizing that which is exceptional and individual. At the same time, Beauvoir’s dichotomy between philosophy and the aesthetic will also be problematized as this thesis progresses; writers will be lambasted for their own essentialising claims, and philosophers’ metaphysical insights will fall flat when faced with the irresolvable individuality of their own nonhuman exemplars.

⁴⁰ Steven Crowell, ‘Existentialism’, in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2020) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/>> [accessed 4 January 2022].

⁴¹ Simone de Beauvoir, ‘Literature and Metaphysics’, in *Philosophical Writings*, ed. by Margaret A. Simons (Urbana, IL; Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2004), pp. 261–77 (p. 274).

⁴² Beauvoir, ‘Literature and Metaphysics’, pp. 274–75.

The aesthetic works this thesis examines span the 1960s to the 2010s. The starting point is not arbitrary. The 1960s were the decade in which Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) crystallised ecological sentiments and movements throughout the Western world, in which a human first stood on the moon and looked back at Earth, and in which NASA-funded scientists sought to communicate with dolphins as a dress rehearsal for a possible encounter with intelligent extra-terrestrials. In short, this decade constituted a step-change in humans' relationships with the planet, with one another, and with nonhuman animals, one marked by a renewed interest in the different sorts of perspectives that might exist. The artists I consider are ones who have sought to explore these possible worlds, casting their minds beyond their own cases and imagining perspectives that are radically Other. This thesis contains no Anna Sewells, and, in the chapters that follow, I remain sceptical of artists who claim to see in an animal some mirror of the human. If there is one conclusion I believe it is possible to draw from analogy with our anthropocentric position, it is as follows: whatever it is like to be a horse, for instance, I believe it vanishingly unlikely that such an experience would bear much if *any* resemblance to what it is like to be a human—and I would venture to say with certainty that it is not an interior monologue in perfect English! In any case, such 'animal autobiographies' have been considered elsewhere.⁴³ Some of the nonhuman animals in this thesis do speak—by which I mean they are imbued with human language—or are otherwise anthropomorphised, most notably in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, but these are included because they allow me to say something about the broader cultural practice of anthropomorphism itself.

This leads on to a related point: this thesis is also interested in the anthropomorphism of the human, which is to say, the construction of a category of the human in contradistinction to all other forms of life. This self-authoring or 'autobiography of the human', is what Derrida wishes to emphasise in his insistent repetition that the 'human' is that which calls itself 'human', the process whereby 'man dares to announce himself to himself, thereby calling himself by the name that he believes he gives himself'.⁴⁴ Such self-authoring has typically involved denying humans' animality; the philosophers this thesis considers—bar one—cleave to this same logic. However, my analyses also look for moments even in these humanist philosophers' writings that read against this tendency to anthropo-anthropomorphise,

⁴³ See, for instance, Karla Armbruster, 'What Do We Want from Talking Animals? Reflections on Literary Representations of Animal Voices and Minds', in *Speaking for Animals: Animal Autobiographical Writing*, ed. by Margo DeMello (New York, NY: Routledge, 2013), pp. 17–33, as well as other contributions in this excellent collection.

⁴⁴ Derrida, p. 12.

pursuing their contradictions, pulling on their loose threads to see how conventional categorisations of the human begin to unravel. It also examines how the human as a category has been constructed by denying the humanity of other humans. As we will see in Chapter Two and Chapter Four of this thesis, the idea of the human is predicated not so much on a taxonomy of species than upon ideology—or, more accurately, upon a taxonomy of species that is always already ideological. Such ideologies operate not only by emphasising humans' differences from nonhuman animals, but also by distinguishing the most dominantly situated group of humans from its human Others. In other words, who gets to be called 'human' is also a question of gender, race, class, culture, sexuality, disability, and their intersectionalities.

At the same time, this thesis operates with the assumption that there is something called a human—even if that is *merely* the name it gives to itself—and which possesses capacities that are unique among the animal kingdom. One reason I have found such a rich seam of ideas within the existentialist tradition is that I harbour the assumption that the human quite simply is exceptional, *as is every sort of living thing*. If we follow Derrida in his desire to attend to the abyssal differences between all lifeforms, then it is not the human exceptionalism in existentialism that is at issue, but the anthropocentrism. The question with which this thesis is more concerned is whether human capacities—and therefore the human itself—are privileged above all other forms of life. Accordingly, this thesis identifies concepts in existentialist philosophy that acknowledge humans' difference from nonhuman animals, whilst also allowing for a de-hierarchisation of species relations, and a de-privileging of the human. Similarly, I identify strategies that aesthetic texts adopt to narrate or otherwise represent this tension between human uniqueness and the desire to decentre human perspectives.

This thesis' emphasis on incommensurability and alterity has implications for two broader debates within animal studies discourses: extensionism and empathy. The 'rights-based' approach to animal liberation—championed by figures such as Peter Singer and Tom Regan—attempts to emphasise nonhuman animals' similarity to the human, arguing that we should extend them rights—or some other form of moral consideration—because they share with us the capacity for social behaviour, complex cognition, or myriad other supposedly humanlike attributes. The gains that such extensionist (or *assimilationist*) rights discourses have made in favour of certain nonhuman animals should not be understated. However, as Lindgren Johnson notes, such a stance risks reifying an existing—and problematically narrow—conception of the human, and its supposedly superior faculties (more on which in

Chapter Four).⁴⁵ For similar reasons, in the chapters that follow, I also remain sceptical regarding humans' capacity to empathise with the nonhuman, and doubtful as to the benefits of such empathic responses. Whilst empathy appears to offer another route for extending moral and/or emotional care to nonhuman animals, it risks the same pitfalls as extensionist rights discourse, granting license to care only on the basis of perceived similarity to the human: we empathise only to the extent that we believe a particular nonhuman's experiences are analogous enough with those of the human to enable us to feel our way into their shoes, and to trust in the veracity of these 'projected fellow feeling[s]'.⁴⁶ Such responses are not extendible to all nonhumans equally. Indeed, in Elisa Aaltola's *Varieties of Empathy and Moral Agency* (2014), which proposes an amalgamated form of empathy as a route to fostering ethical concern for nonhumans, the author herself places an implicit limit on empathy's usefulness for leveraging concern for creatures whose experiences are radically alien to that of the human. Our empathic responses, Aaltola concludes, will be most effective when we allow our empathic responses to influence our thinking, and, in turn, allow our cognitive responses to shape and challenge our empathic responses.⁴⁷ Such a formulation, in other words, enables one to decide that an empathic response is simply out of the question for a given species. It is telling, in this light, that Aaltola's own examples are almost entirely restricted to mammals, and, occasionally, to other vertebrates, seemingly less contestable examples, with whom humans share significant aspects of their evolutionary history, brain chemistry, morphology, habitat, sensory apparatus, and so on. To quote Sands, there is, in other words, a 'tendency of empathic responses to strengthen existing ethical ties, rather than generating new ones'.⁴⁸

An argument that our moral community should include nonhuman animals need not and *should not* be predicated upon an emphasis of their similarity to the human. If we follow Derrida in recognising only a 'heterogeneous multiplicity of the living', then the question becomes not whether differences exist between nonhuman and human animals, but only whether these are pejorative or ameliorative. To adapt Cary Wolfe, the task becomes conceiving of 'very different way[s] of being in the world that [call] on us to rethink, ever anew and vigilantly so, what we mean by "person," "mind," "consciousness"—that entire cluster of

⁴⁵ Lindgren Johnson, *Race Matters, Animal Matters: Fugitive Humanism in African America, 1840-1930* (New York, NY; London: Routledge, 2018), p. 8.

⁴⁶ Laura U. Marks, *Touch: Sensuous Theory and Multisensory Media* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 31.

⁴⁷ Elisa Aaltola, *Varieties of Empathy: Moral Psychology and Animal Ethics* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), p. 131.

⁴⁸ Sands, p. 181.

terms and the ethical implications that flow from them'.⁴⁹ Or, as Dominic Pettman writes, such a project involves learning 'to love (or at least respect) entities that do not resemble or remind us of ourselves, not to enfold them in our clammy embrace but to let them both *be* and *become* according to their own sense of time and place'.⁵⁰ In other words—to adapt Derrida—an ethical concern for nonhumans *on the basis of alterity* will mean learning to see their different capacities and modes of being in the world as 'something other than a privation'.⁵¹ Accordingly, this thesis at times engages in something like Anat Pick's 'creaturely ethics', which turns its back on the shared-capacities approach adopted by figures such as Singer and Regan. However, whilst Pick's model dispenses with capacities only to locate a common ground between humans and nonhumans in our shared *precarity*, arguing 'that *all* existents by virtue of their perishable material being are morally significant',⁵² this thesis examines how aesthetic texts imagine other modes of being, and might help us to value them *all the more* in proportion to their being nothing like ours.

Chapter One examines J. A. Baker's *The Peregrine* (1967) alongside Timothy Treadwell's *Among Grizzlies* (1997)). To analyse these texts, I bring them into dialogue with Martin Heidegger's writing on 'the animal'. In contrast to previous animal-studies readings of Heidegger's philosophy, I focus less attention on his humanist claim that the stone is world-less, the animal is poor in world, and the human world-building. Instead, I examine Heidegger's inquiry into whether a human can transpose themselves into a nonhuman's mode of experience. I distinguish between two forms of Heideggerian transposition: *Mitsein* (Being-with) and *Mitgang* (Going-with). These terms have typically been read as interchangeable, but there is a moment in Heidegger's 1929-30 Frieberg lecture course in which he distinguishes them. Driving a wedge into the gap that Heidegger only began to sketch, I argue that *Mitsein* should be read as the essential capacity to be transposed into an Other's experience; humans are transposed, always already, into the experience of their fellow humans, in Heidegger's view, and this is part of what it means to be a *Dasein*. *Mitgang*, by contrast, describes the 'purely provisional and conditional' attempts at transposition of a human into a nonhuman mode of experience. *Mitsein* is essentialist, relying on Others' having stable identities into which we

⁴⁹ Cary Wolfe, *What Is Posthumanism?* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), p. 47.

⁵⁰ Dominic Pettman, *Human Error: Species-Being and Media Machines* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), p. 199, original italics.

⁵¹ Derrida, p. 48.

⁵² Anat Pick, 'Turning to Animals Between Love and Law', *New Formations*, 76.76 (2012), 68–85 (p. 79), original italics.

might cast ourselves; *Mitgang*, however, requires no such ontological fixity, and even troubles Heidegger's broader, essentialist philosophy. Turning to the two literary works, I explore how commentary on *The Peregrine* and texts concerning Treadwell often highlight the narrators' apparent health problems, implying that their desire to escape the human world stems from a failure to realise their full humanity. I argue that such a normative conception of the human is very much in keeping with Heidegger's philosophy, one that is particularly troubling in light of Heidegger's National Socialist party affiliations. Subverting these previous readings, I propose that it is not Baker and Treadwell who fail to live up to some standard of humanness, but humanity that fails to live up to their expectations. Such a mismatch is nothing other than a failure of *Mitsein*, a failure that undermines the concept itself and—along with it—Heidegger's whole definition of the human as *Dasein*. As well as these anti-essentialist implications, my reformulation of these concepts allows me to theorise the sorts of imagined transpositions into nonhuman modes of experience that Baker and Treadwell undertake. Whilst *Mitsein*'s strong claims to transposition leave no room for otherness, *Mitgang* suggests that imaginative glimpses into alternative modes of being may be possible, but remains cautiously understated in its claims to knowledge of the Other. Baker and Treadwell both employ literary strategies to describe their own transpositions and transformations into the animals of their respective obsessions. Baker, however, shares Heidegger's conflicting desires to imagine the otherness of the/an animal, whilst also attempting to let that otherness be. For Treadwell, meanwhile, the bears become the surrogate for what he could not find in the human world. In short, Baker finds *Mitgang* with peregrines, Treadwell seeks *Mitsein* with bears.

Chapter Two explores two fictional texts about foxes: Sarah Hall's short story 'Mrs Fox' (2013) and Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* (1995), reading them alongside Simone de Beauvoir's writings on womanhood and animality. Beauvoir's attempts to evidence the sheer heterogeneity of animal life mark her out among her philosophical contemporaries, making the lack of attention devoted to her from within animal studies all the more surprising. I read her analyses of sexual differentiation and reproductive strategies within and between species as an example of Derridean 'limitrophe', an attempt that—even if anthropocentrically motivated—undermines humanist attempts to homogenise animality as a singular counterpoint to the human. Beauvoir also proposes a concept that appears to offer a means to de-hierarchise species difference: freedom from species life. An organism's degree of freedom from versus enslavement to the species is a more salient concept for Beauvoir than is complexity, consciousness, or the myriad other ways in which humans have elevated

themselves above nonhuman animals, and it inheres more along sex than along species lines. These decentrings of the human are undermined by Beauvoir herself, however, when she insists on an essential difference between humans and nonhuman animals. For Beauvoir, the fundamental condition of woman is her *estrangement* from herself, which is to say, from the biological being that ought to support her: in short, her animality. Woman is the most enslaved to the species of all mammals, for Beauvoir, but also the one who resists this subjugation most vehemently, a formulation that hinges on a latent Cartesianism within Beauvoir's thinking. I show that the quality of becoming, which Beauvoir associates with woman (thus, the human), is a normative construct, resulting in a homogeneous identity that begins to look like it was always already given in advance. One of Beauvoir's own inadvertently limitrophic examples further undermines her exceptionalism: the praying mantis. Female mantis' sexual predation of their mates, Beauvoir points out, is a myth, in other words, a trope; the reality of the mantis is that its being is never stable or given in advance. The first literary text I consider, Sarah Hall's 'Mrs Fox', also deals with a woman's ostensible estrangement from her own biology. However, my reading of the story turns the cultural constructedness of animality back upon Beauvoir's notion of woman. Both wife and fox in Hall's story are Other in the eyes of the husband, and Hall's omniscient narrator is a microcosm of a hegemonic masculinist and anthropocentric discourse that separates human from animal, and which produces woman and animal as tropes. It is not so much that woman becomes fox in Hall's story; rather, the two enact a queer becoming, which escape the terms of gender and species altogether. The final part of the chapter updates Beauvoir's normative becoming via Judith Butler's account of the performativity of gender identities. It also expands Butler's line of inquiry to examine the performativity of the human itself. The fox in Lai's novel is highly anthropomorphised, a spirit able to animate the bodies of human women. Read in light of the novel's foregrounding of the performativity of other identities, I interpret the fox's inhabitations as a deconstructive parody of the anthropological machine, and thus, of the human itself. At the same time, the novel shows such performances to be in tension with a stability of identity, much closer to Beauvoirian authenticity than Butlerian performativity: Lai's fox is non-normatively fox, but fox, nonetheless, possessing a queer authenticity figured as freedom from species life.

Chapter Three takes performativity a step further, examining Trygve Wakenshaw's *Nautilus* (2015), a mime show in which he performs a variety of animal characters, human and nonhuman. Before turning to Wakenshaw's work, however, I briefly consider another performance project: *Sheep, Pig, Goat* by performance collective Fevered Sleep. In this piece, groups of the eponymous nonhumans are brought into a performance space to serve as an

audience to human dancers and musicians. A second audience—comprised of humans—also takes part, observing the animals, observing the performers. Whilst bringing real animals into the performance space seems like a radical move, and one that could perhaps even skirt the dilemma of attempting to feature animals as something other than tropes, *Sheep, Pig, Goat*, I argue, merely reproduces a conventional dichotomy between human and animal, in which animals in performance are thought to be real because they do not perform. In Wakenshaw's performance, by contrast, human exceptionalism is continually troubled and undermined. In part, this has to do with the peculiarly ostensive mode of performance, versus modes that are passively representative: performance is not signifiatory in the same way as verbal language, and so can avoid projecting anthropocentric structures of meaning onto nonhumans. In fact, Wakenshaw spends the show performing very recognisable animal tropes, making no claims to knowledge of nonhuman Others. In the *form* of his performances, however, Wakenshaw does approach matters of animals and animality. To reveal how he does so, I turn to the phenomenology of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Merleau-Pontian philosophy makes such a productive pairing with Wakenshaw's work because in his philosophy, as in mime, the emphasis is not on consciousness, nor any other form of subjective experience, but on the body, behaviour and intersubjectivity. I show that liveness in performance bears remarkable similarities to life, in Merleau-Ponty's ontology: autochthonous, autopoietic, formed directly, whilst having no product beyond itself. Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of the organism delights in disrupting binaries. One of the phenomenologist's terms best illustrates this deconstructive tendency: *style*. For Merleau-Ponty, the this-ness of a particular organism is not defined by what occurs to/for it in consciousness, Nagel's question of *what it is like* for a bat to *be a bat*. Instead, the organism has a *style*, a term that exists between mind and body, consciousness and behaviour, human and animal, and so becomes a means to question the duality of such terms. *Style* is the level on which mime operates, treating characters—human and nonhuman—as dynamics of behaviour, which Wakenshaw transposes onto his own frame. I use this insight to question whether approaching animals 'on the surface' is quite the reduction Broglie figures it to be. I then turn to Merleau-Ponty's analyses of Konrad Lorenz and Jakob von Uexküll, drawing a connection between the objectlessness of mime and the objectlessness of instinct to further undermine any distinction in kind between human and nonhuman animal behaviour. Delving deeper into Merleau-Ponty's reading of Uexküll, and drawing on work on clowning pedagogy, I consider the peculiarly interactive quality of Wakenshaw's work, figuring clowning as a performance of an *Umwelt*. These analyses confirm

claims to performance's uniquely ostensive mode; sign and signified prove to be of the same 'stuff', and Wakenshaw's performance of animal characters is upstaged by his performance of a *shared animality*. Yet Wakenshaw troubles this connection, also, manipulating the interactivity of the show to bring us to an apprehension of *his* alterity; the unpredictability of his performance reminds us that the surface may be a site of readability, but the Other is never reducible to our previous readings. I then spare a final thought for *Sheep, Pig, Goat*, armed with this idea of inter-animal alterity, suggesting that the show offers a more sophisticated insight than it appeared to, albeit in a way that runs directly counter to its producers' stated aims.

Chapter Four examines the cultural coproduction of humanity, animality and race, via works by two Martiniquan writers: Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) and Patrick Chamoiseau's *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* (2018). I first consider how the Western descriptive statement of the human overrepresents the white man of European descent as the only proper mode of the human, simultaneously relegating all nonwhites to the status of sub- or inhuman. Whilst this form of racialisation was initially predicated upon Man's supposed capacity for reason, via the ostensibly biological concept of *race*, nonwhites' nonhuman status became re-enshrined in biologised terms. For Fanon, the human is defined not by biology or reason, or any of the myriad criteria by which the human has been constructed in the Western canon of thought. Instead, Fanon foregrounds an alternative concept: sociogeny, the capacity for second-order self-representation. Although Fanon begs the question of the animal in his consideration of the construction of Blackness, because he rejects essentialist and biocentric definitions of the human, his work speaks to this question, nonetheless. Sociogeny, I argue, offers a way to think species difference in exceptionalist but non-anthropocentric terms, recognising the incommensurability of human and nonhuman experiences, without denying the experiences of other animals, or the abyssal differences that Derrida emphasises between all forms of sentient life. Chamoiseau's novel goes further: through his descriptions of Plantation life, in particular his characterisation of the old slave, the Master and the mastiff, Chamoiseau calls attention to the way in which identities are discursively coproduced, and culturally situated. It is through the denial of their being for themselves, their subjection to an against-their-will construction of an identity for them *as slave, as monster* that Chamoiseau's novel first imagines a (limited) connection between the experiences of the old slave and the mastiff. In contrast to Timothy Baker's emphasis on shared precarity as a point of connection between human and nonhuman worlds, Chamoiseau's text emphasises the incommensurability of human and canid experiences in the same breath as it draws a tentative

comparison between them. When the old slave maroons, he escapes not only the Plantation, but also from the ontological position forced upon him *as slave*. Because coproduced, each of these categories (slave, monster, man) depends on the others for its definition; once one begins to unravel, the others follow suit, and the colonialist ontology of the Plantation—which relies upon the stable reproduction of these categories—breaks down. The eponymous old slave escapes from the non-humanising logic of slavery, realising his humanity, but in a new genre, one which—even more so than Fanon’s—is attuned to humans’ embodied animality, and worldly imbrication. Paradoxically, however, the old slave’s newfound creatureliness depends upon what Fanon would see as his uniquely human sociogenic self-conception. At the novel’s denouement, the mastiff is likewise freed from its constructedness *as monster*, realising its subjectivity for-itself, characterised by its radical unknowability and autonomy from human designs, accomplished, in part, by Chamoiseau’s refusal to render it intelligible.

The conclusion to this thesis underscores how these readings across philosophical and aesthetic works, and between aesthetic modes, forms and genres, foster new understandings of the literary nonhuman *and human*. It identifies some of the strategies that these texts employ—both in common, and individually—to imagine nonhuman perspectives, whilst apprehending their alterity. It also considers how nonhuman subjects reframe the role, scope and methods of literature itself, as producers of aesthetic works push the envelope of literary, filmic and performative expression to try to represent the unknowable *in its unknowability*.

Chapter One – *Mitsein & Mitgang*: Martin Heidegger, J.A. Baker and Timothy Treadwell

“I felt as if my presence didn’t bother them, since a delightful air of serenity pervaded the beach. I decided to behave like the bears, and dropped to all fours. I was transforming, going through a metamorphosis. I felt wild and free.”

Timothy Treadwell, *Among Grizzlies*

“I found myself crouching over the kill, like a mantling hawk. My eyes turned quickly about, alert for the walking heads of men. Unconsciously I was imitating the movement of the hawk, as in some primitive ritual; the hunter becoming the thing he hunts.”

J. A. Baker, *The Peregrine*

“We can anatomically identify the eyes, ears and tongue with which the animal sees, hears and tastes. These identifiable instruments of sense-perception surely prove that the animal relates to other beings through its senses and has a particular realm of experience into which we can transpose ourselves.”

Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*

Published thirty years apart, on opposite sides of the Atlantic, seemingly aspiring to wildly different readerships and markets, one the subject of a burgeoning literary criticism, the other neglected, overshadowed, perhaps, by a prestigious filmmaker’s adaptation of the same story, the parallels between J. A. Baker’s *The Peregrine* (1967) and Timothy Treadwell’s *Among Grizzlies* (1997) are nevertheless remarkable. We can catch a fleeting glimpse of several of their similarities in the two quotations above. We have the autobiographical ‘I’ of the field journal. Each is a first-hand account of one human’s experiences of pursuing, and trying to understand, charismatic wild predators: *The Peregrine* is ostensibly the record of a single winter, but draws on Baker’s ten years’ experience observing overwintering peregrines in the Essex countryside; *Among Grizzlies* tells the story of Treadwell’s thirteen summers living among wild grizzly bears in a remote part of Alaska. There is a hint of the writers’ closely related motives: a feeling of constraint accompanying their interactions with the human world, and a subsequent desire to slough its trappings. For Baker, to become the falcon is to slip the gaze of other humans. For Treadwell, to become a bear means freedom. But perhaps the most significant connection between the two is the transformation both authors seek: not content with observing and understanding, they imagine themselves becoming the animals they live alongside. To theorise

these attempts to understand, perhaps even to become, these animal Others, this chapter borrows (and adapts) two concepts from Martin Heidegger: *Mitsein* (being-with) and *Mitgang* (going-with).

Heidegger's philosophical enquiry into animal being has been received by thinkers about animal subjects—in animal studies and beyond—with enthusiastic distrust. His notorious thesis that the human is 'world-building', the animal 'poor in world', and the stone 'worldless' has been enormously generative, if only in terms of the critical reaction against this proposal. Matthew Calarco has provided a particularly thorough critique of the anthropocentrism inherent in Heidegger's writing on animal being. Though in some ways an antidote to previous, religiously-informed accounts of the apparent differences between humans and animals, as Calarco observes, Heidegger's brand of metaphysical anthropocentrism served merely to reintroduce the essentiality of the difference between human and animal—and the superiority of the human—via the backdoor.¹ The most influential attack levelled at Heidegger's dichotomisation surely comes from Jacques Derrida, in his own ubiquitous essay 'The Animal That Therefore I Am (More to Follow)', with its now famous rejection of the false homogeneity conjured by Heidegger's usage of the singular 'the animal'. There is no single 'animal' in counterpoint to the human, for Derrida, only a 'plural and repeatedly folded frontier', beyond which 'a heterogeneous multiplicity of the living'.² Heidegger's *Weltbildung/Weltarmut* dichotomy partly informs this chapter. However, my primary focus is on another aspect of Heidegger's thought, one which emerges at the same moment in his 1929-30 lecture course, but has received less attention: namely, his consideration of whether it is possible for a human to *transpose* themselves into the mode of being of another animal.

There are two terms that Heidegger uses to refer to such transpositions: *Mitsein* (being-with) and *Mitgang* (going-with). Both terms have tended to be read as interchangeable, or so closely related as to be inseparable.³ However, there is a moment in Heidegger's 1929-30 Freiberg lecture course (published eventually as *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics*) in

¹ See Matthew Calarco, *Zoographies: The Question of the Animal from Heidegger to Derrida* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2008).

² Derrida, pp. 123–24.

³ For instance, neither Brett Buchanan's nor Matthew Calarco's otherwise excellent chapters on Heidegger's thinking on nonhuman animals attempt to put any space between these concepts. See Brett Buchanan, *Onto-Ethologies: The Animal Environments of Uexküll, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, and Deleuze* (Albany, N.Y.; Bristol: State University of New York Press, 2008), p. 7; Matthew Calarco, 'Heidegger's Zoontology', in *Animal Philosophy: Ethics and Identity: Essential Readings in Continental Thought*, ed. by Peter Atterton and Matthew Calarco (London; New York, NY: Continuum, 2004), pp. 18–30.

which he hints at a distinction between these two concepts. This is a crack into which this chapter drives a wedge. *Mitsein*, I argue, should be understood as the essential capacity to transpose oneself into the experience of an Other. *Mitsein* states that we are transposed, always already, into the experiences of our fellow humans. In short, we come pre-equipped with insight into other humans' mode of being-in-the-world. Some scholars have attempted to extend the community that *Mitsein* implies to include nonhumans, but have done so without questioning the essentialism upon which the concept hinges.⁴ In this chapter, I argue that *Mitsein* requires there to be stable ontic categories into which we might transpose ourselves. As Brett Buchanan has observed, Heidegger's own analysis at times reads against his own essentialising conclusions: the boundaries he seeks to establish between organisms become blurred when we attend to their motility and temporality.⁵ This chapter extends Buchanan's line of enquiry, arguing that organisms, for Heidegger, are understood not so much as fixed ontic beings, but as processes unfolding in relation to an encircling environment. Such an account of the organism precludes any easy, always-already transposedness into the experience of an Other. In short, this chapter questions the capacity to be-with another animal, be they human or nonhuman. What I propose instead is a new reading of *Mitgang*. This concept, I argue, does not require that we adhere to Heidegger's broader philosophy, and even problematizes its essentialism. *Mitgang*, I argue, should be understood as just what its name implies: a going-with, one which treats the Other not as a stable identity, foreclosed in advance by an act of presumed identification, but as an unfolding process that one might—tentatively and conditionally—accompany. Whilst the idea of *Mitsein* plunges headlong into the representational dilemma at the heart of this thesis—assuming, for instance, that there is a fixed quality of what it is like *for a bear* to be a bear, and that such a mode of being might be representable from a human perspective—*Mitgang* offers a tool for conceptualising attempts to imagine nonhuman modes of being that do not foreclose these other existences or presuppose any insight into their experiences. *Mitgang* remains always contingent and conditional, apprehensive of the alterity of Others, human and nonhuman.

The second part of this chapter mobilises this new distinction between *Mitsein* and *Mitgang* to theorise the representations of inter- and intraspecies relationships that Treadwell's

⁴ See, for instance, Ron Broglio, 'Abandonment: Giving Voice in the Desert', *Glossator*, 7 (2013), 33–45; Ralph R. Acampora, 'Bodily Being and Animal World: Towards a Somatology of Cross-Species Community', in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. by H. Peter Steeves (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 117–31.

⁵ Buchanan, p. 111.

and Baker's texts offer, as well as the ways in which these authors imagine themselves transposed, even transformed, into the animals of their respective obsessions. My analysis of Baker's and Treadwell's texts puts paid to the notion of a frictionless human community that *Mitsein* originally, ostensibly, entails. I explore how critical and scholarly responses to Baker's text, and to those written by or concerning Treadwell, often foreground the authors' supposed ill-health, suggesting that their desire to slough the human world and its trapping stems from their failure to live as able-bodied humans. Such a normative conception of the human is very much in keeping with Heidegger's philosophy, I argue, an association that becomes quite troubling when read in light of Heidegger's National Socialist affiliations. Borrowing from Tom Tyler's writings on misanthropy and illness, I reverse these previous commentators' formulation, arguing that it is not Baker and Treadwell who fail to live up to a normative humanity, but rather, their fellow humans who fail to live up these writers' expectations. Such a mismatch between expectations and reality is, put simply, a failure of *Mitsein*. If *Mitsein* can fail, it cannot be the essentialist basis for *Dasein* that Heidegger touts it as being. My reading of Baker's and Treadwell's texts, in other words, begins to undermine Heidegger's whole definition of the human as *Dasein*.

Having explored the anti-essentialist implications of this collapse of *Mitsein*, I then mobilise these newly distinguished concepts to theorise the imagined transpositions and transformations into nonhuman subjectivities that Baker and Treadwell undertake. Whilst *Mitsein*'s strong claims to transposition leave no room for otherness, *Mitgang* suggests that imaginative glimpses into alternative modes of being may be possible, but remains cautiously understated in its claims to knowledge of the Other. Baker and Treadwell both employ literary strategies to describe their own transpositions and transformations into the animals about which they write. However, whilst Baker shares Heidegger's conflicting desires to imagine animals in their otherness, whilst attempting to let that otherness be, for Treadwell, the bears become a surrogate for what he lacked in the human world. In short, Baker finds *Mitgang* with peregrines, Treadwell seeks *Mitsein* with bears.

Being-with and Going-with: two ways to be transposed

The moment in Heidegger's thought with which I am concerned comes roughly two thirds of the way through his Frieberg lecture course, when he begins to expound his thesis on the worldless stone, the world-poor animal, and the world-building human. In order to probe what mode of being might belong to each of these entities, Heidegger asks whether a human

might ‘transpose’ themselves into an animal, a stone, or another human. This transposition ‘does not mean the factual transference of one existing human being into the interior of another being’ but rather ‘going along with what it is and with how it is’, thereby ‘directly learning how it is with this being, discovering what it is like to be this being *with* which we are going along *in this way*’.⁶ This is not a physical transformation: ‘The transposition is not an actual process but rather one that *merely transpires in thought* [...], not an actual transposition, but an “*as if*,” one in which we *merely act as if* we were the other being.’ (*Fundamental*, 202, original italics) Heidegger contends that such a transposition into a stone is impossible: the stone does not possess anything that we might think of as an experience into which we could hope to gain insight. At least initially, however, Heidegger claims that a going-with between a human and another animal is conceivable. For Heidegger, that such a question can reasonably be asked ‘assumes without question that in relation to the animal something like a going-along-with [...] is possible [...] and does not represent an intrinsically nonsensical undertaking’ (*Fundamental*, 202). He states that ‘the animal as such carries around with it, as it were, a sphere offering the possibility of transposition’ (*Fundamental*, 204). Later, he suggests that ‘we comport ourselves toward animals, and in a certain manner toward plants too, in such a way that we are already aware of being transposed in a certain sense’, and that ‘a certain ability to go along with the beings concerned is already an unquestioned possibility from the start’ (*Fundamental*, 210).

Heidegger’s invocation of the sphere of transposability is notable given his indebtedness to the work of Jakob von Uexküll, who used the image of a soap bubble to analogise the idea that each animal possesses a unique *Umwelt*.⁷ Heidegger appears to make a more direct reference to the concept of the *Umwelt* when he states that ‘we can anatomically identify the eyes, ears and tongue with which the animal sees, hears and tastes’ (*Fundamental*, 216), and suggests that ‘these identifiable instruments of sense-perception surely prove that the animal relates to other beings through its senses and has a particular realm of experience into which we can transpose ourselves’ (*Fundamental*, 216). That organisms have sensory organs that correspond to humans’ own sensory capacities appears to suggest that they might have

⁶ Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, trans. by William McNeill and Nicholas Walker (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1929), p. 202, original italics.

⁷ For more on Heidegger’s indebtedness to the German Biologist see the excellent chapter on the subject in Buchanan, pp. 65–114.

their own sensorial ways of experiencing the world, into which humans could hope to transpose themselves.

Characteristically, however, Heidegger proceeds to problematize this analysis. He considers whether these ‘instruments’ of sense perception are really instruments in the same way as a tool might be thus considered. On the contrary, he concludes that ‘the eye’ is not equivalent to ‘an independent piece of equipment present to hand’, but rather must be considered as ‘belong[ing] to the organism and emerg[ing] from the organism’ (*Fundamental*, 221). He concludes that ‘it is not the organ which has a capacity but the *organism which has capacities*. It is the *organism* which can see, hear, and so forth. The organs are “only” for seeing, but they are not instruments’ (*Fundamental*, 221, original italics). If organs of sense perception are understood as expressions of underlying capacities belonging to the organism, attending to one particular organ of sense perception can never bring us closer to understanding what sort of capacity—the capacity for seeing, for instance—might belong to that organism, because these sensory capacities cannot be abstracted from the organism in its totality. Such abstractions, in other words, will not enable us to understand how that organism experiences its world. Heidegger asks: ‘when we consider the dog itself—does it comport itself toward the table as table, toward the stairs as stairs?’ (*Fundamental*, 210). ‘It does go up the stairs with us’, he suggests: ‘It feeds with us—and yet, we do not really “feed”. It eats with us—and yet, it does not really “eat”. Nevertheless, it is with us! A going along with... a transposedness, and yet not.’ (*Fundamental*, 210) The problem, as Heidegger sees it, is that no degree of knowledge about an animal’s biology will ever bring us closer to understanding its phenomenology, nor, indeed, can it tell us if that animal possesses any form of subjective experience at all.

For Heidegger, the big phenomenological question concerns access to Being as such. He alludes to this in his question regarding the dog: does the dog recognise the presence of things—a table, stairs—in the same, or even in an analogous, fashion to the way in which human beings appear to do so? Whilst biology in and of itself will not furnish an answer, Heidegger believes his own reading of Uexküll can help bring us to such an insight. For Heidegger, the *Umwelt* provides a possible means of piecing together the mode of being of nonhuman animals, not by simple inferences based on their sensory organs, but by taking a step back and considering the fashion in which an animal’s senses and behaviours interact, and what access to environment—if any—the nature of these interactions might imply. The key example that Heidegger chooses to probe this question is that of a scientific experiment conducted on a honeybee. Part of the bee’s abdomen is cut away, so that whatever it consumes

escapes from the cut, and the bee never becomes full. Presented with a bowl of honey, the bee is observed to drink well beyond the point at which it would normally be satiated. Since the bee appears to be unaware of the diminishment of the honey, Heidegger interprets this to mean that the bee never had access to the honey *as such* (*Fundamental*, 241-2). Heidegger states that ‘the bee is simply taken [*hingenommen*] by its food. This *being taken* is only possible where there is an *instinctual* “toward...” Yet such a driven being taken also excludes the possibility of any recognition of presence’ (*Fundamental*, 242, original italics). He elaborates: ‘Instinctual activity is not a recognitive self-directing toward objectively present things, but a *behaving*.’ (*Fundamental*, 243, original italics) He concludes that the bee experiences ‘no *apprehending* of honey *as* something present, but rather a peculiar captivation which is indeed related to the honey’ (*Fundamental*, 243, original italics). The bee, in Heidegger’s analysis, has an innate instinctual drive to consume honey, which the presence of the honey merely *disinhibits*. This is not a mechanist account of life: the bee possesses some form of agency, arising from within itself. However, the relationship between its perceptions, its instinctual drives and its environment is such that it has no access to being *as such*. This interaction of sensory experience and instinctual drives in relation to an encircling environment comprise the animal’s state of *captivation*, its poverty in world. As Buchanan points out, Heidegger’s thinking on the bee appears to contradict his own insistence on understanding organisms as holistic entities; the idea that a bee should behave as it usually would following such a catastrophic injury seems like special pleading on the philosopher’s part, a point I will return to later in this chapter, and thesis.⁸ Letting this be, for now, it should be noted that, having brought us this far, Heidegger appears to impose a limit on how far a human might transpose themselves into a nonhuman mode of experience: once we have determined the animal’s condition as one of ‘poverty in world’—the fact that, properly speaking, it does not have a world in the way that humans ostensibly do—this seems to preclude any possibility of a human fully going-with the animal’s mode of experience. These two modes of access to environment seem to be so disparate as to be incommensurable.

There is a muddiness to the waters of Heidegger’s analysis here, however—enough to leave some room for scholarly debate as to whether, in Heidegger’s thought, it is possible to go along with the experience of another organism. In Buchanan’s reading, Heidegger ultimately denies the possibility of a human transposing themselves into the experience of another animal,

⁸ Buchanan, p. 83.

because animals ‘have a wealth of openness that we simply cannot relate to, such as in how the bee or lark relates to the sun, how a dog leaps up a flight of stairs, how a bird makes its nest’.⁹ In such cases, ‘the animal has access to beings in a mode of being-open, and it does so in a manner toward which we cannot relate’.¹⁰ Buchanan draws a comparison between this conclusion and that drawn by Thomas Nagel: for both thinkers, ‘we have nothing—in short, no experience—that allows us to compare ourselves to these different modes of access: they have a wealth that we cannot approximate’.¹¹ But, if it were the case that Heidegger’s animal has *nothing like* an experience which we might probe then it would exist in the same mode as the world-less stone. The animal, as Heidegger repeatedly states, has some mode of access to its environment, even if this might be essentially different from human *Dasein*. William McNeill sums up this seemingly paradoxical situation in Heidegger’s thought quite well, stating that the animal ‘admits the *possibility* of a certain transposedness of human beings into it’ even whilst it ‘necessarily *refuses* our going along with it. We cannot go along with the way in which the animal sees something in the way that we can go along with the manner in which another human being sees something’.¹² For McNeill, we cannot go along with an animal ‘in the way we can’ with another human, but the animal still ‘admits the possibility’ of transposition. It appears that some sort of going-along-with between human and animal might be possible, even if, in Heidegger’s estimation, we might struggle to recognise—and might not be terribly impressed with—whatever we might find.

McNeill alludes to something here, which he does not fully explore, namely that the transposedness accompanying human-human intersubjectivity is, for Heidegger, fundamentally different to the going-with that might be possible between human and animal. Heidegger initially states that a ‘going-with’ between humans appears possible: indeed, it ‘appears [...] as not questionable at all, that in certain contexts and situations other human beings on average comport themselves to things exactly as we do ourselves’ (*Fundamental*, 205). And so ‘it appears that it is possible, accordingly, to go along [*Mitgang*] with others in their access [*Zugang*] to things and in their dealings [*Umgang*] with those things. This is a *fundamental feature* of man’s own immediate experience of things’ (*Fundamental*, 205, original italics). As this

⁹ Buchanan, p. 98.

¹⁰ Buchanan, p. 98.

¹¹ Buchanan, pp. 98–99.

¹² William McNeill, ‘Life Beyond the Organism: Animal Being in Heidegger’s Freiburg Lectures, 1929–30’, in *Animal Others: On Ethics, Ontology, and Animal Life*, ed. by H. Peter Steeves (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 197–248 (p. 220), original italics.

quotation suggests, Heidegger initially characterises this transposition of human into human in the same fashion, as *Mitgang*. However, he goes on to state that this transposition of one human into another is so fundamental a feature of man's experience as to render this transposition incomparable with the transposition of a human into an animal:

Where man is concerned we cannot even make such an assumption concerning the intrinsic possibility of one human being transposing him- or herself into another human being [...] because this possibility already and originally belongs to man's own essence. Insofar as human beings exist at all, they already find themselves transposed in their existence into other human beings, even if there are factually no other human beings in the vicinity. (*Fundamental*, 205)

The question as to whether a human can transpose themselves into the experience of another human is, according to Heidegger, 'superfluous because in a sense it does not know what it is asking' (*Fundamental*, 207). This is because *Dasein* is, partially and necessarily, to always already be-with other *Daseins*. For Heidegger, 'the question concerning the factual realization of such being-with-one-another is not a problem of empathy, nor a theoretical problem of self-transposition, but is a question of factual existence' (*Fundamental*, 207). This is Heidegger's explicit counter to a monadic conception of the human subject, 'the view that in his relationship to other human beings, man is first of all an isolated being existing in himself' (*Fundamental*, 207). 'The illusion of such isolation', Heidegger argues, is possible precisely because 'human beings factually move around in a peculiar form of being transposed into one another, one which is characterized by an indifferent going alongside one another' (*Fundamental*, 208). Heidegger suggests, counterintuitively, that humans' peculiar mode of being always already transposed into the experience of other humans can go unrecognised precisely because it is typically so frictionless, so 'indifferent'.

For Heidegger, this is also a moment to push back against a Cartesian view of the self-contained *cogito*, 'the philosophical dogma that man is initially to be understood as subject and as consciousness, that he is primarily and most indubitably given to himself as consciousness for a subject' (*Fundamental*, 208) Human *Dasein* is not characterised by each individual's experience of consciousness. Instead, it is something that inheres in humans' interactions with other *Daseins* and with a world.¹³ Buchanan's uncharacteristically clumsy comparison of Heidegger with Nagel, which I quoted a moment ago, therefore elides a crucial difference

¹³ A remarkably similar sentiment is expressed by contemporary neuropsychologist Paul Broks, who observes: 'Minds emerge from process and interaction, not substance. In a sense, we inhabit the spaces between things.' (Paul Broks, *Into the Silent Land: Travels in Neuropsychology*, [New York, NY: Grove Press, 2004], p. 56).

between these two thinkers. Nagel's essay is about the epistemological inaccessibility of other subjective experiences: we can never know what it is like *for a bat* to be a bat. For Heidegger, 'the problem of the relationship of human being to human being does not concern a question of epistemology or the question of how one human being understands another' but is instead 'a problem of being itself' (*Fundamental*, 208). Other subjectivities are not necessarily inaccessible to us, in this formulation, quite the contrary in fact; *Dasein* is characterised partly by its inextricability from other *Daseins*. Hence Heidegger's rejection of empathy, which he takes issue with because it 'suggests we must "feel our way into" the other being in order to reach it', which 'implies we are "outside" in the first place' (*Fundamental*, 203). Given the broader aims of this thesis, Heidegger's thinking at this moment already seems to hold some promise, rejecting empathy between human beings—albeit on the basis that it is superfluous—and attempting to sketch a conception of animal existence, which, however pejorative it seems, at least recognises its difference from the human. As Steve Baker notes, 'flawed as his approach may have been, it should not be forgotten that Heidegger's concern was to understand the animal in its otherness, and to let that otherness be'.¹⁴

Contrary to Buchanan's analysis, Matthew Calarco believes that, for Heidegger, 'transposition into another animal is possible to some extent' but is 'ultimately limited by the fact that the *Being* of animals is simply and fundamentally different from the *Being* of human *Dasein*'.¹⁵ Calarco does question Heidegger's example of humans going-with or being-with domesticated animals, however, an example that he finds 'particularly problematic because it is precisely domestic animals that human beings are typically most capable of "going along with," of being-with'.¹⁶ Shared evolutionary history, cohabitation of the same environments, or humans' familiarity with domestic animals, perhaps, appear to make such transpositions more plausible. 'The being of other, nondomesticated animal species remains, in many instances, completely shrouded in mystery', Calarco suggests, yet—tantalisingly for my analysis of Baker and Treadwell's texts—he still holds open the possibility for going-with such Others: 'scientists and experts who live with such animals for many years' may be able to offer 'the slightest glimpse of what being-with these animals might entail'.¹⁷

¹⁴ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', *Performance Research*, 5.2 (2000), 70–81 (p. 79).

¹⁵ Calarco, *Zoographies*, p. 26, original italics.

¹⁶ Calarco, *Zoographies*, p. 26.

¹⁷ Calarco, *Zoographies*, p. 26.

What Calarco takes issue with is not the possibility of transposition, so much as the frictionless being-with that Heidegger's notion of *Mitsein* implies. Calarco clearly interprets *Mitsein* to be something that only effort or labour can supply: hence the years of work needed to offer a glimpse into a nondomesticated animal's experience. This is not how Heidegger appears to understand this process, as we have seen—for Heidegger, *Mitsein* is so effortless that we can remain entirely unaware that it even occurs. There is also a slippage in Calarco's analysis between the concepts of *Mitsein* and *Mitgang*. This is characteristic of previous scholarship examining Heidegger's writing on animality, which tends to use being-with and going-with interchangeably. This scholarly ambiguity has not been helped by the fact that Heidegger himself at times appears to muddle the two, as in the previous quote from his 1929-30 course, which juxtaposes 'being-with-one-another' and 'going alongside one another' as though these were synonymous. I believe Heidegger himself hints at a conceptual difference between the two, however. As he states, interhuman intersubjectivity involves a 'peculiar form of being transposed into one another', one which is 'indifferent' (*Fundamental*, 207-8). Heidegger usually characterises this form of transposedness as 'being-with'. He states explicitly that 'the being-there of Da-sein means *being with others*, precisely in the manner of Dasein' (*Fundamental*, 205, original italics). This stands in stark contrast to the 'purely provisional and conditional' transpositions that might be possible between humans and organisms of other species (*Fundamental*, 203). Although he does not fully expound the distinction, Heidegger alludes to a conceptual difference between these two terms when he acknowledges that humans do not always succeed in their attempts to go along with one another: 'we know from the everyday experience [...], and often enough seem to lament the fact, that we find it so difficult to transpose ourselves into other human beings and so seldom find ourselves really able to go along with them' (*Fundamental*, 205). Heidegger insists, however, that 'this possibility already and originally belongs to man's own essence' (*Fundamental*, 205). He continues:

And yet how often we feel burdened by our inability to go along with the other. And do we not experience a new sense of elation in our Dasein each time we accomplish such going-along-with in some essential relationship with other human beings? Thus the ability to go along with..., the ability to transpose oneself, is also questionable where other human beings are concerned. (*Fundamental*, 206)

However, Heidegger interprets this as further evidence that *Mitsein* is an essential part of human *Dasein*:

It is questionable *even though, indeed precisely because*, in accordance with the essence of his being man always already finds that he is with others. For it is part of the essential constitution of human Dasein that it intrinsically means being with others, that the factually existing human being always already and necessarily moves factually in a particular way of being with..., i.e., a particular way of going along with. (*Fundamental*, 206, original italics)

Heidegger's grammar is ambiguous here, and his reasoning at first seems entirely circular. He appears to be drawing some distinction between *Mitsein*, the being-with of human-human interaction, only to conflate this once again with *Mitgang* in the final sentence. However, in passages such as the ones just quoted, where Heidegger refers to human's (potentially unsuccessful) attempts at transposition, be that into humans or other animals, he typically refers to this as *Mitgang*. In the second quotation here (as well as in other passages), when Heidegger insists on the essential, immutable, always-already-transposed quality of human-human interactions, this is explicitly and repeatedly characterised as *Mitsein*. Both terms concern the possibility of transposing oneself into an Other's mode of being, but being-with is essential and unerring, whereas going-with remains provisional and conditional, liable to failure. The apparent circularity of Heidegger's reasoning is resolved if we consider *Mitsein* and *Mitgang* in this way, as 'particular' but distinct forms of transposition.

And whilst the contrast between *Mitsein* and *Mitgang* initially appears to hinge upon species lines—*Mitsein* coincides with human-human intersubjectivity; *Mitgang* denotes the transposedness that might be possible between species—this difference does not inhere in species differences. While this difference is revealed in Heidegger's consideration of the transposition that might belong, respectively, to human-human and to human-animal intersubjectivity, it would be more accurate to interpret *Mitsein* as the supposedly effortless, intuitive awareness of the Other, which happens to accompany human-human intersubjectivity (if Heidegger is to be believed); *Mitgang*, on the other hand, should be read as this effortful going-along-with, an insight that cannot be taken as given, but must be inferred and constructed and so remains always contingent. *Mitgang*, in this sense, means an attempt at transposition. *Mitsein* is the essential capacity to be transposed.

Misanthropy and the failure of *Mitsein*

Of course, by assuming that human beings find themselves transposed into the experience of their conspecifics in an essentially and incommensurably different way to that in which they might transpose themselves into the experience of other animals, Heidegger is begging the

question. An intervening ninety years of continental-philosophical thought would seem to give the lie to Heidegger's assurance (not to mention events in Germany, and the world, which closely followed Heidegger's 1929-30 Frieberg lecture course!).¹⁸ Even setting these contexts aside, however, close attention to the sorts of interhuman relationships represented within Baker's and Treadwell's texts gives me cause to question Heidegger's concept of *Mitsein*, and the supposed easiness of interaction it denotes.

Baker's and Treadwell's desires to cohabit the environments of wild animals, to be accepted by them, perhaps even to become them, appear to stem from their own perceived failures to integrate into the human world. Scholarship on *The Peregrine*, and on texts concerning Treadwell, often highlights their protagonists' misanthropy. For Dominic Pettman, Baker and Treadwell's respective abandonments of the human world qualify them as 'true misanthropes'.¹⁹ Robert Macfarlane identifies Baker's disdain for the human as a form of 'species shame'.²⁰ Helen Macdonald writes of Baker's 'misanthropic' demeanour, and his desire to 'reject humanity', motivated in part by his own declining health.²¹ Elsewhere, Macfarlane foregrounds Baker's arthritis and myopia as if these might explain Baker's desire to leave the human world and enter a new one. 'Out there,' Macfarlane writes, Baker 'was also able to forget the fact that he himself was ill. For Baker was suffering from severe and worsening arthritis, particularly in his arms and legs'.²² According to this analysis, Baker's wish to live with and be accepted by the peregrines is motivated by his inability to live as an able-bodied human being. At one point, Macfarlane's account presents Baker's illness as an animalising force in the latter's apparent transformation: 'his fingers tightened in on themselves, curled over', his 'hands clenching into talons'.²³ Ill-health is the self-professed motivation behind Treadwell's desire to leave behind his human life. The first chapter of Treadwell's *Among Grizzlies* explains that it is his struggle with drug and alcohol addiction that spurs his first retreat to Alaska: an overdose on cocaine and heroin leads him to a near-death experience, which in turn leads him to seek a place 'really remote, far away from people' (*Grizzlies*, 7), hence Jorge Conesca-Sevilla's

¹⁸ We have only to think of the scepticism of Wittgenstein, for instance, and his revelation of the contingency of all social interaction in 'language games'.

¹⁹ Pettman, p. 30.

²⁰ Robert Macfarlane, 'Violent Spring: The Nature Book That Predicted the Future', *The Guardian*, 15 April 2017, section Books (np.).

²¹ Helen Macdonald, 'The Rapture of the Raptor', *New Statesman*; London, 27 May 2018, 44-45 (p. 45).

²² Robert Macfarlane, *The Wild Places* (London: Granta, 2007), pp. 275-76.

²³ Macfarlane, *The Wild Places*, pp. 275-76.

suggestion that Treadwell is seeking to escape ‘the environmental circumstances of his own failures and addiction’.²⁴

I am uneasy regarding these highlightings of Treadwell’s and Baker’s ill-health, as if their respective conditions make them less capable of achieving their full humanity. Such commentaries depend upon there being a normative category of the human to which it is possible and desirable to belong. This is how the human is figured, too, in Heidegger’s analysis. For all the issues he takes with Heidegger’s anthropocentrism, Matthew Calarco argues that Heidegger’s ‘nonmetaphysical definition of man appears to be so broad as to pose no concerns about exclusion’.²⁵ Whereas definitions of the human as *zoon logon echon* or the *animal rationale*, as well as being problematically anthropocentric, allow for the exclusion of any human who might not have the capacity for speech or complex cognition, *Dasein* is, at least theoretically, something any human might attain. Or so the argument might go. I would argue, on the contrary, that such an existentialist notion of the human, which locates authentic humanness in its supposedly ultimate expression as *Dasein*, has extremely troubling implications for any human who might be deemed not to have achieved their authentic human existence, especially so in light of Heidegger’s membership and explicit endorsement of the National Socialist Party. Whereas such a contingent—and contestable—definition of the human may appeal to those humans who would wish to slough their humanity, such figurations seem always to be haunted by the possibility of exclusion *from without*, the relegation of human Others to a sub- or non-human status, women and nonwhites being two longstanding examples (considered in Chapter Two and Chapter Four).

Whilst I think it is a mistake to locate Baker’s and Treadwell’s motivations in their failure to realise a certain standard of humanness, the relationship between pathology and misanthropy can still be useful in reading their respective texts, however. As Tom Tyler observes, these two terms are often closely intertwined.²⁶ Tyler considers Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* and Molière’s *The Misanthrope*, texts whose protagonists harbour a deep-seated disdain for the human world. Tyler argues that ‘Timon and Alceste manifest extreme qualities that are unhealthy to them, and constitute [...] a form of pathology’.²⁷ In Tyler’s analysis, ‘both are compelled to withdraw from human society altogether’ because ‘neither is able to tolerate the

²⁴ Jorge Conesa-Sevilla, ‘Walking and Dying With Bears: An Ecopsychological Case Study of Timothy (Dexter) Treadwell’, *Trumpeter*, 24.1 (2008), 136–50 (p. 140).

²⁵ Calarco, *Zoographies*, p. 49.

²⁶ Tom Tyler, ‘Misanthropy without Humanity’, *Paradoxa*, 26 (2014), 239–45 (p. 243).

²⁷ Tyler, ‘Misanthropy without Humanity’, p. 243.

inconstancies, accidents, and infractions with which they are beset'.²⁸ Tyler's reading of these texts is the reverse of Macfarlane's and others' assessments of Baker and Treadwell. Insofar as these protagonists are sick, Tyler argues, their sickness is not their failure to live up to a standard of humanness. On the contrary: 'What makes Timon and Alceste ill is humanity's failure to live up to their inflated expectations, to comply with the standards they believe should hold for all civilized society.'²⁹ For Tyler, this mismatch between the protagonists' expectations of their fellow humans and their fellow humans' actual behaviour is the motivating force behind their desire to shun the human world.

Tyler's account of Alceste and Timon could just as easily have been written about Baker and Treadwell. Treadwell himself recounts that, as a child, he experienced great difficulty interacting with his peers, preferring instead to act out fanciful adventures by himself: 'I donned imaginary wings, claws and fangs', becoming, in his imagination, 'a grizzly, roaming the great north, or a Bengal tiger in the lush jungles of Asia'.³⁰ The first extended anecdote he recalls that involves interaction with his peers is highly antagonistic. Treadwell happens upon a group of older children with a bucket of frogs. They were 'throwing frogs high into the air and splattering them' on the surface of a muddy pond: 'they were murdering them', Treadwell tells us (*Grizzlies*, 2). Though his initial attempt to intercede is unsuccessful, eventually Treadwell is able to drive the older children away by physically attacking them with a plank of wood. For Treadwell, the story is worth recounting because that day in his life 'an eco-warrior was born' (*Grizzlies*, 2). The passage is equally remarkable for the strong antipathy Treadwell feels for his conspecifics—he is even willing to resort to violence against them—and the ease with which he identifies with animals of another species. The children with whom he interacts do not meet his standard for how they ought to behave.

The first chapter of *The Peregrine* makes clear Baker's desire to leave behind the human world. He explains: 'I have always longed [...] to be out there at the edge of things, to let the human taint wash away in emptiness and silence as the fox sloughs his smell into the cold unworldliness of water; to return to the town as a stranger.'³¹ There is something paradoxical in Baker's comparison of himself with the fox: whereas the fox washes its own smell in water, Baker sees his humanity as a 'taint', not as something arising from within his own being, like

²⁸ Tyler, 'Misanthropy without Humanity', p. 243.

²⁹ Tyler, 'Misanthropy without Humanity', p. 243.

³⁰ Timothy Treadwell, *Among Grizzlies* (New York, NY: Ballantine Books, 1999), pp. 1–2.

³¹ J. A. Baker, *The Peregrine, The Hill of Summer, & Diaries: The Complete Works of J. A. Baker*, ed. by John Fanshawe (London: William Collins, 2015), p. 28.

the fox's smell or Heidegger's *Mitsein*, but as something attached to him from outside, a disturbing noise which he seeks to lose 'in emptiness and silence'. There is a double meaning to 'unworldliness': read most literally to mean *naivety*, we can also read 'world' in the Heideggerian sense to mean *a specifically human mode of relating to environment*. To be *unworldly*, is also, therefore, to be without *Dasein*. There is the promise of a return to the human world, here represented by the town, but this is only to be enacted once interhuman connection has been lost, when Baker has become a 'stranger'. Compared with Treadwell, Baker's disdain for the human world is less clearly expressed, but his prose is pervaded by a misanthropy no less bitter for being latent. Of a pair of peregrines that Baker suspects to have been poisoned by agricultural pesticides, he observes: 'Foul poison burned within them like a burrowing fuse. Their life was lonely death, and would not be renewed.' (*Peregrine*, 110) Later, he describes how 'a red-throated diver, sodden and obscene with oil, able to move only its head, will push itself out from the sea-wall with its bill if you reach down to it as it floats like a log in the tide', or 'a poisoned crow, gaping and helplessly floundering in the grass, bright yellow foam bubbling from its throat, will dash itself up again and again on to the descending wall of air, if you try to catch it' (*Peregrine*, 113), or 'a rabbit, inflated and foul with myxomatosis' nevertheless 'will drag itself away into a bush, trembling with fear' when a human approaches (*Peregrine*, 113). His fatalist, self-loathing conclusion is that 'we are the killers. We stink of death. We carry it with us. It sticks to us like frost. We cannot tear it away' (*Peregrine*, 113). These descriptions certainly bear out Macfarlane's characterisation of Baker's 'species shame': on the one hand, Baker appears to be internalising the pathos of these nonhuman animals; at the same time, however, it feels like there is a touch of pathetic fallacy to these descriptions, a projection of Baker's own contempt for humanity onto the behaviour of these nonhuman Others.

For both Baker and Treadwell, misanthropy is not motivated by pathology; rather, misanthropy is its own pathology, one motivated by the authors' perception of their fellow humans' failures to meet these author's own standards. There is therefore another layer of contested humanness, here: as well as the dehumanisation and pathologisation that others project onto them from without, there is also a sloughing of human society, perhaps even of humanness itself, which is self-professed. These authors fall short of a normative humanness, but society also falls short of their individual ideals. Perhaps the most pertinent Shakespearean comparator is not Timon, but Coriolanus: these characters banish society as much as society banishes them. Most importantly for my current analysis is what such a mismatch between expected and actual standards of behaviour seems to reveal about Heideggerian being-with.

Far from being always already transposed into the experience of their conspecifics, what leads to these authors' self-expressed rejections of the human world is a deep sense of disconnection, alienation and incomprehensibility—is, in other words, the total absence of *Mitsein*.

It is a scene from Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* (2005), however, that offers the most damning portrait of human-human relations. In it, Treadwell performs a rambling soliloquy to camera about his failures to communicate with women: 'I always cannot understand why girls don't wanna be with me. [...] I don't know what's going on'.³² He goes on to express his envy for the perceived simplicity of romantic life he believes to be enjoyed by gay men, for whom, Treadwell thinks, sex is forthcoming and uncomplicated. Treadwell's words are not those of a human who feels easily transposed into the experiences of his conspecifics. The difficulty with which Treadwell communicates, the fracture that has opened between him and his fellow humans, undermines Heidegger's avowal that human-human intersubjectivity is anything like as effortless as the concept *Mitsein* would imply. Certainly, Treadwell cannot achieve it; by his own assessment, women literally do not want to 'be with' him. Treadwell's attempts to know the minds of his fellow humans read more like an example of *Mitgang*, and a particularly effortful one at that. His ranting is rendered all the more jarring in light of Herzog's voiceover: as the filmmaker points out, Treadwell was actually accompanied by his girlfriend, Amie Huguenard during his later trips to Alaska. His disconnection from his fellow humans, then, seems to persist even with another human 'factually [...] in the vicinity'. Treadwell's attempts to hide Huguenard from his video footage—she appears in front of camera during only one clip—parallel Heidegger's lack of attention to any social positionality besides his own: for Heidegger, the human is *man*, a category constructed by excluding certain Others, including women and nonwhites (as I will explore further in my second and, especially, my fourth chapter). Treadwell's rantings may be ignorant to the point of being offensive, but like a stopped clock, he does point to something: Heidegger can maintain his unwavering belief in *Mitsein* partly because the only *Daseins* in which he is interested are those of the supposedly universal human—the white man of European descent—and the only intersubjectivity he is actually talking about concerns homosocial relationships between men, thus figured. The *absurdum* extension of Heidegger's thought—that individuals from this dominantly situated group always already find themselves transposed into the experiences of, for instance, women,

³² Werner Herzog, *Grizzly Man* (Santa Monica, CA: Lions Gate Home Entertainment, 2005).

queer folk, and/or people of colour—is surely the final coffin nail in Heidegger’s claim to *Mitsein*’s frictionlessness.

Movements and Processes: *going-with* the nonhuman

This distinction I have drawn between being-with and going-with has broader implications for thinking through, and problematizing, the essentialist basis of Heidegger’s ontological distinction between different species. Buchanan has already problematized Heidegger’s seemingly essentialist ontology, noting that any discussion of the temporality of the animal’s existence is conspicuously absent from the philosopher’s conceptualisation of *Weltarmut*, or poverty in world. This constitutes a significant omission given the essential relatedness of time with human *Dasein*, a relationship Heidegger had expounded at great length in his earlier works. (Heidegger’s 1929-30 course also devotes a significant amount of attention to an exploration of *Dasein*’s relationship with ‘boredom’, in German, *Langeweile*, meaning literally ‘long-while’.) As Buchanan observes, however, time is key to our understanding of the difference between the animal’s *Weltarmut* and human’s *Weltbildung*, because it is through humans’ transcendent—*ekstatic*, in Heidegger’s terminology—relationship with time that Being is disclosed to *Dasein*. Buchanan explains that ‘*Dasein* is characterized as always “beyond itself,” “outside itself,” “stepping out of itself,” “transcending itself,” and [...] *Dasein* is so for essential reasons’.³³ This is because ‘*Dasein*’s existence as temporal [...] provides the specific ontological constitution of being open to things, to others, to the world, to time, and to being itself’.³⁴ Heidegger’s animal has no such capacity, lacking ‘this temporality that grounds transcendence’.³⁵ Thus, Buchanan concludes, Heidegger’s animal exists within time, but without a conception of temporality.

McNeil likewise calls attention to the centrality of time to this distinction when he observes that ‘the animal [...] does not appear to have what we call world’ because the world of humans ‘is always that of a historical community’.³⁶ However, as McNeil also notes, Heidegger himself vacillated on this subject: ‘even in the summer semester of 1926—which is to say, while *Being and Time* was being finalized—Heidegger continued to attribute’ to animals ‘*Befindlichkeit*’, or disposition, a quality, which, when attributed to *Dasein*, requires temporal

³³ Buchanan, p. 102, original italics.

³⁴ Buchanan, p. 102.

³⁵ Buchanan, p. 102.

³⁶ McNeill, ‘Life Beyond the Organism’, p. 220, original italics.

existence, because it ‘presupposes having-been’.³⁷ For McNeil, then, ‘it follows that the being of animals is indeed constituted by having-been and thus by time (even if such having-been may not be the *same* ekstastic having-been attributable to *Dasein*)’.³⁸ Buchanan, too, suggests that Heidegger admitted of a certain temporality to the animal’s existence, a concession that provides some nuance to his otherwise essentialising logic. To demonstrate this, Buchanan turns to the moment in the 1929-30 course where Heidegger discusses the incompleteness of his project to account for the essential being of the animal. What has been missing from Heidegger’s analysis is, by his own admission, any attempt to account for the motility inherent in the animal’s mode of being, to consider the observation that ‘all life is *not simply organism* but is *just as essentially* process, thus formally speaking *motion*’ (*Fundamental*, 265, original italics). The motion of which Heidegger speaks does not consist merely in the vital processes of ‘birth, growth, maturing, aging and death of animals’—i.e. an Aristotelian vegetative life—but rather is ‘a *motility of a peculiar kind*’ (*Fundamental*, 265, original italics), one that is inherent in captivation itself:

Captivation is not a static condition, not a structure in the sense of a rigid framework inserted within the animal, but rather an intrinsically determinate motility which continually unfolds and atrophies as the case may be. Captivation is at the same time motility, and this belongs to the essence of the organism. (*Fundamental*, 265)

In his analysis of this passage, Buchanan observes that ‘it is as though [Heidegger] is at once speaking of the history of the animal as ontic being, and also suggesting something altogether different from the concept of “organism.” Life as process, life as motion, rather than the life of a being’.³⁹ This does not equate Heidegger’s thought with ‘the “process ontology” that Deleuze will develop,’ or entail ‘that Heidegger does away with the organism as an ontical unit’.⁴⁰ However, this focus on ‘process and motion,’ Buchanan argues, suggests ‘a new vista for rethinking the ontology of the animal. Perhaps this phenomenon of life that one calls “organism” is more dynamic than previously thought. A new plane emerges, and it has to do with the body, movement, and processes’.⁴¹

³⁷ William McNeill, ‘A Sense of Time: Aristotle, Nietzsche, and Heidegger on the Temporality of Life’, *Mosaic*, 48.2 (2015), 45–61 (p. 55).

³⁸ McNeill, ‘A Sense of Time’, p. 55, original italics.

³⁹ Buchanan, p. 111.

⁴⁰ Buchanan, p. 112.

⁴¹ Buchanan, p. 112.

There is a similar movement to be teased out of Heidegger's notion of *Mitgang*. *Mitsein* is inherently essentialist. Such a stable and effortless being-with can only occur if an Other being has a fixed, essential Being. As with Buchanan's discussion of the animal's motility, and what this appears to signal regarding the beginnings in Heidegger's thought of a movement towards a less essentialist, more dynamic ontology, *Mitgang* requires no fixed ontic categories, no stable identities. Indeed, the term 'going-with' connotes the very mutability of the categories concerned, characterising them as unfolding processes that one might accompany. The same motion can be read in 'transposition'. What the translators of my edition render as 'to transpose' is, in Heidegger's German, *sich versetzen*, which means, amongst other things, 'to move'. In this sense, *Mitgang* treats the Other, not as an essentialised, fixed ontical unit, foreclosed by an act of identification, but as an unfolding process. *Mitgang* therefore means just what its name implies: going with an Other, understanding that Other as a changeable entity, recognising that any insight into its experience can only ever be conditional and provisional. We might move *towards* the Other, only to find that Other has already moved elsewhere.

Then what makes such acts of transposition more plausible? For Heidegger, *Mitsein* and *Mitgang* do not imply or require physical proximity—recall Heidegger's avowal that humans 'already find themselves transposed in their existence into other human beings, even if there are factually no other human beings in the vicinity' (*Fundamental*, 205). However, for Calarco, at least implicitly, proximity seems to be important: domesticated nonhuman species appear to be those into whose experiences humans find themselves most readily transposed, yet even nondomesticated species, may be amenable to such transpositions, if humans 'live with such animals for many years'. Ralph Acampora explicitly attempts to incorporate a spatial element within Heidegger's thought as an avenue towards new types of interspecies understanding, to build what he calls 'cross-species conviviality'.⁴² Acampora sees being-with in the physical sense as a way to promote being-with in the Heideggerian sense.⁴³ If we want to 'understand more about another animal's world, if there is such a "thing",' Acampora argues, 'there is no need to conduct fanciful thought-experiments or to attempt supernatural exercises in identity-shifting'.⁴⁴ Nor does it require transformation: 'I do not actually have to become someone else in order to be familiar with the Other'.⁴⁵ The solution, Acampora suggests, is

⁴² Acampora.

⁴³ Acampora.

⁴⁴ Acampora, p. 118.

⁴⁵ Acampora, p. 118.

Mitsein: his aim is ‘to arrive at some sort of comprehension of what it means to be-with other individuals of different yet related species [...], to articulate a transpecific form of [...] *Mitsein*. What we seek is familiarity with cross-species conviviality.’⁴⁶ Acampora’s ‘cross-species conviviality’ falls short of explaining the kinds of transpositions sought by Baker and Treadwell, because these writers *do* seek to imagine the subjectivities of these other species, and *do* appear to seek a transformation to some degree. My reading of Baker and Treadwell’s texts has also called into question Heidegger’s essentialising notion of *Mitsein*, upon which Acampora’s thinking rests. What is of great relevance to my analysis, however, is Acampora’s emphasis on physical proximity, on cohabiting of space: ‘an important, perhaps primary, part of what it means to share a convivial context with another animal is to belong, at least temporarily, to some common, relatively localized environment’.⁴⁷ Drawing on the work of Watsuji Tetsuro and his critique of Heidegger (in particular, his purported failure to account for spatiality in *Being and Time*), Acampora stresses the importance of *climaticity*. He defines this as ‘that dimension of transhuman existence which opens up lived experience to the common convivial context shared by somatically animate organisms occupying the same eco-regional environs’.⁴⁸ For Acampora, sharing the same space as another animate being is a way to foster a sense of commonality, of experience lived together.

As I have already remarked, however, it is necessary to go beyond Acampora’s consideration of the implications of spatiality for Heidegger’s philosophy if we are to account for the sorts of transpositions, and the possible transformations, that occur in Baker and Treadwell. Pettman’s insightful analysis of Heidegger can be useful here. I have touched already on Heidegger’s appropriation of Uexküll’s work to inform his conceptualisation of the animal’s state of captivity. For Pettman, Heidegger’s adaptation of this research is so revolutionary because it expands the boundary of the individual organism beyond its body, instead discovering the animal’s proper existence in the interplay of its interactions with an environment: ‘What Heidegger argues, drawing on the investigations of Buytendijk and, more specifically, Uexküll, is that every animal’s morphology already encompasses the environment within it.’⁴⁹ This results in an erasure of ‘the surface of the animal body as a false corporeal limit, and instead redraws the unity of the animal as one that already encompasses the

⁴⁶ Acampora, p. 118.

⁴⁷ Acampora, p. 120.

⁴⁸ Acampora, p. 121.

⁴⁹ Pettman, p. 95.

environment within the morphology of the animal body'.⁵⁰ There is still a border of sorts, 'but it is no longer seen as the primary limit that coheres the individual organism into a self-sufficient unity'.⁵¹ *Umwelt* theory dictates that the animal's morphology is already attuned to an environment in a particular, and limited, way. This limitation is not only dictated by that organism's physical body, i.e. by its capacity to engage with that environment, but is just as much imposed from without, by the sorts of engagement that environment promotes and permits. Perhaps the most illustrative of Uexküll's examples is of a tick, whose *Umwelt* consists of the sensory relations it has with its mammal host—the relationship between heat-sensing and warmth of the mammal body, sense of smell and the mammal's scent, etc.—and the instinctual responses that are released by these sensorial interactions. Each animal's state of captivity is this relationship. As Pettman observes, Heidegger's consideration of *Umwelten* 'discovers not so much a firm delimitation of the body as an appendage within a particular environment, but instead perceives the animal as being that already encompasses the environment within it,' an analysis which 'prepares the way for reenvisioning the individuality of every particular life form'.⁵² As Buchanan states, the 'ambiguous relational state' of animal captivity 'is probably best characterized by what Heidegger calls a little "leeway [*Spielraum*]" that an animal has in its access to things', a term that captures the way in which 'the animal is suspended between itself and its environment,' the manner in which it both 'has and does not have world,' and how it is 'open to things that are nevertheless fundamentally withheld'.⁵³

When read in this way, Heidegger's fixed ontic categories of human and animal become less essentialist than they first appear; there are the beginnings of a movement towards a more dynamic ontology, which views the animal as an unfolding process, one which occurs, not within the confines of the corporeal body, but in that animal's relationship with its environment. As Uexküll himself notes, the implications of the *Umwelt* are that 'all animals, from the simplest to the most complex, are fitted into their unique worlds with equal completeness'.⁵⁴ This suggests another reason to question Buchanan's comparison of Heidegger with Nagel. For Nagel, other subjectivities are epistemologically inaccessible. However, in the nuanced readings of Heidegger that these commentators—including

⁵⁰ Pettman, p. 95.

⁵¹ Pettman, p. 95.

⁵² Pettman, pp. 96–97.

⁵³ Buchanan, p. 89.

⁵⁴ Jakob von Uexküll, 'A Stroll Through the World of Animals and Men: A Picture Book of Invisible Worlds', in *Instinctive Behaviour: The Development of a Modern Concept*, ed. & trans. by Claire H. Schiller (New York, NY; London: International Universities Press; Methuen, 1934), pp. 5–82 (p. 11).

Buchanan himself—have put forward, such a rigid dichotomy of subject and object is called into question. The subjective is not dualistically opposed to the empiric. In a sense, it is the empiric, because it always already determines and is determined by it. And so, the organism is its environment, at least in part. If the animal's mode of being, down to its very morphology, is sculpted by its environment, understanding an animal's environment can become a way of understanding the animal itself. There is no easy, effortless transposition here, no *Mitsein*, but there appears to be more possibility for interspecies *Mitgang* than Heidegger himself explicitly suggests.

This mutually determining relationship between species and environment was understood by pioneers of ethology. Haydon Lorimer defines early ethology, as that 'branch of mid-20th century science dedicated to the study of animal lives as expressions of dwelling in the physical world'.⁵⁵ In stark contrast with 'hard' scientific studies of animal behaviour, which removed animals from their environments and transplanted them into controlled laboratory conditions, ethology 'was founded on a principled commitment to understand animal types as undisturbed but never autonomous, always immersed in a natural habitat and surrounding socio-environmental relations'.⁵⁶ For proponents of this school, to transplant an animal into a lab and expect to study its behaviour would be to commit the same fallacy for which Buchanan lambasts Heidegger's example of the honeybee, akin to removing a vital appendage and expecting an animal to behave as it otherwise would.

Despite their complete lack of formal training—in biology, ecology or ethology—this awareness of animals' imbrication within their environments is one that both Baker and Treadwell appear to share. Treadwell's writings reveal a similar insight into the ways in which life and landscape shape and determine one another. During his first visit to Alaska, he ventures to an area where he is told to expect to find large numbers of grizzlies. Travelling down the path to which he has been directed, he tells us that 'my dread increased as I realized that this trail wasn't made by anything human, but was worn by centuries of perpetual bear use' (*Grizzlies*, 12). This ursine sculpting of the environment is even more evident when Treadwell ventures to the Grizzly Maze, where 'fifteen-foot-high alders and spiny shrubs cloaked the floor [...], creating a twisting thicket between the two lakes', undergrowth that Treadwell might find entirely unnavigable, except that, 'over the centuries, the bears had

⁵⁵ Haydon Lorimer, 'Forces of Nature, Forms of Life: Calibrating Ethology and Phenomenology', in *Taking-Place: Non-Representational Theories and Geography* (London: Ashgate), pp. 55–78 (p. 56).

⁵⁶ Lorimer, pp. 62–63.

carved an intricate series of tunnels through the landscape' (*Grizzlies*, 113). The Grizzly Maze is an 'animal space', in Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert's sense of the term: an environment 'to which they have adapted, and which they have helped to mould in some way over time', a space which bears the marks of this nonhuman agency.⁵⁷ We can read the same sensitivity to such interactions in Baker's description of a kingfisher:

A kingfisher flew overhead and went down to the brook. [...] Flying high over dry earth, against the matt surface of a cloud, it seemed a feebler and much less splendid bird. Wild things are truly alive only in the place where they belong. Away from that place they may bloom like exotics, but the eye will seek beyond them for their lost home. (*Peregrine*, 151)

Indeed, so co-determining is the relationship between organism and environment, for Baker, that the conventional characterisation of the landscape's passivity in contrast with the activity of the animal might be just as sensibly reversed. As Baker tells us: 'All wormy mud must have its wader.' (*Peregrine*, 80)

Treadwell's sense of the bears' impression upon their environment is such that merely occupying the same space where a bear has been provides Treadwell with a feeling of connection. The night Treadwell first arrives at the Grizzly Sanctuary, he recalls a dream he has in which he is surrounded by bears, and wakes to discover the prints of bears all around his camp: 'There were curious divots in the ground, ground that had been smooth and featureless when I went to bed. [...] In the sand around my head were very fresh tracks of very large bears.' (*Grizzlies*, 19-20) We can compare Treadwell's footprint reading with Baker's parsing of the prints of animals in snow: 'The deep corrugated toe marks of the peregrine were mixed with the spidery footprints of a crow and the pad marks of a fox. Both fox and crow had apparently tried to drive the hawk from its kill.' (*Peregrine*, 126). The passage is remarkable in the degree of information Baker is able to derive about the animals that have been present in this space before him. Explicitly, Baker recounts that 'to rest my hand in the place where the peregrine had stood so recently was to experience a strong feeling of proximity, of identification' (*Peregrine*, 126). This is something like Acampora's cross-species conviviality, a feeling of shared lived experience, facilitated through climaticity.

For Baker and Treadwell, however, climaticity provides something more than identification or connection. It is again useful to compare their accounts of their experiences

⁵⁷ Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert, 'Introduction', in *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places: New Geographies of Human-Animal Relations*, ed. by Chris Philo and Chris Wilbert (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2000), pp. 1-35 (p. 14).

to the methods of early ethologists. As Lorimer notes, the importance of environment to the study of ethology applies not only to the situation of an animal within its habitat, but also the positioning of the researcher within that same space: ‘embedded ethologists learned to look intently at the workings of the world-in-the-making’.⁵⁸ These ethologists undertook lives of ‘self-imposed exile’, becoming ‘purposefully out of step with one world’ so as to ‘quicken the senses and find attunements and synchronicities with another’.⁵⁹ Lorimer figures this as a ‘yielding to animal landscapes and to states of wildness,’ whereby ‘ethologists found the means to physically embody their gift for empathy’.⁶⁰ I would question whether empathy is the right word for this process; such claims to feel-with the experience of an Other always risk collapsing their alterity, making too strong a claim to know them in their subjecthood. However, this idea of attunement and synchronicity to animals and their environments fits very well with Baker’s and Treadwell’s accounts of their experiences.

In Baker’s view, ‘to be recognised and accepted by a peregrine you must wear the same clothes, travel by the same way, perform the same actions in the same order’, so as to ‘soothe the hawk from its wildness by a ritual of behaviour as invariable as its own’ (*Peregrine*, 30). The regular rhythm of the falcon and Baker’s emulation of it stand in stark contrast to his disdain for the arrhythmia of humans, with ‘their suddenly uplifted arms, the insanity of their flailing gestures, their erratic scissoring gait, their aimless stumbling ways’ (*Peregrine*, 92). Steve Hinchcliffe emphasises the corporeality of such ornithological practices, arguing that ‘knowing birds is not a matter of human subjects getting to know their avian objects through a representational economy’, but rather through ‘a suite of embodied activities, bodies arched forward, lenses at hand and to eye’.⁶¹ Bird watchers are ‘primed to “jizz”’, meaning ‘a mode of recognition based on the slightest of “signals”, be that a silhouette, a fleeting glimpse, a reading of proportion or a characteristic movement’.⁶² Such knowing entails ‘an embodied readiness to the world, an affective attunement to avian bodies and movements’.⁶³ Such ornithological practices are a sort of *Mitgang*, provisional and conditional approximations, which at the same time entail some form of emulation, a mirroring of the very movements and gestures being

⁵⁸ Lorimer, p. 57.

⁵⁹ Lorimer, p. 57.

⁶⁰ Lorimer, p. 64.

⁶¹ Steve Hinchcliffe, ‘Sensory Biopolitics: Knowing Birds and a Politics of Life’, in *Humans, Animals and Biopolitics: The More Than Human Condition*, ed. by Kristin Asdal, Tone Druglitrø, and Steve Hinchcliffe (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2016), pp. 153–70 (p. 160).

⁶² Hinchcliffe, p. 160.

⁶³ Hinchcliffe, p. 160.

observed. It is not only birds that Baker views this way; in both examples just given, these Others are seen as just such collections of movements and gestures, whether that be the falcon's jizz or a human's equally inarticulate yet distinctive 'gait'.

For Treadwell, cohabiting landscapes shaped by the bears leads to a profound sense of destabilisation. Travelling the tunnels of the Grizzly Maze is 'surreal and confusing' (*Grizzlies*, 129), and when he first arrives at the Grizzly Sanctuary he is totally out of sequence with its rhythms. Seeing a huge number of bears present on the grassy plains, the pilot who is carrying Treadwell drops him on the far side of a large river, unloading him and his gear in an area that would be inundated only hours later by an enormous spring tide. Treadwell recalls:

I didn't know much about the local tides, and spent the next three hours being chased by their increasing waters. As it turned out, the tide fluctuated by as much as twenty-five feet in six hours. It was not only the summer solstice, but a full moon as well, a combination that did wild things to the tides. (*Grizzlies*, 19)

Yet, as Treadwell discovers the next morning, the same tidal pattern that flooded his camp is a boon for the bears. Coming upon the beach, Treadwell sees that the corresponding low tide has drawn the sea out as much as a mile. He is shocked to see a dozen or so grizzly bears digging for clams along the exposed seabed (*Grizzlies*, 24-5). The tide has another effect: by rising, and effectively damming the river that flows through the area, it causes the plains to flood with freshwater, which in turn leads to a glut of sedge grass, a staple springtime foodstuff for the bears. Once Treadwell himself has adapted to the place's changeability, his own seasonal journey from Grizzly Sanctuary to Grizzly Maze becomes dictated by the spawning of sockeye salmon in the latter location. Like the bears' migrations, his movements are determined by the cycles of the landscape and its flora and fauna.

For Heidegger, physical proximity is seemingly unimportant when it comes to attempting to transpose oneself into the experience of an Other, human or nonhuman, despite certain scholars' attempts to foreground such physical sharing of space. For me, however, it matters that these are 'field journals': they are not purely fictional imaginings, but textual reperformances and interpretations—more or less literary and fictionalised—of actual experiences these writers have undergone. It is not so much that *Mitgang* cannot be accomplished by going-with an Other purely in thought, or that nonhumans in literary fictions are inevitably doomed to be manifestations of hackneyed tropes. As we will see in the remainder of this thesis, producers of entirely imaginative aesthetic works certainly find strategies to suggest the presences of the real animals that our cultural scripts bely. However,

the plausibility of Baker's and Treadwell's insights derive, in part, I think, from their having actually shared these spaces, encountered these Others in all their real-life unpredictability, wonder and bathos. And of having *not encountered* them. If, as Macfarlane observes, Baker himself is curiously absent from his own account,⁶⁴ so is the eponymous raptor—this despite Baker having condensed ten years of observations into a single winter. Baker's savage editing preserves or produces something akin to a wildlife documentary where the camera is left rolling, capturing hours of footage punctuated by tiny snippets of the animal under surveillance. Perhaps there is a subtle challenge being made, here, to our own anthropocentric desire for narrative, a thwarting of readers' entitled expectations to have the peregrine *show up for us*. Treadwell's time spent away from Alaska, meanwhile, is barely documented, save a couple of anecdotes. As the title suggests, the story is about his time *among grizzlies*, not his time spent—begrudgingly—among humans. Elided from the narrative, these periods become like the bears' own seasons of hibernation, a device whose apparent literariness, for me, suggests an overlooked sophistication to Treadwell's diaries. Ironically, then, whilst the insights these authors have gained do derive from their own concrete experiences, there is a sense in which their experiences, in turn, can only be related to us by means of such literary contrivances.

Considering his own writing practice, Baker himself tells us that he finds it necessary 'to preserve a unity, binding together the bird, the watcher, and the place that holds them both' (*Peregrine*, 31). Baker's inclusion of himself in this frame emphasises his own embeddedness in the environment, and the partiality of his observations. Observer, animal, and landscape comprise a *gestalt*, irreducible to the sum of its parts. The world that Baker's prose creates is one of contingencies, and interdependencies, something akin to a Deleuze-Guattarian milieu, blending animals with one another, and with the landscape itself. Upon hearing a starling mimicking a peregrine, Baker states:

I could not believe it was not a hawk, until I saw the starling actually opening its bill and producing the sound. By listening to the autumn starlings one can tell from their mimicry when golden plover, fieldfares, kestrels, and peregrines arrive in the valley. (*Peregrine*, 62-3)

Again we see Baker's intimate knowledge of the interactions between animals, and his ability to read phenomenological traces in the environment. The starling's mimicry echoes the absent peregrine, and it also recalls Baker's own emulation of the raptor. At the same time, his

⁶⁴ Macfarlane, 'Violent Spring'.

mistakenness underscores the contingency of his own observation: he is true to his aim to preserve the unity of the scene, including his own imbrication within its milieu.

Baker draws expansive, multisensory metaphors: ‘An hour of drenching rain extinguished the day. The valley was a sopping brown sponge, misty and dun. [...] Rain fell copiously again, and the hollow dusk was filled with the squelching calls of snipe.’ (*Peregrine*, 88) Here, the weather, the air, the ground, and the animals that inhabit the landscape bleed together: rain puts out the sun; the valley comprises the sopping sponge of earth, and the misty sky above and between it; the rainfall soaks the voices of birds, which in their own wetness fill the dusk, as water might fill the hollow of a tree. These metaphors are not merely multi-sensory, but synaesthetic, blending environment into animal, and vice versa. Later in the text we are told that ‘the hawkless valley bloomed with the soft voices of waking owls’ (*Peregrine*, 100). Here, the peregrine lingers as a syntactic trace, physically absent from the landscape but still remnant as a description of it as ‘hawk-less’. The calls of the present owls become strange flora, their voices carried over to become part of the visual scene of the landscape.

As David Farrier states, for Baker, ‘metaphor is the place of becoming’.⁶⁵ Yet Farrier is careful to contrast Deleuze and Guattari’s ontology with Baker’s writing. As Farrier observes, becoming-animal’s ‘usefulness [...] as a critique of anthropocentrism is limited by their lack of interest in animal subjectivities’.⁶⁶ Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy—more so than even the most heterodox readings of Heidegger—sees organisms as contingent processes of becoming, inhering in a relationship with an environment. There certainly is something of Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘the-animal-stalks-at-five-o’clock’ to Baker’s descriptions,⁶⁷ such as the passage on the kingfisher I previously quoted, in which the bird has no being *as such*, but instead exists as an unfolding *in such and such* a place and time. His synaesthetic descriptions likewise contribute to a sense of these organisms’ insuperable imbrication within the landscape. However, whilst the conceptualisation of the organism as the temporary organisation of a milieu, a series of lines of flight, seems to allow the porousness of boundaries that would allow insight into these other experiences, or enable a transformation of one species into another, at the same time, to think in these terms is to render concepts such as ‘species’, ‘organism’ and ‘experiences’ so diffuse as to be meaningless—this is more or less Deleuze and Guattari’s point! For Baker, on the other hand, there clearly is something it is like to be a peregrine, an owl, a human, evident

⁶⁵ Farrier, p. 746, original italics.

⁶⁶ Farrier, p. 747.

⁶⁷ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, MN; London: University Of Minnesota Press, 1989), p. 263.

not only in his attempts to describe them, but in his ardent desire to transpose himself into their experiences in the first place. In the universe that Baker's prose constructs there is something less essentialist than *Mitsein*, but more phenomenologically invested than becoming-animal. *Mitgang*, reinterpreted as I have done so here, perfectly encapsulates these sorts of transpositions and transformations that Baker imagines.

Like Heideggerian *Mitgang*, Baker's transpositions are always provisional and conditional. As Macfarlane observes, *The Peregrine* is less a book about becoming a bird, as it is about 'failing to become a bird'.⁶⁸ This should not be read as a weakness of Baker's writing, nor a failure of his artistic project. In fact, it means Baker's text cleaves all the more closely to Heidegger's own conceptualisation of what it means to be transposed, a process that 'does not consist in our simply forgetting ourselves as it were and trying our utmost to act as if we were the other being', but rather 'consists precisely in we ourselves being precisely ourselves, and only in this way first bringing about the possibility of ourselves being able to go along with the other being while remaining *other* with respect to it' (*Fundamental*, 202-3, original italics). In short: 'There can be no going-along-with if the one who wishes and is meant to go along with the other relinquishes himself in advance.' (*Fundamental*, 203) There is perhaps a slight suggestion of ethical concern, here, for Heidegger: 'remaining *other* with respect to' the Other can be read as remaining other *out of respect for* that Other. Like Heidegger, Baker avoids overstating his insight into these other modes of being. This hesitancy is clear if we re-examine the passage from Baker with which I began this chapter:

I found myself crouching over the kill, like a mantling hawk. My eyes turned quickly about, alert for the walking heads of men. Unconsciously I was imitating the movement of the hawk, as in some primitive ritual; the hunter becoming the thing he hunts. I looked into the wood. In a lair of shadow the peregrine was crouching, watching me, gripping the neck of a dead branch. We live, in these days in the open, the same ecstatic fearful life. (*Peregrine*, 92)

The passage builds a strong sense of connection between Baker and the bird he pursues. But there is no ontological claim or easy identification. Nor is there even imagined to be an actual metamorphosis. This is a going-with, based on momentarily shared sensual experiences and motions. Baker's use of imagery is sparse—there is only one direct metaphorical comparison of himself with the peregrine, a simile, and one which is carefully qualified: Baker, in his specific posture of crouching over the kill is *like* the peregrine, specifically when it mantles, i.e.

⁶⁸ Macfarlane, 'Violent Spring'.

hunches over its prey. The simile highlights a parallelism but does not collapse Baker's and the peregrine's alterity. Elsewhere, upon encountering the peregrine, Baker recalls that 'for more than a minute we both stayed still, each puzzled and intrigued by the other, sharing the curious bond that comes with identity of position' (*Peregrine*, 129): in these moments, it is not that Baker becomes the peregrine *as such*; the two are bound together by their shared posture. Indeed, in the latter example, the connection is based not so much on common feeling, as on their respective *unknowability* from the other's point of view. There is something tactfully underdetermined to Baker's claim that he and the peregrine 'live [...] the same ecstatic fearful life'. The two coexist side by side, Baker claims, living a life not specified as either human or peregrine, but which is imagined to be shared because of common affects: ecstasy and fear.

As I have said, climaticity facilitates these imagined transpositions. So, when Baker encounters a tawny owl, he states:

I stopped. A chill spread over my face and neck. Three yards away, on a pine branch close to the ride, there was a tawny owl. I held my breath. The owl did not move. I heard every small sound of the wood as loudly as though I too were an owl. (*Peregrine*, 78)

Here, the comparison of Baker with owl is not even metaphorical, but literal, if Baker's description is to be believed: their connection is via the shared acuity of his and the owl's sensory experience; he imagines his subjective experience of hearing the sounds in this shared environment to be as acute, for him, as the owl's hearing of them is, for the owl. Syntactically, the comparison—'as loudly as though I too were an owl'—is via an adjectival, nested within another adjectival. The grammatical mood is subjunctive. Everything in this comparison is conditional. In another passage, the augmented movement of Baker cycling downhill connects him with the motion of a sparrowhawk:

Going downhill, I flashed past a barn. [...] Sparrows were shrilling, disintegrating upward. The clutching grey slash of a sparrowhawk flicked across the eye like a twig lashing back. I had swooped round the bend of the road like a hawk swooping, startling both hawk and prey. (*Peregrine*, 122)

This is *Mitgang* achieved via a shared movement: he swoops round the bend like a hawk swoops. But here, his identification is at an even further remove. He measures his transformation by the impression it leaves on the other animals in the environment. It is not so much that he identifies with the sparrowhawk; rather, he imagines that he reads these other animals' identification of him as such, reacting to their reaction.

Recall Heidegger's statement that transposition is not a physical process, but one 'that merely transpires in thought'. In one of the most quoted passages from Baker's text, he enacts just such an imaginative going-with:

I shut my eyes and tried to crystalize my will into the light-drenched prism of the hawk's mind. Warm and firm-footed in the long grass smelling of the sun, I sank into the skin and blood and bones of the hawk. The ground became a branch to my feet, the sun on my eyelids was heavy and warm. [...] I sank down and slept into the feather-light sleep of the hawk. (*Peregrine*, 131-2)

The use of the verb *to sleep* in this unusual, transitive construction underscores that this connection is not essential, but is merely via a common activity. Baker frequently foregrounds adjectivals in his writing. We can read this in the three quotations prior to this one: '*In a lair of shadow the peregrine was crouching*'; '*Three yards away, on a pine branch close to the ride, there was a tawny owl*'; '*Riding downhill, I flashed past a barn*'. We have an extended example here, in the second sentence: the syntactic emphasis is on the location, the sensory experience, the attribute—the warmth and firm-footed-ness in the grass, and the smell of the sun (indirectly, as it heats his surroundings?)—rather than the thing to which these qualities are attributed, or the thing doing the sensing, be that human or peregrine, or both. The connection Baker imagines between himself and the peregrine is via their shared situation within, and attunement to, the landscape that encompasses them both. This is underscored by the bizarre reversal in Baker's claim: the 'ground became a branch to my feet'. What is described here is not a transformation of Baker himself, or not directly, but of his attitude toward the environment that he and the peregrine share.

Remaining Other: the difference between Baker and Treadwell

Unlike *Mitsein*, Baker's transpositions do not require these Others to have any fixed ontic being or stable identity aside from the very movements, rhythms and sensorial attunements he observes. Yet neither does he overplay the insights he claims to gain from such observations. Analysing the same passage I have just quoted, David Herman rightly points out that 'the desired change remains just that—desired'.⁶⁹ And so, 'despite the imagined moment of convergence, Baker and the hawk remain separated by two-ness rather than joined in one-ness, with Baker's waking constituting a disturbance for another, nonhuman subject that

⁶⁹ David Herman, *Narratology Beyond the Human: Storytelling and Animal Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 57.

continues to be distinct, autonomous'.⁷⁰ To put this in the terms of this thesis, Baker imagines the peregrine's mode of being whilst also apprehending the insurmountability—and necessity—of its alterity. That this transformation is characterised as Baker 'sinking' further into himself, appears to acknowledge the inescapability of his own position, the hopelessness of any 'real' metamorphosis. Like Heidegger in his humblest characterisation of *Mitgang*, Baker acknowledges the impossibility of not keeping at least one foot in one's own subject position, imagining glimpses of other animal worlds, but only momentarily, becoming the peregrine, but only contingently. His imaginative forays into these other modes of being are always provisional and conditional, understated in their claims to knowledge of the Other. As Lorimer observes, Baker's interest in the peregrine appears to stem from his perceptions of it as 'the true essence of alterity'.⁷¹ Accordingly, if Baker seems desperate to approach nonhuman Others, to go-with them, he nevertheless shares Heidegger's conflicting urge to pull back, and to let their otherness be. Like Buchanan's reading of Heidegger's animal, which is 'suspended between itself and its environment',⁷² Baker's prose seems always to be poised between these two conflicting gestures of insight and alterity.

Despite their similarities, this marks a difference between Baker's and Treadwell's projects. One of the first of Treadwell's imagined transformations occurs when he sees a bear fording a swollen river that he was afraid to cross:

Without hesitation, the lovely creature gracefully descended into the current. As the animal glided by, it caught my eye. In a flash, I realized that I was going to have to swim across. Nervously, I walked up to the exact spot where the beautiful animal had plunged in, and without a second thought I followed it. [...] "I am Grizzly, I am Grizzly," I thought. (*Grizzlies*, 22)

As with Baker, a literal going-with in physical space facilitates Treadwell's feeling of transformation. His ostensible metamorphosis is established through a shared connection with the landscape, as he fords the river in the 'exact spot' where the bear had also crossed. We can add to this the passage which began this chapter, which occurs immediately after Treadwell enters the beach where the bears are digging for clams: 'I felt as if my presence didn't bother them [...]. I decided to behave like the bears, and dropped to all fours. I was transforming, going through a metamorphosis. I felt wild and free' (*Grizzlies*, 25). Yet Treadwell's transformation—the ultimate realisation of his perceived connection to these

⁷⁰ Herman, p. 57.

⁷¹ Lorimer, p. 57.

⁷² Buchanan, p. 89.

bears—seems to be accomplished so effortlessly, and seems so sure of itself. His assertion—‘I am Grizzly’—exceeds even Heidegger in the boldness of its ontological claim. On the question of transposition, in the sense of a metamorphosis into another being, Heidegger is perfectly clear: he tells us ‘there is no question of *any actual* transporting oneself into another being, as if we could somehow vacate our own position and directly fill out and occupy the place of that being’ (*Fundamental*, 202, original italics). Whilst Baker keeps one foot in the human, Treadwell imagines that he uproots himself and vacates his humanness entirely. In doing so, he ‘relinquishes himself in advance’, as Heidegger would say. The capitalisation of ‘Grizzly’ performs an ontological reification at the level of the species. The emphasis is on their being a homogeneous category of ‘Grizzly’, a stable identity into which Treadwell can cast himself. As such, whilst it does not dichotomise human/nonhuman, it feels as essentialising as Heidegger’s singular ‘the animal’. At the same time, whereas Baker and Heidegger seem torn between theorising the otherness of animals, and letting that otherness be, Treadwell views his transformation with all the self-certainty, all the effortlessness and essentialisation, of *Mitsein*.

Accordingly, there is no room for alterity in Treadwell’s account. Instead, his encounters with the bears are characterised by a strong desire for identification and acceptance. There is a further trace of *Mitsein* in the statement: ‘I felt as if my presence didn’t bother them’. Later in the text, he tells us that, since ‘the majority of the brown grizzlies now accepted me, and casually let me within their personal space at any hour of the day’ that ‘I was honoured, and really felt like a grizzly’ (*Grizzlies*, 91). Later still he states: ‘Twenty-seven bears grazed, dozed and played around me. I moved among them at will, feeling like a bear myself.’ (*Grizzlies*, 105) And, again, ‘without a doubt they knew I was there, but they ignored my presence. I was beginning to feel like a real grizzly’ (*Grizzlies*, 121). Treadwell literally imagines these nonhuman animals as a surrogate for the human family he has left behind: ‘The word “home” brought a smile to my face. For in that moment, as I looked around [...], I realized that I was, at long last, home’ (*Grizzlies*, 47). And again, much later in the text, he recalls whispering goodnight to his ‘children’, before he ‘climbed into the tent, straining to hear their peaceful breath’, and ‘went to sleep, contented by the sense of having a family’ (*Grizzlies*, 139). In Jorge Conesa-Sevilla’s assessment of Treadwell’s relationship with the bears, Treadwell, ‘seeking kinship elsewhere [...] mistakes bear tolerance as acceptance. He falsely interprets their ignoring his presence as inclusion or invitation. Worse, he interprets their confusion to his

jittery antics as love'.⁷³ We can read the same desire for acceptance in the title of Treadwell's text, wishing to situate him 'among' the bears, in their society. The helicopter pilot Sam Egli, one of Herzog's interviewees, remarks that it was as if Treadwell 'was walking with people wearing bear costumes'.⁷⁴ It is as if, having failed to achieve the easiness of transposition conveyed in *being-with*, that Treadwell, rather than questioning its achievability, goes looking for the same among grizzlies. Treadwell's text might be as aptly titled: *Mitsein with bears*.

Herzog's closing remarks to *Grizzly Man* offer perhaps the most damning assessment of Treadwell's identification with this other species:

What haunts me is that in all the faces of all the bears that Treadwell ever filmed, I discover no kinship, no understanding, no mercy. I see only the overwhelming indifference of nature. To me, there is no such thing as a secret world of the bears, and this blank stare speaks only of a half-bored interest in food.⁷⁵

However, for me these comments miss the real extent to which Treadwell's story speaks to such a question. Whilst I agree with Herzog's identification of an unreciprocated kinship, Treadwell's desire for identification and acceptance—for *Mitsein*—underscores that he was never looking for 'a secret world of the bears', merely a surrogate human world among this other species. It is ironic that in Treadwell's inflexible conception of what might constitute a *world*—in the existentialist sense—he appears the more closely aligned with Heidegger's thought. Herzog, meanwhile, in the same breath as he voices his very Heideggerian dismissal of the bears' capacity for having world, simultaneously holds open the possibility of such a world's construction—and of an interspecies *Mitgang*—on Heidegger's own terms. For Heidegger, the incommensurability of humans' and animals' modes of access to environment, human world-building versus animal world-poverty, precludes any possibility of a human easily transposing themselves into another animal's experience. Yet Heidegger spends around a fifth of his Freiberg lecture course explaining that *Dasein's* unique world-building capacity is revealed to us in boredom, in the suspension of our access to Being itself, which occurs when we experience *Langeweile*, and the world seems to withdraw the affordances that it usually offers. (*Fundamental*, 78-168). By attributing to the bears the capacity for boredom, Herzog breaks the spell of animal captivation, allowing a crack to open within the supposed immanence of instinct and environment. According to Heidegger, such a fissure is precisely

⁷³ Conesa-Sevilla, p. 140.

⁷⁴ Herzog.

⁷⁵ Herzog.

the space in which world-building occurs, and into which one might hope to transpose oneself. This capacity may be only 'half-formed', in Herzog's reading, but half a crack is still a crack; if a bear can be bored, it cannot be poor in world.

Conclusion

For Heidegger himself, *Mitsein* entails that humans are always already transposed into the experiences of, or are pre-equipped to *be-with*, their fellow humans. What we find in Baker's and Treadwell's texts, however, puts paid to this notion of an ostensibly frictionless human community; neither of these authors appear able to achieve it. This has implications for rethinking Heidegger's broader writings on the nonhuman: whereas *Mitsein* is essentialist, *Mitgang* does not require that Others—human or nonhuman—have a fixed identity into which we can be effortlessly transposed. *Mitsein* plunges headlong into the representational dilemma this thesis seeks to explore, assuming that there is a fixed quality of what it is like *for a bear* to be a bear, and that such a mode of being might be representable from a human perspective. *Mitgang*, on the other hand, treats the Other as an unfolding process one might—tentatively and conditionally—accompany, allowing flickers of insight, but also the apprehension of alterity. These reformulated concepts offer a new resource, not only for my readings of J. A. Baker's and Timothy Treadwell's texts, but for other aesthetic works concerning human attempts to imagine the experiences of nonhuman animals. Indeed, my readings in the remaining chapters of this thesis will occasionally return to *Mitgang*, in particular, for the insight this reformulated concept can supply. Baker and Treadwell both employ literary strategies to describe their own transpositions and transformations into the animals about which they write. Both authors share Heidegger's sense of the inextricability of organisms and environments, and see sharing these animal spaces as a means to achieve greater insights into the nonhumans who live there. However, though Baker shares Heidegger's conflicting desires to imagine these nonhuman animals in their otherness, whilst attempting to let that otherness be, Treadwell's text is characterised by a strong desire for acceptance, coloured by the easiness of the identification he finds with this other species. And so, whilst Baker finds *Mitgang* with the peregrine, and the other nonhumans of the Essex countryside, Treadwell seeks *Mitsein*—and a surrogate human family—among grizzlies.

I have a final thought about Treadwell's story, however, one that perhaps ameliorates somewhat this otherwise harsh appraisal. In light of mine and others' assessment of Treadwell's misplaced identification, it is tempting to view his and Huguenard's deaths as the

ultimate instance of an animal's non-conformism to trope: he views the bears through anthropomorphising eyes, treating them as a surrogate family, when really they are dangerous wild animals; Huguenard's and Treadwell's fate becomes hardly surprising, read in this light. But such a reading only short-circuits to a yet more clichéd view of these nonhumans, and their supposed character. Herzog's closing remarks to *Grizzly Man* also appear to miss this point—quite spectacularly—seeing only a reification of an already ubiquitous view of nature—amoral, red in tooth and claw—rather than a moment to reflect upon such tropes. And so, for Herzog, Treadwell's footage 'is not so much a look at wild nature, as it is an insight into ourselves, our nature'.⁷⁶ Yet Treadwell's story resists Herzog's attempts to wrangle it into this conventional humanist narrative. His and Huguenard's tragic demise may illustrate the problem of taking as given any insight into a nonhuman Other's mode of experience. Perhaps it also highlights the perils of anthropomorphism. At the same time, however, their story exposes a parallel tendency to *ursinomorphise* grizzly bears as wild, ferocious apex predators, the very trope that Treadwell set out to challenge. The couple's deaths do not detract from the fact that Treadwell spent twelve summers in Alaskan bear country without ever being attacked. Perhaps the bears' real non-conformism to trope should be seen as these dozen summers when—against many people's expectations—the couple were *not* killed and eaten. And so perhaps there is some hint of a real bear in this story after all, a being that is poised, not so much between itself and its environment, as between these two extremes of human child, and man-eating predator. The next chapter of this thesis will pick up on this idea of the animal behind the trope. Turning to the work of Simone de Beauvoir, I consider how our society's hegemonic masculinist and anthropocentric discourse produces not only certain *animals* but also certain humans *as tropes*, and examine how two authors have represented attempts to escape such overdeterminations.

⁷⁶ Herzog.

Chapter Two – Free to be Estranged: Simone de Beauvoir, Sarah Hall and Larissa Lai

“He turns and leaves, feeling sickened. He is angry and ashamed. That she could ever, even before this, be his pet.”

Sarah Hall, ‘Mrs Fox’

“And because laughing is not something foxes generally do, they twitch their noses in disgust and hurry away.”

Larissa Lai, *When Fox is a Thousand*

“The animals have become absent referents, whose fate is transmuted into a metaphor for someone else’s existence or fate.”

Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat*

The fox is one of the most overdetermined of animal tropes—stereotyped and fabled as clever, sly, cunning, thieving—and also one in which gender and animality overlap and intertwine: a strong, sexualised woman is called a *vixen* or, simply, a *fox*. This association is characteristic of a phenomenon that John Berger identifies, whereby the animal is made to function as vehicle in a metaphor whose tenor is ultimately human: ‘Everywhere animals offered explanations, or more precisely, lent their name or character to a quality, which like all qualities, was, in its essence, mysterious.’¹ In the post-industrial era, Berger argues, as real animals have disappeared from the lives of humans in most Western nations, their realness has been forgotten; all that is left is the metaphor. For Berger, J. J. Grandville’s *Public and Private Life of Animals* (1840–42) illustrates this particularly well. Grandville’s engravings ‘appear to belong to the old tradition, whereby a person is portrayed as an animal so as to reveal more clearly an aspect of his or her character’.² However, Berger argues that when one looks closer, ‘these animals are not being “borrowed” to explain people, nothing is being unmasked; on the contrary. These animals have become prisoners of a human/social situation into which they have been press-ganged’.³ The signification that the animal was thought to be lending turns out never to have been its to give: ‘The vulture as landlord is more dreadfully rapacious than

¹ John Berger, *About Looking* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 1980), pp. 8–9.

² Berger, p. 18.

³ Berger, p. 19.

he is as a bird. The crocodiles at dinner are greedier at the table than they are in the river.⁴ This phenomenon of metaphor is not peculiar to animals: as one philosopher points out,⁵ the vehicle of a metaphor, what is carried over to cast new light upon some element of the tenor—or to cast the tenor in a new light—is rarely the thing itself, but is based on a qualities the speaker and listener pretend that vehicle to have. Appropriately, though, it is an animal metaphor that he reaches for to illustrate this point. The phrase, ‘Richard is a gorilla’, he argues, will be interpreted by most to mean that a human called Richard is ‘fierce, nasty, prone to violence’.⁶ It matters little that gorillas ‘are not at all fierce and nasty, but are in fact shy, sensitive creatures, given to bouts of sentimentality’.⁷ Indeed, if we do know this, the metaphor requires us to forget it.

To put this in the terminology given us by Carol Adams, these animals have become *absent referents*, ‘transmuted into a metaphor for someone else’s existence or fate’.⁸ In these metaphorical cases, ‘the absent referent can be anything whose original meaning is undercut as it is absorbed into a different hierarchy of meaning; in this case the original meaning of animals’ fates is absorbed into a human-centered hierarchy’.⁹ Adams proposes ‘a cycle of objectification, fragmentation, and consumption’ to explain how the metaphorical absent referent functions: ‘a subject first is viewed, or objectified, through metaphor. Through fragmentation the object is severed from its ontological meaning. Finally, consumed, it exists only through what it represents’.¹⁰ A woman is like a fox because the fox is thought to be feminine, sly, and seductive, but femininity, slyness, seductiveness are themselves projections of the human onto this nonhuman Other: they belong to the trope of fox, not to the fox itself. First displaced, the ‘real’ animal becomes imprisoned in its trope: the fox is feminine, sly and seductive because of its association with women, and so ‘the consumption of the referent reiterates its annihilation as a subject of importance in itself’.¹¹ Of course, the underlying irony is that these qualities in turn belong always already to woman *as trope*, as its own cultural construct.

⁴ Berger, p. 19.

⁵ In light of recent revelations, he remains nameless, for reasons of solidarity.

⁶ John R. Searle, *Expression and Meaning: Studies in the Theory of Speech Acts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 89.

⁷ Searle, p. 89.

⁸ Carol J. Adams, *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory* (New York, NY; London: Continuum, 2010), p. 67.

⁹ Adams, p. 67.

¹⁰ Adams, p. 73.

¹¹ Adams, p. 73.

My starting point for thinking through this association of woman and animal is the philosophy of Simone de Beauvoir. There is a well-established academic lineage examining the interconnections and inter-constructions of femininity and animality. Indeed, some of these works were foundational to the discipline that would come to be known as ‘animal studies’. In addition to Adam’s *Sexual Politics*, which I have already cited, other notable examples include Josephine Donovan’s pivotal essay ‘Animal Rights and Feminist Theory’ (1990) and Donna Haraway’s equally seismic *Primate Visions* (1989). All three of these texts were instrumental in setting the trajectory, not only for feminist approaches to animal-studies work, but to all subsequent work within the discipline. Within these three foundational works, Beauvoir receives only a passing mention, a level of interest by-and-large maintained throughout the intervening thirty years. This chapter does not evade the issues that might have led to this omission: Beauvoir’s own problematic association of womanhood with animality, for instance, or her prescriptively singular and homogenous category of ‘Woman’, to which all human women should ostensibly aspire. However, I also identify in Beauvoir’s overlooked writings a far more nuanced attempt to engage with nonhumans than that offered by most writers in the continental tradition.

This chapter focuses predominantly on the first chapter of *The Second Sex* (1949), where most of this consideration of the nonhuman occurs. I examine three concepts that Beauvoir develops: *freedom*, *estrangement*, and *transcendence*. Though Beauvoir’s motives for developing these concepts are anthropocentric—she hopes to develop an existentialist account of the condition of human women—they nevertheless offer new ways of thinking the nonhuman and human, and the relationship between them. In Beauvoir’s account, *freedom from*, versus *enslavement to*, *species life* is a more salient concept than *species* alone in determining the mode of existence of certain beings: males almost always experience more freedom from species life than do females. I argue that Beauvoir’s notion of freedom has the potential to unsettle species hierarchies, and human exceptionalism, diverting emphasis from the anthropocentric privileging of cognitive and behavioural complexity. I further argue that Beauvoir’s attempts to grapple with the sheer heterogeneity of life, sexual differentiation and reproductive strategies can be read as a prefiguration of Derridean ‘limitrophy’, a stark contrast to Heidegger’s singular ‘the animal’, expounded in my previous chapter.

The apparent promise of these potential destabilisations is undercut by Beauvoir herself, however, who insists that animals constitute ‘given species’, whereas woman—and the human—are defined by their capacity for transcendence. Woman’s ostensible capacity for

transcendence means that she chafes against her enslavement to the species, resulting in her *estrangement* from herself. I interpret woman's immutable capacity to transcend her bodily being as a relic of the same latent Cartesianism for which Beauvoir has elsewhere been criticised. I read this aspect of Beauvoir's thought alongside Giorgio Agamben's analysis of the anthropological machine, identifying a paradox: most subjugated to the species, but most strongly resistant to this subjugation, Beauvoir's woman is simultaneously the human at its most and least animal. Reading Beauvoir's analysis against the grain of her own synthesis, I argue that her example of the fabled praying mantis fatally undermines her distinction in kind between humans and other animals; insofar as nonhuman animals constitute 'given species', what is 'given' is never the animal *as such*, but the animal as trope.

Beauvoir's characterisation of woman betrays this same tendency to collapse individual into type, projecting one mode of being (or becoming) that would hold for all women. I contrast this normativity with the sort of queer becoming celebrated by Claire Colebrook, exemplified in Deleuze and Guattari's concepts of becoming-woman and becoming-animal. I set up this contrast because Beauvoirian authenticity—with its emphasis on stable homogeneous identities—and Colebrook's queer becoming—with its radical erasure of identity—represent the two extremes of the representational dilemma this thesis seeks to explore: there is something that it is like to be a praying mantis, a fox or a human; these modes of being are disparate, yet any artistic attempt to represent other species' experiences risks falling down the same rabbit hole as Beauvoir does in her consideration of the mantis: i.e. it risks peddling a trope.

The second half of this chapter considers two literary texts that both explore the overlapping overdeterminations of women and foxes, but which adopt very different strategies to tackling this representational dilemma. In Sarah Hall's short story 'Mrs Fox' (2013) a strange occurrence befalls a seemingly contented heterosexual marriage: while out for a walk one day, the wife transforms into a fox. The husband's attempts to make sense of or reverse the transformation fail, and he feels he has no choice but to open the doors and allow her to leave. When the husband later encounters his fox-wife on the heath, she leads him to her den, where we learn she has birthed a litter of cubs. The husband is sure he is their father. This transformation follows the revelation that the wife is undergoing one of the biological processes Beauvoir most strongly implicates in woman's estrangement from herself: pregnancy. In a seeming reversal of Beauvoir's thinking, rather than realising her humanity by overcoming her subjugation to the species, the wife quite literally becomes a fox. However, in my reading, wife and fox escape not so much from the human world into the world of the

animal, as from the epistemology that found it necessary to distinguish these worlds in the first place. Close reading Hall's story, attending to the ambiguity of the metamorphosis scene itself, and the voice of the narrator, we see that the wife never experienced the schism between her humanity and animality that is the condition of Beauvoirian estrangement (and the logic of the anthropological machine on the whole). It proves to be only from a masculinist, anthropocentric perspective that such a schism exists, because it is only from such a perspective that this characterisation occurs. Wife and fox are Other to this epistemological subject, both simultaneously animalised and feminised, imprisoned within their respective tropes, and Hall's narrator is a microcosm of the hegemonic discourse that produces them. The fox's unruliness resists her overdetermination, suggesting an agency that is unknowable, but remains present due to its unpredictability. Ultimately, however, wife and fox more or less vanish from the story, shirking the terms of gender and species altogether.

The second literary text this chapter considers, Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* (1995), is a novel of three interwoven narratives: one is narrated by a fox spirit (a figure from premodern Chinese literary culture and/or folklore) and recounts her adventures in China over the past millennium, and in late-twentieth century Canada; another offers a contemporary retelling of the life of a ninth-century Taoist poet, Yu Hsuan-Chi; the third, focuses on the character of Artemis Wong, a Chinese-Canadian student in 1980s-90s Toronto. The East-Asian tales from which Lai takes inspiration operate with a non-biocentric notion of animality: in these stories, foxes are not species, but spirits, characterised as wily and treacherous, possessing supernatural powers, including the ability to animate and inhabit the bodies of dead women. Drawing on the work of Judith Butler, and recent work in queer animal studies, I examine Lai's representation of the performativity of identities. Humanity itself, I argue, is shown to be performative in Lai's novel: the fox's animations of the bodies of human women become a kind of drag act, which I read as a deconstructive parody of the anthropological machine. As in Hall's story, the production of identities is critiqued from without—the motif of photography calls attention to the ways in which representations construct the objects they purport to reveal. But in Lai's novel, tropes are also resisted from within. Artemis claims a subjecthood that exceeds its own performance—suggesting a stability of identity closer to Beauvoirian authenticity than to Butlerian performativity or Colebrook's queer becoming—but which simultaneously reverses the normative logic of identity formation posited by Beauvoir. I apply this same logic to the fox, whose first-person narration presents her as non-normatively fox, but fox, nonetheless. That such a characterisation is unrealistic becomes the

real point: the fox exists to trouble norms, and possesses a queer authenticity figured as freedom from species life.

Beyond Biology: sexual difference and freedom from species life

For Beauvoir, previous attempts to explain human existence have fallen short because they have assumed that sexual difference is an ontological *a priori*. Hegel's consideration of reproduction, for instance, merely begs the question of sexual differentiation, declaring that 'in order for the process of union to occur, there has to be differentiation of the two sexes'.¹² Beauvoir challenges this:

The surpassing of the individual towards the species, by which individual and species accomplish themselves in their own truth, could occur without the third element, by the simple relation of genitor to child: reproduction could be asexual. Or the relation to each other could be that of two of the same kind, with differentiation occurring in the singularity of individuals of the same type, as in hermaphroditic species. (*Second*, 23-4)

For Beauvoir, sexual differentiation might be a concrete fact of human reality but the existence of alternative reproductive strategies in other species means that sexual differentiation is not a necessity for life. Here Beauvoir also takes issue with another of this thesis' philosophical interlocutors. As Beauvoir notes, Maurice Merleau-Ponty's work 'points out that human existence calls for revision of the notions of necessity and contingency' (*Second*, 24). He argues, and here Beauvoir quotes: "Existence has no fortuitous attributes, no content which does not contribute towards giving it its form; it does not give admittance to any pure fact because it is the process by which facts are drawn up."¹³ Beauvoir agrees that 'there are conditions without which the very fact of existence would seem to be impossible' (*Second*, 24), but sexual differentiation is not one of these: 'The perpetuation of the species appears thus as the correlative of individual limitation, so the phenomenon of reproduction can be considered as ontologically grounded. But this is where one must stop; the perpetuation of the species does not entail sexual differentiation.' (*Second*, 24) Beauvoir's argument for this is that although 'a consciousness without a body or an immortal human being is rigorously inconceivable, [...] a society can be imagined that reproduces itself by parthogenesis or is composed of

¹² Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (London; New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2011), p. 23.

¹³ Beauvoir, p. 24, quoting from Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2005), p. 151.

hermaphrodites' (*Second*, 24). For Beauvoir, the existence of such reproductive strategies in other species prove that sexual differentiation is not an *a priori* condition of human existence. Neither can it be explained (away) by invoking biological determinism. 'Males and females', Beauvoir states, 'are two types of individuals who are differentiated within one species for the purposes of reproduction' (*Second*, 21). However, the '*division of the species into two sexes [...]* does not occur universally in nature' (*Second*, 21, original italics). Because of this, 'it is very difficult to give a generally valid description of the notion of female' (*Second*, 31). Attempts have been made to define the female 'as a carrier of ova and the male as a carrier of sperm', but such attempts are 'insufficient because the relation of organism to gonads is extremely variable' (*Second*, 31). For Beauvoir, there is no one stable definition of 'female' that would hold for all species. As such, sexual differentiation within a species can only be understood in the context of that species. Human sexual differentiation cannot, therefore, be naturalised by comparing it with nonhuman sexual dimorphism.

If the division of the human species into males and females cannot be considered to have any *a priori* ontological or biological basis, for Beauvoir this clears the ground for an existentialist inquiry into the condition of woman. If not as a biological nor ontological necessity, how can her existence be characterised, and how did/does this existence come about? Beauvoir's answer to these questions concerns the closely related concepts of *freedom*, *estrangement*, and *transcendence*. And it is here that Beauvoir's relevance for thinking about nonhuman animals—however unintentional the import—first begins to take shape, because these concepts concern both sexual and species identities.

For Beauvoir, one defining characteristic of the existence of humans and other animals is their degree of *freedom from*, or *enslavement to*, species life. Beauvoir states that 'when surveying the steps of the animal ladder [...], from bottom to top, life becomes more individual' (*Second*, 31). In the case of those species 'at the bottom' life 'concentrates on the maintenance of the species' (*Second*, 31), whilst 'at the top it puts its energies into single individuals' (*Second*, 32). Organisms of 'lower' species are 'reduced to barely more than the reproductive apparatus; in this case, the ovum—and therefore, the female—takes precedence over everything else, since it is above all the ovum that is dedicated to the sheer repetition of life' (*Second*, 32). But this privileging of the ovum (and female) does not constitute freedom, as the females of such species comprise 'barely more than an abdomen [whose] existence is entirely devoured by the work of a monstrous ovulation' (*Second*, 31-2). Males and females of these 'lower' species 'can hardly be thought of as individuals; they form one whole with elements that are inextricably

linked' (*Second*, 32). In some species Beauvoir considers, this privileging of the female is such that the male has seemingly forfeited any autonomy whatsoever, becoming attached to and parasitic on the body of the female (*Second*, 32). However, 'in all these cases the female is just as enslaved as the male: she is a slave to the species' (*Second*, 32).

Beauvoir's thinking here is, if not outrightly anthropocentric, then at least highly teleological: her taxonomy of species takes the archetypally hierarchical form of a ladder, and her conception of higher versus lower species appears to adhere to preconceived notions of cognitive or behavioural complexity. However, against the backdrop of this ladder, Beauvoir proposes another axis, one that problematises such a teleological account, namely degree of *freedom from* versus *enslavement to* the species. Freedom is not a mere stand-in for complexity, nor does it map onto it in any straightforward fashion. Whilst individual autonomy appears to increase as we move 'up' this ladder, this autonomy is figured as expanded or contracted, variously, depending on the relationships between conspecifics of different sexes, their reproductive strategies, and their relationships with their offspring: most species of oviparous organisms, including most fish, possess a higher degree of freedom from species life than do most mammals because the former's eggs develop outside the female body, and because most species of fish involve themselves very little with their offspring after the eggs are laid and fertilized (*Second*, 36).

Sexual difference is more salient than is species in determining the degree of freedom that an individual animal can be said to possess. For Beauvoir, even supposedly 'lower' species have some degree of freedom, but males almost always have more, relative to their female conspecifics. Although some species—certain amphibians, for instance—defy this trend, depending on their different roles in caring for offspring (*Second*, 33-4), these are the exception. Even in the case of seemingly lowly insects, Beauvoir states that 'an individual existence takes shape in the male', who 'very often takes more initiative than the female in fertilisation' (*Second*, 33). It is he 'who seeks her out, who attacks, palpates, seizes her and imposes coitus on her; sometimes he has to fight off other males' (*Second*, 33). This is reflected in morphological differences between the sexes: in the male, 'the organs of locomotion, touch and prehension are also often more developed; many female butterflies are apterous whereas the males have wings; males have more developed colours, elytrons, feet and claws; and sometimes this profusion can also be seen in a luxurious vanity of gorgeous colours' (*Second*, 33). This characterisation of 'luxurious vanity' connotes a certain gratuitousness, or superfluity to the male's existence, a theme Beauvoir later makes explicit:

Aside from the fleeting coitus, the male's life is useless, gratuitous: next to the diligence of worker females, the laziness of drones is a privilege worth noting. But this privilege is outrageous; the male often pays with his life for this uselessness that contains the germ of independence. A species that enslaves the female punishes the male for attempting to escape: it eliminates him brutally. (*Second*, 33-4)

For Beauvoir, freedom correlates with a certain purposelessness or aimlessness, one which, for me, recalls but reformulates Heidegger's opposition of animal captivity with human *Dasein*. As we can recall from my previous chapter, captivity is a certain type of enslavement, whereas *Dasein* is dependent upon the capacity for a particular sort of aimlessness. The world-building and access to being as-such, which Heidegger posits as the authentic experience of human *Dasein*, is identified by Heidegger with reference to its absence, in his consideration of those occasions when a human experiences *Langeweile*, and the world seems to withdraw the affordances it usually offers. For Heidegger, this experience of purposelessness is not equivalent to the animal state of captivity, because the human experience of *Langeweile* also carries with it the remembrance or awareness that the world and its objects once offered such affordances. Whilst Beauvoir, like Heidegger, withholds transcendence from nonhumans, as we shall see, both admit of a certain 'leeway' in nonhuman animals' relationship to the world. This is the term invoked by Buchanan to explain the kernel of possibility that exists in Heidegger's notion of captivity, characterised by 'a little give-and-take in what is open to the animal', which is 'suspended between itself and its environment'.¹⁴ Leeway 'offers a little room to play within but without the incursion of anything too grave'.¹⁵ In Beauvoir's analysis, the 'uselessness' of males, even of 'lower' species, explicitly 'contains the germ of independence', the suggestion of an agency that is not beholden to species life at all.

Estrangement: putting the ghost back in the machine

This unyoking of freedom from complexity becomes still more pronounced when Beauvoir considers the case of mammals, in whom 'the most complex and concretely individualised life' is realised (*Second*, 35), but amongst whom females are if anything still more subjugated to species life. Here, on this 'higher' rung, 'the whole organism of the female is adapted to and determined by the servitude of maternity, while the sexual initiative is the prerogative of the male' (*Second*, 35). This idea of sexual initiative is important, as Beauvoir understands this to

¹⁴ Buchanan, p. 89.

¹⁵ Buchanan, p. 89.

have profound implications as to the sorts of agency enjoyed by the sexes: 'For birds and above all mammals, the male imposes himself upon her; very often she submits to him with indifference or even resists him. Whether she is provocative or consensual, it is he in any case who *takes* her: she is *taken*' (*Second*, 36, original italics). The male's lot in this is activity, whereas the female is passive. When activity is allowed, it is only by way of resistance to male's initiative: 'she is like a raped interiority. [...] there is thus a resistance that has to be broken down, and so by penetrating the egg the male realises himself in his activity' (*Second*, 36).

Whereas in Beauvoir's analysis, organisms of 'lower' species appear to experience their enslavement to the species with passivity, female mammals chafe against this subjugation. In the case of human women, so great is the conflict that arises between this autonomous and species life that it results in woman's *estrangement* from herself:

Although she plays a fundamentally active role in procreation, she endures coitus, which alienates her from herself by penetration and internal fertilisation; although she feels the sexual need as an individual need—since in heat she might seek out the male—she nevertheless experiences the sexual adventure in its immediacy as an interior story and not in relation to the world and to others. (*Second*, 36)

Already, this quote sets into a play an interesting reversal, or exception within Beauvoir's thought as it concerns the typical interior-exterior dichotomy of the subject and world. The subject is typically figured as an interiority in opposition to a world 'out there'. However, this distinction becomes problematised in Beauvoir's conception of woman as a being who is, in a sense, alienated from an exteriority that is within her. 'Female individuality', Beauvoir suggests, 'is fought by the interest of the species; she seems possessed by outside forces: alienated' (*Second*, 38-9). Woman, in Beauvoir's account, is not even entitled to the privilege of her own interiority. These 'outside forces' comprise woman's biology and bodily being, the same forces that enslave organisms, particularly females, of other species. 'Man's development', on the other hand, 'is comparatively simple', his sexual maturation is borne relatively easily, and, following puberty, his 'sex life is normally integrated into his individual existence: in terms of desire and coitus, his surpassing towards the species is an integral part of the subjective moment of his transcendence: he *is* his body' (*Second*, 39, original italics). But this concordance of body and subject stands in stark contrast with the fundamental rupture Beauvoir perceives between woman's bodily, biological being and her sense of self:

At the moment of birth the species has taken possession of her and seeks to affirm itself; on coming into the world, the woman goes through a kind of first

puberty; ovocytes suddenly grow bigger; then the ovary reduces by about one-fifth. One could say that the child was [then] granted a reprieve; while its organism develops, its genital system remains more or less stationary. [...] But at puberty the species reasserts its rights (*Second*, 39-40).

This reassertion of the species' rights at puberty 'has all the characteristics of a crisis; the woman's body does not accept the species's installation in her without a fight; and this fight weakens and endangers her' (*Second*, 40). Between the ages of fourteen and twenty-two, significantly more girls die than do boys, casualties, in Beauvoir's eyes, of the battle that is waged within woman's own body (*Second*, 40).

This subjugation does not end when a woman reaches sexual maturity, Beauvoir claims, but continues to plague her throughout her adult life. The peak of the menstrual cycle is the time at which woman 'feels most acutely that her body is an alienated and opaque thing; it is the prey of a stubborn and foreign life that makes and unmakes a crib in her every month' (*Second*, 42). If the alienation due to the oestrus cycle is abated, this is only due to the 'even stronger alienation' that begins with the moment of fertilisation (*Second*, 42). This in turn is followed by a period of gestation, 'tiring work that offers woman no benefit as an individual but that demands various sacrifices', and 'often brings with it appetite loss and vomiting that is not observed in any other domestic female and shows the body's revolt against the species taking possession of it' (*Second*, 42). Following pregnancy is the business of childbirth, a 'painful' and 'dangerous [...] crisis [which] shows clearly that the body does not always meet the needs of both the species and the individual' (*Second*, 43). Beauvoir concludes that woman 'is the most deeply alienated of all female mammals, and she is the one that refuses this alienation the most violently. [...] Her destiny appears even more fraught the more she rebels against it by affirming herself as an individual' (*Second*, 44).

Beauvoir's close consideration of sexual differentiation within species has the potential to lead to a destabilisation of species boundaries, and of human exceptionalism. As Lori Jean Brown notes, Beauvoir's thought 'bring[s] immanence, animality, and the female reproductive body into close relationship with one another and interfere[s] with the ontological breaks that Beauvoir establishes between human existents and animals'.¹⁶ Beauvoir's analysis of freedom diverts attention from the anthropocentric privileging of behavioural and cognitive complexity, suggesting a new basis for characterising the existence of humans and other animals. Nonhuman males may possess freedom from species life, such that they can begin to

¹⁶ Lori Jean Brown, 'Enslaved to the Species: The Confluence of Animality, Immanence, and the Female Body in Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex*' (University of Oregon, 2008), p. 34.

develop lives of relative autonomy; even male insects possess the ‘germ of independence’. Beauvoir clearly regards humans as the paragon of freedom from species life, but seemingly, only if they are men. Women, by contrast, are apparently as enslaved to the species as are females of the ‘lowest’ organisms.

This first chapter of *The Second Sex* reads as an exercise in Derridean ‘limitrophy’. Such practice resides ‘not in effacing the limit, but in multiplying its figures, in complicating, thickening, delinearizing, folding, and dividing the line precisely by making it increase and multiply’.¹⁷ As discussed in my previous chapter, one of the key issues with Heidegger’s consideration of the difference between human and nonhuman animal being is his positing of a singular category of ‘The Animal’, and it is for this manoeuvre of separation and elision, more than any other, that Heidegger’s thinking on nonhuman animals has been rightfully taken to task. Responding to Heidegger, Derrida notes that ‘beyond the edge of the *so-called* human, beyond it but by no means on a single opposing side, rather than “The Animal” or “Animal Life” there is already a heterogenous multiplicity of the living’.¹⁸ For Derrida, *abyssal* differences exist between humans and other animals, and ‘one would have to be more asinine than any beast [*plus bête que les bêtes*] to think otherwise’.¹⁹ This much is a given; the interesting question lies in ‘determining the number, form, sense, or structure, the foliated consistency, of this abyssal limit, these edges, this plural and repeatedly folded frontier’.²⁰ Beauvoir’s motivation for mobilising so many diverse examples of species, sexes and reproductive strategies may be anthropocentrically motivated—she wants to demonstrate that the category of woman is neither biologically determined nor an ontological *a priori*—but their implications extend beyond the human, showcasing the inherently deconstructive heterogeneity of nonhuman life.

Beauvoir herself undercuts this destabilisation, however. Brown suggests that there is a ‘threshold of transcendence’ within Beauvoir’s conceptualisation of humanity versus animality: once a being has spilled over into the realm of transcendence, as humans have purportedly done, no amount of subjugation to the species can undo this. At the same time, for all their freedom from species life, all the leeway in their existence, males of other species have never exceeded this threshold. This resurgence of a seemingly essentialist reasoning appears to betray the same latent Cartesianism that Judith Butler identifies in Beauvoir’s thought. As Butler states, ‘the theory of embodiment informing Beauvoir’s analysis is clearly

¹⁷ Derrida, p. 29.

¹⁸ Derrida, p. 31, original italics.

¹⁹ Derrida, p. 30.

²⁰ Derrida, p. 30.

limited by the uncritical reproduction of the Cartesian distinction between freedom and the body', such that 'Beauvoir maintains the mind/body dualism, even as she proposes a synthesis of those terms'.²¹ The assumption of a *cogito* offers a solution to the question of how human women can resist their subjugation to the species, allowing them to be both enslaved, and transcendent, and to experience a tension between these forces, i.e. *estrangement*. As my examples illustrate, for Beauvoir this relationship between body and mind is less a Cartesian theatre, more of a torture chamber, in which the female *cogito* is wracked by bodily processes of puberty, menstruation, intercourse, gestation, childbirth and childrearing. At the same time, this latent Cartesianism also answers the question of why males of other species, for all their freedom, remain confined to immanence: a male honeybee might live a life of relative freedom *qua* superfluity, but it can never be transcendent because there is no ghost to chafe against its confinement within the machine. This mind-body dualism appears to be most strongly re-entrenched by Beauvoir in the case of woman, who 'is her body as man is his', but whose 'body is something other than her' (*Second*, 42, original italics). Commenting on this passage, Moi notes that 'this strikingly deconstructive turn of phrase nevertheless gives rise to a series of new difficulties and paradoxes in Beauvoir's arguments', not least that 'the "woman" to be liberated must first and foremost be freed from that which *makes* her a woman in the first place: her own body'.²²

One such paradox of this reasoning becomes apparent when thought alongside Agamben's analysis of the anthropological machine. The similarity between these formulations is more than mere coincidence. As Brown notes, Beauvoir's understanding of the origins of the human and its capacity for transcendence are derived from Alexandre Kojève's reading of Hegel's master-slave dialectic.²³ It is this same re-reading that, for Agamben, best captures the logic by which the anthropological machine constructs the human:

In Kojève's reading of Hegel, man is not a biologically defined species, nor is he a substance given once and for all; he is, rather, a field of dialectical tensions always already cut by caesurae that every time separate—at least virtually—"anthropophorous" animality and the humanity which takes bodily form in it. Man exists historically only in this tension; he can be human only to the degree that he transcends and transforms the anthropophorous animal which supports him, and only because, through the action of negation, he is capable of

²¹ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 2nd edn (New York, NY: Routledge, 1999), p. 17.

²² Toril Moi, 'Existentialism and Feminism: The Rhetoric of Biology in the *Second Sex*', *Oxford Literary Review*, 8.1 (1986), 88–95 (p. 90), original italics.

²³ Brown, pp. 4–5.

mastering and, eventually, destroying his own animality (it is in this sense that Kojève can write that “man is a fatal disease of the animal”).²⁴

This pattern of thinking produces the human not only by separating it from the animal, but also via the internal division of the human, into that part of it that is necessarily animal, and a human existence that can be fully realised only by transcending this animal being. In the case of woman, this ‘animal’ being can hardly be considered ‘anthropophorous’—human *bearing*—being so at odds with the human life that ‘takes bodily form in it’. As Beauvoir says, ‘there is no way to escape that tyranny [of the species] because it enslaves individual life at the same time that it nourishes it’ (*Second*, 40). It is as if ‘a hostile element is locked inside them: the species is eating away at them’ (*Second*, 43). Whereas for Kojève, ‘man is a fatal disease of the animal’, for Beauvoir, animality appears to be a fatal disease of womanhood. Beauvoir’s woman, then, births a paradox: most subjugated to her anthropophorous animality, yet ultimately defined by her struggle to overcome mere biology, woman is simultaneously the human at its most and least animal. *Estrangement* is revealed to be the perpetual othering of the animal that woman always already is, and woman’s *authenticity* is accomplished only by transcending and mastering the anthropophorous animality in which her *cogito* abides.

From Becoming and Immanence to Becoming Immanent

Beauvoir characterises this (capacity for) mastery as *becoming*, something which she explicitly states is the sole purview of human existents. For Beauvoir, ‘animals constitute given species and it is possible to provide static descriptions of them’ (*Second*, 45). To do so would be ‘simply a question of collating observations to decide if the mare is as quick as the stallion, if male chimpanzees do as well on intelligence tests as their female counterparts’ (*Second*, 45). ‘Humanity’, on the other hand ‘is constantly in the making’ (*Second*, 45), and man is ‘a being who is not given, who makes himself what he is’ (*Second*, 46). Beauvoir again references Merleau-Ponty, for whom ‘man is not a natural species: he is an historical idea’ (*Second*, 46). Accordingly, Beauvoir argues that woman is ‘a being who is transcendent and surpassing,’ on whom ‘it is never possible to close the books’ (*Second*, 46). Woman ‘is not a fixed reality but a becoming’ (*Second*, 46). Ironically, however, Beauvoir’s own eye for the exception—which so deftly undermines previous biocentric and essentialist justifications for the treatment of women—sows the seeds of this exceptionalism’s undoing. Beauvoir argues that ‘the relation

²⁴ Agamben, p. 12.

of maternity to individual life is naturally regulated in animals by the cycle of heat and seasons', but that this remains 'undefined for woman; only society can decide; woman's enslavement to the species is tighter or looser depending on how many births the society demands and the hygienic conditions in which pregnancy and birth occur' (*Second*, 47). For Beauvoir, this separates humans even from the so-called 'higher animals'—in whom 'individual existence is affirmed more imperiously in the male than in the female'—because 'in humanity individual "possibilities" depend on the economic and social situation' (*Second*, 47). Woman is not merely a product of her biology, in other words, but also of her complex social, economic and other material conditions.

This is another instance of Beauvoir's inclination, identified by Moi, to wed a Sartrean idealism with a materialist analysis: whereas, for Sartre, 'objectification is always identical with alienation', for Marx, 'the fact that we are all objects for each other is not in itself the problem; only specific historical and material conditions can determine whether we are likely to be alienated as well'.²⁵ Once Beauvoir has opened the door to such a materialist analysis, she invites a reading of her other examples on those same terms. Previously, Beauvoir observed the existence of likewise epigenetic influences in a species that is not only nonhuman but is also one of the so-called 'lowest'. The praying mantis, Beauvoir recalls, sometimes predares her own mate after mating (*Second*, 33). This behaviour has become one source of the 'myth of devouring femininity' (*Second*, 33). As Beauvoir points out, however, 'in truth, the praying mantis only manifests such cruelty in captivity: free and with rich enough food around, she rarely makes a meal out of the male' (*Second*, 33). Although Beauvoir does not reference Jacob von Uexküll's work, or dedicate much space to human and nonhuman phenomenologies, reading between the lines—and against the grain—of her analysis reveals a rather Uexküllian understanding of the ways in which organisms are fitted to their environments, particularly when thought alongside the leeway of male existences, considered above. Read in this light, the being of a female mantis can never be a given, because what would *be given* exists only in relation to an environment: a mantis in captivity is not the same animal as a mantis 'free and with rich enough food around'. The corollary, which Beauvoir stops well short of identifying, is that a mantis in any other environment would not be the same, either. Perhaps we might update Beauvoir *a la* Deleuze and Guattari: ~~the-female-mantis-predates-her-mate-in-captivity~~. Whilst Beauvoir quips that 'seeing in these facts the harbinger of the "battle of the sexes" that

²⁵ Moi, p. 89.

sets individuals as such against each other is just rambling' (*Second*, 33), arguing that advocates of this view might be saying too much by way of analogy, Beauvoir herself says not quite enough, stopping short of the final bit of synthesis that would undermine her distinction in-kind between humans and other animals. Beauvoir's reasoning here echoes another tension that Berger identifies in the way animals are asked to function within human culture, as both individual and archetype: the individual animal's 'blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was Lion, each ox was Ox'.²⁶ Too eager to characterise the mantis as a 'given species', Beauvoir collapses individual into type. Beauvoir's analysis may present a dizzying array of nonhuman species, but her analysis is interested only in differentiation at this species level; individual animals are writ therein *only as archetype*, and so each mantis is Mantis (even if Beauvoir does not, in practice, capitalise the word).

Beauvoir has no cause to question such representations because she remains beholden to another dichotomy, namely between 'natural' and 'historical' facts. This was invoked by Beauvoir in her suggestion that man is not 'a natural species' but 'an historical idea'. Clearly, for Beauvoir, some facts are independent of human knowledge production; mares *naturally are* as quick as stallions; female mantises *naturally do* predate their mates when there are inadequate resources. The task of the scientist or researcher is to reveal these facts of the world. On the other hand, society 'decide[s]' and 'demands' what the conditions of humans will be, and thus 'it is never possible to close the books'. This formulation positions human culture outside the domain of nature at the same time as it puts (knowledge of) nonhuman animals squarely outside the realm of human culture (to say nothing of an animal culture, which would be out of the question). Such distinctions, we now know, are untenable. As Mario Ortiz Robles observes, animals and the facts that humans claim to know about them are themselves products of human discourses, including those literary *and* scientific.²⁷ In the present context, for instance, to make the swiftness of mares and stallions the object of inquiry is to have determined in advance that speed is the quality by which horses are defined.

At the same time, as Butler observes, even the seemingly 'natural' fact of biological sex, may be merely the product of 'various scientific discourses in the service of other political and social interests'.²⁸ Butler goes as far as to state that 'perhaps the construct called "sex" is as culturally constructed as gender; indeed, perhaps it was always already gender, with the

²⁶ Berger, pp. 6–7, original italics.

²⁷ Ortiz Robles.

²⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 10.

consequence that the distinction between sex and gender turns out to be no distinction at all.²⁹ In short, knowledge of nonhuman animals and of women's biology, which Beauvoir regards as supracultural facts of existence, are always already discursive. Ironically, Beauvoir's account of the mantis illustrates this point quite clearly, even if she remains blind to its implications. Her acknowledgement that the mantis' behaviour in the myth of devouring femininity is itself mythic again prefigures Berger: the mantis is the vehicle in a pejorative allegory for human women's sexual desire. Like the vulture in Grandville's engraving, however, the mantis has fallen prey to the allure of a tidy metaphor. This is not mantis *as mantis*, but mantis *as trope*, and its being is not so much 'given' as it is *taken away*, transmuted into an absent referent.

These poststructuralist and postmodernist revelations do not necessarily undermine Beauvoir's conclusions, however. To an existentialist inquiry, it does not matter if the external forces that interfere with an existent's quest for the expression of its authenticity arise from biology or from culture; if these comprise part of the concrete experience of womanhood, for instance, they constitute a fact of woman's lived experience. If anything, the deconstruction of the binary between 'natural' and 'historical' facts only extends the reach of Beauvoir's existentialist challenge by making all facts cultural, and, therefore, contestable. Beauvoir's insistence on this dichotomy, on the other hand, ushers biological determinism in via the backdoor, even whilst it promises that woman might come to rise above it. Such reasoning seems detrimental to Beauvoir's argument, except insofar as it allows her to maintain a distinction in kind between humans and other animals, thereby reincorporating woman within an existing conception of the human as the only cognizant, historical and transcendent being, simultaneously making woman Other because animal, whilst locking her in a historical struggle to *become* more than the animal she always already is.

By characterising woman as becoming, Beauvoir hopes to free her from the strictures of essentialism and biological reductionism. As Claire Colebrook notes, however, for all their purported rejection of essentialised identities, philosophies of becoming are not necessarily any less normative. Instead, becoming is, in a sense, its own norm, because 'if the subject were not to give itself to itself, not affect itself and realize itself, then it would have abandoned its proper potentiality *to act and become*'.³⁰ Such a formulation merely replaces a normative and stable identity—woman as (human) being—with an identity defined by its capacity to

²⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, pp. 10–11.

³⁰ Colebrook, p. 82, original italics.

continually (re)realise itself—woman as (human) becoming. Colebrook references Agamben and Butler, who, she argues, ‘seek to liberate the self from any *proper* end that would govern its becoming’, and thereby ‘react against the traditional definition of human potentiality as teleological,’ whilst in the same breath ‘repeating the idea that the human animal has a particularly special end: that of having no end, of being oriented to nothing proper’.³¹ Whilst such philosophies might seek to do away with any essentialism within the bounds of the human, like Beauvoir, they do so only by essentialising humans’ difference from nonhuman Others.

In her characterisation of woman (and the human) as transcendence and becoming, and her withholding of these qualities from nonhumans, Beauvoir’s thinking is likewise exceptionalist. Indeed, Beauvoir’s thinking has failed even to shake off the yolk of teleology. Her subsumption of the individual mantis within its species is no anthropocentric oversight, but a quirk of Beauvoir’s whole mode of thinking. Her consideration of woman reveals this same tendency to collapse individual into type: for Beauvoir, each woman is ‘Woman’ (singular, homogeneous, capitalised)—or, at least, *must aspire to be* if she is to realise her authenticity. This positing of woman as a singular process of becoming ignores the multifacetedness of culture, race, class, sexuality, disability, and the myriad other ‘political and cultural intersections in which [gender] is invariably produced and maintained’.³² Much like Timothy Treadwell’s ‘*Mitsein* with bears’ in my previous chapter, Beauvoirian becoming presupposes, and so forecloses, its own end. Whereas Treadwell’s assumed identification with the bears subsumes the alterity of this other mode of being, Beauvoir’s notion of becoming negates the possibility of its own heterogeneity, of its becoming other to itself. Ironically, then, the becoming that Beauvoir posits as the authentic condition of woman, and, by extension, of the human, begin to look a lot like immanence: these becomings are not open-ended at all, but directed along a predetermined trajectory toward a womanhood and a humanism that were always already determined in advance. Colebrook contrasts a normative becoming with a queer becoming, as epitomised by Deleuze’s concepts of becoming-animal and becoming-woman. Such becomings are provocative and radically non-normative, Colebrook argues, because here ‘becoming does not realize and actualize itself, does not flourish into presence,

³¹ Colebrook, p. 82, original italics.

³² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 6.

but bears a capacity to annihilate itself, to refuse its *own-ness* in order to attach, transductively, to becomings whose trajectories are external and unmasterable'.³³

Beauvoirian authenticity—with its emphasis on stable homogeneous identities—and Colebrook's queer becoming—with its radical erasure of identity, as such—constitute the two extremes of the representational dilemma that this thesis seeks to explore: there both is and is not something that it is like to be a praying mantis, or a human, for instance. Clearly these modes of being are disparate, yet to claim to know precisely what is characteristic of all human experience—or of any nonhuman species—is to have fallen down the same rabbit hole as Beauvoir, to have spoken normatively, and to have remained blind to these groups' inherently deconstructive internal heterogeneity: in short, to have peddled a trope. The remainder of this chapter charts a course between these two positions, analysing two literary texts, with very different approaches to tackling this representational dilemma.

Estrangement and Alterity: critiquing the anthropo-/andro-centric subject

The title of Sarah Hall's 'Mrs Fox' tells an oft-repeated story about gender: a woman is defined by her marriage to a man. But already it performs something that Beauvoir insists against: a partial ushering of the animal into the domain of human culture, via its naming conventions and social institutions. The association of the feminine and the vulpine reaches a particular culmination in Hall's story: while husband and wife are out for a walk together one morning, the wife, Sophia transforms into a fox. The husband carries the fox home and shuts them both up in the house. All the husband's attempts to understand or to reverse the transformation fail, and he eventually feels he has no other choice but to release the fox. The husband later encounters her on some heathland, and discovers she has had a litter of cubs, of which he is sure he is the father.

Sophia's transformation follows the revelation that she is undergoing one of the biological processes that Beauvoir most strongly implicates in woman's estrangement from herself: pregnancy. The husband initially remains oblivious to her condition:

One morning he wakes to find his wife vomiting into the toilet. She is kneeling, retching, but nothing is coming up. She is holding the bowl. As she leans forward the notches in her spine rise against the flesh of her back. Her protruding bones, the wide-open mouth, a clicking sound in her gullet: the scene is disconcerting, his wife is almost never ill.³⁴

³³ Colebrook, p. 83, original italics.

³⁴ Sarah Hall, 'Mrs Fox', in *Madame Zero* (London: Faber & Faber, 2017), pp. 1–28.

Here, with this very first indication of Sophia's pregnancy, the narrator's description seizes upon her biological being, in its piling up of corporeal verbs and nouns: 'vomiting' 'retching', 'spine', 'flesh', 'bones', 'mouth', 'gullet'. We are told that 'her eyes are bright,' but this is undercut: it is 'the brightness of fever', in fact, and 'there is a coppery gleam under her skin'. The physical signs of her morning sickness are not a part of her, but a subcutaneous alien presence, a characterisation that is echoed in the narrator's observation that 'whatever was rising in her has passed' (*Mrs*, 4). The next morning, the husband hears his wife in the bathroom again, 'the low cry of someone expressing injury, a burn, or a cut, a cry like a bird, but wider of throat' (*Mrs*, 6), an explicit if qualified association between pregnancy and animality. The husband imagines his wife to be suffering from some 'flu' (*Mrs*, 6), 'virus' or 'malaise' (*Mrs*, 7), an invading presence, or breakdown of her biological wellbeing. Very much in keeping with Beauvoir's depiction of pregnancy, these descriptions reduce Sophia to her animal body, at the same time as they characterise her morning sickness as a hostile force within her.

Sophia's transformation might be read as a simple parable: having become pregnant, she realises her animal nature, literarily emphasised in her quite literal transformation into a fox. Close reading the metamorphosis scene, however, reveals that no such binary transformation in fact occurs. The beginnings of the apparent change are behavioural: 'She picks up her pace and begins to walk strangely on the tips of her toes, her knees bent, her heels lifted.' (*Mrs*, 8) Sophia has not yet transformed into anything; she is *merely acting* how a fox might be observed to walk, on its paws, which are the equivalent of a human's toes. We are told that 'something is wrong with her face. The bones have been re-carved. Her lips are thin and her nose is a dark blade. Teeth small and yellow. The lashes of her hazel eyes have thickened and her brows are drawn together' (*Mrs*, 8). Nothing unusual has yet happened before our eyes—the present and present-perfect tense constructions suggest that we are viewing these changes only after the fact. The final stages are described as follows:

She is leaning forward, putting her hands down, lifting her bottom. She has stepped out of her lace boots and is walking away. Now she is running again, on all fours, lower to the earth, sleeker, fleeter. She is running and becoming smaller, running and becoming smaller, running in the light of the reddening sun, the red of her hair and her coat falling, the red of her fur and her body loosening. Running. Holding behind her a sudden, brazen object, white-tipped. Her yellow scarf trails in the briar. All vestiges shed. (*Mrs*, 9)

The process is incremental, picked up in the adjectives used to describe it, most of which are comparative: 'lower', 'sleeker', 'fleeter', 'smaller'. The precise palilogy of 'running and becoming

smaller' gives way to the transmuted repetition of 'the red of her hair and her coat falling, the red of her fur and her body loosening', a syntactical double take in which 'hair' and 'coat' ambiguously become, or are revealed to be, 'fur' and 'body'. The passage's blending together of wife and fox makes it impossible to pinpoint the precise moment of transformation, makes it impossible to say, in fact, if any such change has actually occurred. As Julia Ditter notes, there is a suggestion that 'Sophia may have been a vixen all along'.³⁵ Once Sophia has stepped out of her shoes, left her scarf behind, shed the costumery of her humanity—more on the performativity of clothing later—it appears she may always have been an absent presence. The word 'vestiges' suggests a vestigial limb, perhaps—a remnant of evolutionary heredity—but also recalls the Derridean 'trace', the echoing of the antithesis in the thesis, which undermines all binaries. The animal is always within the human; perhaps the fox was already within Sophia. If this is a becoming, it is not normative in the way Colebrook defines this term: it is not predicated upon an actualisation of the self and nor is it directed toward any predetermined point. Instead, the ambiguity and incrementality of the change call the very idea of a stable identity into question.

The metamorphosis scene is what gives the story its tellability. But it also sets into play another form of estrangement. What begins as a work of seemingly realist fiction mutates with Sophia's own transformation, a change, which, upon closer inspection, is perhaps no change at all. The notion of estrangement in this literary sense derives from Bertolt Brecht's writing on theatre. Whereas, for Brecht, the fourth wall is broken to emphasise the work's constructedness as art, thereby encouraging audience members to undertake a more conscious appraisal of the characters and events portrayed,³⁶ Hall's story breaks with generic conventions of what has apparently been, up until this point, realist fiction, prompting a closer inspection of the seemingly benign domestic context in which the transformation occurs. This is something closer to Darko Suvin's notion of 'cognitive estrangement', as applied to science fictional works, the readerly attempt to resolve the strangeness of a literary event by finding a rational explanation in line with the broader logic of the text.³⁷ The husband dramatizes such a quest for explanation, undertaking fruitless research into metamorphoses. One motif recurs

³⁵ Julia Ditter, 'Human into Animal: Post-Anthropomorphic Transformations in Sarah Hall's "Mrs Fox"', in *Borders and Border Crossings in the Contemporary British Short Story*, ed. by Barbara Korte and Laura M^a Lojo-Rodríguez (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), pp. 187–204 (p. 192).

³⁶ Bertold Brecht, *Brecht on Theatre: The Development of an Aesthetic*, ed. & trans. by John Willett (London: Eyre Methuen, 1964), p. 136.

³⁷ Darko Suvin, *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction: On the Poetics and History of a Literary Genre* (New Haven, CT; London: Yale University Press, 1979), pp. 64–66.

in the sources he consults: 'most upsetting is the repetition of one aspect: an act of will' (*Mrs*, 16).

Rereading Hall's story, looking for any explanation for Sophia's transformation, something comes into focus: the voice of the narrator. The story is told from a third-person, seemingly omniscient perspective. But in fact, the narrator conveys virtually nothing of Sophia's perspective, whilst delving intimately into the workings of the husband's mind. The very first sentence reads: 'That he loves his wife is unquestionable.' (*Mrs*, 1) The embedded clause appears to position the husband's perspective semantically and syntactically beyond question, whilst situating Sophia as object, of both the clause and the husband's affections. At the same time, however, the simple abstract declarative and the negative construction 'unquestionable' seem to protest just enough to sow some seed of doubt—if the husband's love for his wife goes without saying, why say it at all? Within the first paragraph, the husband 'looks forward to seeing her', 'imagines her robe falling as she steps across the bedroom', and 'tries to wait, for her to come and find him' (*Mrs*, 1). Only in the last two sentences of the opening paragraph does Sophia make an appearance outside of the husband's mind. In stark contrast to the ease with which the narrator voices the husband's thoughts, however, even when Sophia does arrive, she is present only physically: 'She is in the kitchen, taking her coat off, unfastening her shoes' (*Mrs*, 1). Sophia removes her clothing, seemingly unaware of the husband or narrator's watchful gaze. This voyeurism continues: 'Her waist, her hips in the blue skirt, he watches her move—to the sink, to the table, to the chair where she sits, slowly, with a woman's grace.' (*Mrs*, 1) The final sentence fragment appears to be yet another free-indirect account of the husband's own impression of her: 'Her form, her essence, a scent of corrupted rose.' (*Mrs*, 1) To the narrator, the husband is all mind and activity, whilst Sophia exists only physically, and, even then, only via the husband's perspective and impressions of her. When the narrator most directly considers Sophia herself, it is only to posit her as an irresolvable Other: 'And what of this wife? She is in part unknowable, as all clever women are.' (*Mrs*, 3). She is rooted in her body yet again, via another anatomical analogy: 'The marrow is adaptable, which is not to say that she is guileful, just that she will survive.' (*Mrs*, 3) The narrator adopts the register of (notoriously phallogocentric) psychoanalysis, speculating that 'something in her childhood has made her withheld' (*Mrs*, 3), delving into Sophia's psychology only in order to explain its apparent absence. This characterisation of Sophia by reference to what she does not do is repeated: 'She makes no romantic claims, does not require reassurance, and he adores her because of the lack.' (*Mrs*, 3) These representations accord strongly with Beauvoir's

account of how a masculinist epistemology constructs womanhood. In the words of Butler, 'for Beauvoir, women are the negative of men, the lack against which masculine identity differentiates itself'.³⁸

This, at least, is how she appears to the husband and narrator. That this characterisation occurs only from their perspective, is, of course, the point of Hall's narratological choice. As Butler's reading of Beauvoir foregrounds, 'the "subject" within the existential analytic of misogyny is always already masculine, conflated with the universal, differentiating itself from a feminine "Other" outside the universalizing norms of personhood, hopelessly "particular," embodied, condemned to immanence'.³⁹ Whilst woman is thus reduced to corporeality, the 'masculine epistemological subject' is founded upon embodiment's erasure and displacement: this subject remains 'abstract to the extent that it disavows its socially marked embodiment and, further, projects that disavowed and disparaged embodiment on to the feminine sphere, effectively renaming the body as female'.⁴⁰ At the same time, 'this association of the body with the female works along magical relations of reciprocity whereby the female sex becomes restricted to its body, and the male body, fully disavowed, becomes, paradoxically, the incorporeal instrument of an ostensibly radical freedom'.⁴¹ The narrator of Hall's story is shot through with masculinity not despite, but because of, his lack of a body. He is the (dis)embodiment of this masculinist epistemological subject: transcendent, untethered, speak-thinking from everywhere and nowhere.

This ostensible objectivity belies a more pernicious partiality, however: Hall's use of internally focalised narration, with the husband as its exclusive focaliser, blurs the line between narration and characterisation, such that it becomes impossible to distinguish the narrative voice from the thoughts of the husband. As Ditter notes, 'the narrative suggests an overpowering centrality of the husband's male gaze, which defines their relationship'.⁴² I would go further: the husband's agency is doubly assumed, in the sense that it is adopted, and that its adoption is beyond question, the only stance this masculinist narrator is able to inhabit. This narration is a microcosm of a hegemonic epistemology that defines women always already as Other. What is more, these two masculine subjects are in cahoots, staging a

³⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 14.

³⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 16.

⁴⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 16.

⁴¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 16.

⁴² Ditter, p. 191.

male perspective and performing the male gaze. In this literary critique of what it means to be a man in a man's world, the only happy union is between husband and narrator.

Something that Beauvoir does not acknowledge, of course, is the humanism that this masculinist epistemological stance also entails. Nonhuman animals also feature—or, rather, likewise fail to feature—within this signifying economy. Butler touches on this point, acknowledging that ‘it is not enough to claim that human subjects are constructed, for the construction of the human is a differential operation that produces the more and the less “human,” the inhuman, and the humanly unthinkable’.⁴³ Neither women nor nonhuman animals qualify as subjects in this masculinist world because the human as such is constructed by aggregating the qualities of subjecthood (disembodiment, universality, transcendence) to men only. At the same time, to say that woman is reduced to her corporeality is to say that she is animalised, insofar as animality has been likewise constructed—including by Beauvoir herself—as immanence, embodiment, and, therefore, absence of a subjecthood defined as transcendent consciousness. The epistemological stance that Hall's story critiques is therefore not only masculinist; insofar as it relies upon the erasure of corporeality, it also constructs this epistemological subject via a denial of its animality, and so is product and part of the anthropological machine. Something that seems to be missing from Butler's reading of Beauvoir, however, is any consideration of the paradoxical state of exception that Brown singles out, and which I explored earlier: despite all the wrackings of biology and society, woman, for Beauvoir, is not reduced to a level of animal immanence; something within her is still able to chafe against this confinement. Hall's wife is also permitted some resistance to her reduction. The narrator's only representation of Sophia's interiority comes with sleep, when ‘she dreams subterranean dreams, of forests, dark corridors and burrows, roots and earth’ (*Mrs*, 3). What is revealed, then, in the only moments when Sophia is free to pursue any activity outside the bounds of masculinist society is not a *cogito* raging against the machine, but a mind that seems decidedly *animal*.

This epistemology's stance towards both woman and animal is further complicated by Hall. As with Sophia, descriptions of the fox are limited to her body and her behaviour. We are told that the husband ‘is able to touch the back of her head, under the slim, almost bearded jaw, even the pads of her paws, which are so sensitive her flesh quivers’ (*Mrs*, 12). The description of the interaction limits itself to the exterior: the form of the fox, and the visible

⁴³ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of ‘Sex’* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), p. 8, original italics.

movement of her 'flesh'. At the same time, the interaction is almost sexually intimate, though the sensation for the fox is left ambiguous; this could be a 'quiver' of discomfort or of pleasure. This sexualisation becomes more explicit: the husband is 'like a curious lover', who 'studies her form', taking in 'the bend in her hind legs; the full, shapely thighs, similar, in a way, to a woman squatting' (*Mrs*, 12-13). Through its substitution of feminised fox for animalised wife, Hall's story underscores the imbrication of animality and femininity: both wife and fox are objectified; both are simultaneously animalised and feminised. This is the real connection between wife and fox in Hall's story: not shared animality, but their shared imprisonment within their respective, but interconnected, tropes.

As with Sophia's subterranean dreams, the fox in Hall's story resists this reduction, defying the husband's expectations of how a seemingly wild creature ought to behave. Following her transformation, the narrator relays the husband's impression of the fox: 'Nerve and instinct. Her thousand feral programmes. Should she not flee into the borders, kicking away the manmade world?' (*Mrs*, 10) Here, there is another Cartesian reduction of fox to physiology, and of her behaviour to mere reflex, even software. Couched in objectified scientific language, the husband's impression of the fox rests upon a cultural construction of wildness, a trope that, like Beauvoir's myth of the mantis, turns out to be a misapprehension: inexplicably, from the husband's perspective, the fox 'trots towards him down the path, as a dog would, returning to its master' (*Mrs*, 10), and remains fairly calm as the he picks her up and carries her home. Once home, it becomes clear that the fox is not domestic, either—she rejects the tinned dog food that the husband tries to feed her (*Mrs*, 17), for instance, and otherwise resists his attempts to direct her behaviour: 'She sleeps [...] not on the bed, where he keeps trying to put her, but on a chair seat, in the corner of the utility room' (*Mrs*, 16-17). Unable to get the fox to eat, the husband procures a live pigeon to feed to her: 'She bites its iridescent neck. She twists its head. She is like machinery; the snapping and clicking of her teeth.' (*Mrs*, 18) The fox is again reduced to an automaton, mechanically clacking her jaws. The husband's reaction to the fox's killing of the pigeon once again emphasises the cultural production of woman and animal: 'He turns and leaves, feeling sickened. He is angry and ashamed. That she could ever, even before this, be his pet.' (*Mrs*, 18) The husband appears to recognise the construction he has imposed upon both fox and wife, treating them as 'his pet'. Yet his shame stems not from this recognition but from embarrassment: he feels sick observing the fox's actions, which do not conform to how he thinks this fox-who-is-still-his-wife should behave. Continually bucking the husband's expectations, resisting the cultural constructions he

imposes upon her, the fox refuses to be reduced to mere trope. Her otherness gives way to alterity, as we are shown glimpses of an agency that is unknowable, but which remains stubbornly present, precisely because of its unpredictability.

The husband's veiled admission to have treated wife and fox as if they were 'his pet' takes on a new significance if read in light of Berger's analysis of pet keeping. 'The pet *completes* him', i.e. the owner, Berger argues, by 'offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed. He can be to his pet what he is not to anybody or anything else'.⁴⁴ Yet, the pet provides only the aping of recognition: 'the pet can be conditioned to react as though it, too, recognises this'.⁴⁵ Berger suggests that 'the pet offers its owner a mirror to a part that is otherwise never reflected', but 'the autonomy of both parties has been lost (the owner has become the special-man-he-is-only-to-his-pet, and the animal has become dependent on its owner for every physical need)' and so 'the parallelism of their separate lives has been destroyed'.⁴⁶ For Berger, pet keeping is Hegel's master-slave dialectic in decrepit and ossified form. The husband's relationship with his wife appears likewise stilted and imprisoning. Her subjecthood is never confirmed—the narrator's free indirect style never ventures into her thoughts. She is merely a mirror to reflect the husband's own impressions and desires. The fox's unruly alterity and refusal of the role of pet defamiliarizes this previous relationship: in particular, the fox's killing of the pigeon colours the husband's sense of who his wife was 'even before' her transformation, confronting him with the stark realisation that she never did conform to the role he imagined her to fill. But again, it is the metamorphosis-that-perhaps-wasn't which most profoundly estranges this prior state of affairs, defying the husband's belief in his wife's domesticity in the most fabulous of ways, for who would expect her to transform into, let alone to have always been, a fox? This fantastical 'act of will' must be doubly surprising for the husband, springing—as it does—from an agency he never even realised his wife possessed.

Hall's story subverts the transcendence of animality by which woman achieves her authentic selfhood, in Beauvoir's account. Sophia's apparent transformation does not constitute an escape from her enslavement to biology. The husband eventually realises that his home is no place for the fox, that he cannot control her or cater to her needs, and so he leaves the doors open to allow her to leave. Some while later, the husband encounters her on the heath, and she leads him into a thicket where he discovers her den, and a litter of cubs. The

⁴⁴ Berger, pp. 14–15, original italics.

⁴⁵ Berger, p. 15, emphasis added.

⁴⁶ Berger, p. 15.

husband has a strong but inarticulable sense that he is their father. He proceeds to visit them weekly, noting how the fox still ‘feeds them milk, though they are two thirds her size and he can see the discomfort of her being emptied, of manufacturing and lending nutrients’ (Mrs, 26). The fox ‘at times seems sallow, having sacrificed her quota of prey, having no mate to help her’ (Mrs, 27). As these observations demonstrate, the fox is just as subjugated to her species. Rather in keeping with Beauvoir’s conception of sexual differences, the husband sees his part in the cubs’ parentage as a freedom writ-superfluity: ‘He has no role, except as guest. The truth is their survival is beyond his control.’ (Mrs, 25) But now the husband becomes the one alienated. His ongoing visits to the den are merely tolerated, he realises, and so he ‘remains at a distance; a watcher, estranged’ (Mrs, 25). And whilst the husband sees his wife’s metamorphosis as a ‘purging of the disease of being human’ (Mrs, 12)—a suggestive characterisation when read in light of Kojève’s assertion that ‘man is a fatal disease of the animal’—this is a reading that the logic of the narrative seems to resist. It turns out to be only from a masculinist, anthropocentric perspective that Sophia is estranged from herself via her pregnancy, for it is only from the perspective of the narrator that this characterisation is offered. Sophia’s dreams, combined with the ambiguity of the metamorphosis, suggest she experiences no pathological schism between an “anthropophorous” animality and the humanity which takes bodily form in it.⁴⁷

Just like Beauvoir’s ostensibly ‘natural’ facts of womanhood and biology, in Hall’s story, woman and fox prove to be, not givens, but tropes. The story’s most sophisticated literary device lies in its creation of a narrator who is a microcosm of the masculinist, anthropocentric discourse that produces them. As Scholtmeijer states, ‘one of the preconditions for acknowledging the rights of animals is freeing them from the cultural constructions human beings have imposed upon them’, which ‘does not mean replacing one cultural construction with another’ more ameliorative one, but instead ‘means coping with the animal’s autonomy from culture in general’.⁴⁸ It is telling, then, that once freed from her confinement, the fox more or less vanishes from the story. The fox’s relative absence marks her liberation from her cultural construction, and a gesturing towards the irrepresentability of this other mode of being. Yet, at the same time, the story appears to allow a glimpse of what an authentic foxness might look like, freed from the clichés and expectations imposed by husband and narrator, and

⁴⁷ Agamben, p. 12.

⁴⁸ Marian Scholtmeijer, ‘The Power of Otherness: Animals in Women’s Fiction’, in *Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations*, ed. by Carol J. Adams and Josephine Donovan (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 1995), pp. 231–62 (p. 234).

the epistemology they represent. As my examples illustrate, the fox continually bucks the husband's expectations of how she ought to behave; her otherness thereby makes way for alterity, the suggestion of an agency that is unknowable, but which remains stubbornly present precisely because of its unpredictability. And it is not only the fox who bucks her trope: through Sophia's dreams, the ambiguity of the metamorphosis scene itself, and the husband's half-recognition that she never was his pet, the story reveals that Sophia never was who the husband and narrator thought her to be. The story concludes with the husband thinking of 'his unbelonging wife' (*Mrs*, 28), a phrase that for me recalls Heidegger's *Mitsein*. Beauvoir also employs this concept, when she states that men and women comprise 'an original *Mitsein*' (*Mrs*, 47). As in Treadwell's and Baker's texts in my previous chapter, any such notion of an easy being-with is undermined in Hall's story. As the husband realises only in the story's final three words, his wife did not belong to or with him any more than did the fox. Faced with the choice of being overdetermined or being elsewhere, wife and fox have decamped, not so much from the human world into the world of the animal, as from an epistemology that ever distinguished these worlds in the first place. Hall's story therefore represents neither a transcendence of animality, nor a transformation into an animal. Instead, wife and fox enact a queer becoming, a line of flight that departs the terms of gender and species altogether.

Performative Identities: queer authenticity and/as freedom from species life

My reading of Beauvoirian estrangement and becoming has served as a useful interlocutor for Hall's story, helping to tease out some of the more sophisticated effects I have argued are at work in it. At the same time, Hall's story has helped to nuance Beauvoir's analysis of sex and species, ultimately overturning its stubborn anthropocentrism. However, my analysis has so far left bracketed two other problematic elements of Beauvoir's philosophy. The first of these tendencies is immediately detectable in the statement I last quoted: that men and women constitute 'an original *Mitsein*' (*Second*, 47). Although Beauvoir posits a non-androcentric account of human existence, her work nevertheless re-enshrines heterosexuality as, if not compulsorily, then at least normatively, human. As such, Beauvoir's thinking merely shores up the binary terms in which gender has typically been thought. As Butler notes, 'gender can denote a *unity* of experience, [...] only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender—where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self—and desire—where

desire is heterosexual'.⁴⁹ At the same time, Beauvoir's philosophy offers only an incomplete rejection of biological determinism in shaping woman's subjecthood. As previously quoted, 'Woman's enslavement to the species and the limits of her individual abilities are facts of extreme importance', and her 'body is one of the essential elements of the situation she occupies in the world', but still 'her body is not enough to define her' (*Second*, 49). As this formulation suggests, the human female body, for Beauvoir, is a *necessary* condition of womanhood, even if it is not *sufficient* to dictate her mode of being in the world. As Moi points out, 'Beauvoir's existentialist discourse constrains her to argue that human biology in no way determines human social structures', but, at the same time 'her own rhetoric [...] proclaims the theoretically unpalatable fact that the female body is a crucially important material structure which simply cannot be left out of her analysis'.⁵⁰ This reliance on the notion of a pre-cultural female body throws up its own problems. As Butler observes, 'the "body" is itself a construction, as are the myriad "bodies" that constitute the domain of gendered subjects. Bodies cannot be said to have a signifiable existence prior to the mark of their gender'.⁵¹

The remainder of this chapter reads Beauvoir and Butler alongside a second literary text: Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand*, a novel that deals explicitly with gender-nonconformist and queer identities. If the association between the fox and the feminine was left implicit in Hall's story, Lai's novel takes it as a central focus. Rania Huntington has analysed many of the premodern Chinese tales that provide the inspiration for Lai's protagonist. As Huntington documents, fox spirits appear as male or female in this literary tradition, but within those stories that take sexuality as a core theme, the overwhelming majority of foxes are female.⁵² In human guise, these female foxes often seduce and lead astray young male scholars and devotees. This aspect of the fox has become so ubiquitous that 'the modern [Chinese] vernacular retains *huli jing* 狐狸精 (fox spirit) as a derogatory term for a seductive, loose, and cunning woman'.⁵³ This may suggest that these tales are less interested in foxness than they are in policing gender roles and relations, betraying anxieties about feminine agency and sexual desire, and about masculine lust and the inevitable dereliction of duties this is feared to entail (a distinction which, by-the-by, seems very much in keeping with Beauvoir's account of the degree of activity versus passivity attributed to males and females). There is

⁴⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 30, original italics.

⁵⁰ Moi, p. 90.

⁵¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 13.

⁵² Rania Huntington, 'Foxes and Sex in Late Imperial Chinese Narrative', *NAN NÜ*, 2.1 (2000), 78–128 (p. 83).

⁵³ Huntington, p. 78, original italics.

also a clear heteronormativity to the way the fox spirit trope is invoked in this tradition, with homosexual encounters between foxes and men being marked as unnatural or abnormal, and sex between vixens and women being virtually unexplored, bar the single example that Huntington considers.⁵⁴ However, Huntington's analysis of these source texts suggest that the fox spirit always functioned as something of a queering presence within these tales—even if Huntington herself does not use this particular term—troubling species borderlines, identities and normative human-human relationships, in ways I will expound more below.

It is this queer presence of the fox that Lai's retelling seems most keen to explore. Lai's fox, still gendered female, mostly pursues same-sex relationships, including with the protagonists of both other narratives. The novel represents gender, sexuality and cultural identity as performative, and, via the fox, also draws attention to the performativity inherent in the human itself. The fox's animation of the corpses of human women becomes a kind of drag act, which I read as a deconstructive parody of the anthropological machine. At the same time, this performativity of identities coexists, in Lai's novel, with an authenticity of gender, culture, and species that somehow exceeds these performances, a tension that cuts to the heart of a dilemma that is central to this thesis' consideration of how artists imagine what it might be like to be a nonhuman animal. Lai's novel subverts the normativity of authenticity proffered by Beauvoir, however: the fox is self-avowedly fox despite her nonconformity to trope, possessing a queer authenticity figured as freedom from species life.

Lai's novel calls attention to the—at times coercive—cultural production of gender identities. Whilst living in China and inhabiting the body of (the now deceased) Yu Hsuan-Chi, the fox recalls:

I have big feet. For a while, it was a problem. I spent weeks on end in the graveyards waiting for lily-footed dainties to pass away before their time. I could go nowhere with the long paddles left to me by the poetess, although they served her perfectly well in her own time. [...] I might as well have worn an olisboi beneath my skirts as gone about on my obscenely masculine feet.⁵⁵

Whether 'lily-footed dainties' is an explicit reference to the practice of foot-binding is unclear—Lai does refer to it elsewhere (*Thousand*, 23)—but the focus upon feet as markers of gender certainly acquires a new valence in this context: whether speaking physically or discursively, the novel represents the process Butler identifies, whereby culture marks gender upon the body. In one of the source texts Huntington analyses, *Gujin shiwu kao* it is a fox, no

⁵⁴ Huntington, pp. 121–23.

⁵⁵ Larissa Lai, *When Fox Is a Thousand* (Vancouver: Press Gang Publishers, 1995), p. 104.

less, who is credited with the invention of foot-binding. Having ‘not yet changed her small fox paws to human feet,’ the concubine Daji ‘wrapped them in bandages to conceal them. Thereafter all the palace women imitated her’.⁵⁶ As Huntington states, ‘the vixen is more attractively female than human women, so that foxes are credited with defining femininity’.⁵⁷ In this earlier text, gender becomes uncoupled not only from biological sex, but also from species; a fox possesses the most desirably feminine form, which comes to be marked—materially, in this case—upon the bodies of women.

This arrangement is playfully subverted in Lai’s novel: the feet of the fox in the poetess’ body become the marker of masculinity. This connection is made more explicit a moment later, when the fox relays her experiences in the company of courtesans and nuns, who, more often than not, confuse her for a man:

They were puzzled by my lean, squarish jaw and plain dark robes that betrayed nothing but my amusement at the game of dressing. What seemed to relieve and reassure them was the sight of my feet, their phallic length. And then it was “Tea, elder brother?” Or “A game of rhymes perhaps?” If they discovered later that I was a woman after all, by then it did not matter so much. (*Thousand*, 104).

Again, the text shows the metonymy by which sex comes to be marked upon the seemingly gender-neutral parts of the body: the ‘phallic length’ of the poetess’ feet. At the same time, the fox’s reported ‘amusement at the game of dressing’ emphasises the role of clothing as the costumery of this performance.

The masculine appearance of the fox in the poetess’ body leads to a double case of mistaken identity when she visits a courtesan she spies sitting at her open window. The courtesan invites the fox in and the two drink tea and play a game of rhymes. After a flirtatious exchange of couplets, they go to bed together:

At the same moment we placed our hands in that telltale place between the legs and I discovered that she had something that I had not, and she discovered, since I had no olisboi with me that night, that I lacked something which she had. Being good natured creatures, we both fell to laughing and went on with what we were doing. (*Thousand*, 107)

As Butler states, ‘gender as substance, the viability of *man* and *woman* as nouns, is called into question by the dissonant play of attributes that fail to conform to sequential or causal modes

⁵⁶ Huntington, p. 85.

⁵⁷ Huntington, p. 85.

of intelligibility'.⁵⁸ This passage's humorous tone depends upon the incongruity of the courtesan's penis—the quintessential physical expression of an ostensibly embodied masculinity—with the other outward markers of her gender; likewise the outwardly male fox's lack of either penis or prosthetic. The result is a queer heterosexual encounter in which sex and gender become unstuck. The continued use of 'she' suggests a concept of gender divorced from either essence or physiology: in the eyes of the fox, the courtesan is a woman, penis notwithstanding. The end to the chapter further underscores the association of clothing and gender: 'she gave me her dainty embroidered shoe as a token of the evening, and I went home dreaming of all the possible disguises the future held' (*Thousand*, 107). As with many sections in Lai's novel, this scenario recalls and refigures another episode, from one of its other narratives. The chapter immediately preceding this one sees Artemis attend a men-only night at a gay bar. Her friend Eden proposes the idea, and helps Artemis to disguise herself: 'They cut a sheet into strips and flattened her small breasts against her chest. He slicked her hair back and tucked it under a skull cap. Loose jeans, a baggy T-shirt, and men's shoes her size' (*Thousand*, 99). The very existence of 'men's shoes her size' further undermines the notion of ostensibly precultural, physiologically sexed attributes; as the fox's inhabitations of the poetess' body also demonstrate, humans—regardless of their genitalia—can have feet any size.

Butler's notion of performativity explains how gender is continually re-enacted: 'there is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very "expressions" that are said to be its results.'⁵⁹ There is no homogeneous category of woman, for Butler, only an array of norms *for* femininity. These norms are *for* rather than *of* it, because these norms produce femininity, rather than the other way around. In this sense, 'gender proves to be performative—that is, constituting the identity it is purported to be'.⁶⁰ It is 'always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed'.⁶¹ For Butler, drag is so productive for thinking about gender identity because 'in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself—as well as its contingency'.⁶² Butler's account of gender parody 'does not assume that there is an original which such parodies imitate. Indeed, the parody is *of* the very notion of an original'.⁶³ In short:

⁵⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 32, original italics.

⁵⁹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

⁶⁰ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

⁶¹ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33.

⁶² Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 175, original italics.

⁶³ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 175, original italics.

all gender is drag. It is telling, in this light, that when the fox expresses her anxieties over her large feet, she compares their ostensibly masculine appearance not to a penis, but to a prosthetic: 'I might as well have worn an olisboi beneath my skirts as gone about on my obscenely masculine feet'. In Butler's account of gender, and, implicitly, in Lai's text, the penis is in a sense already a prosthesis: a physical prop in the performance of a masculinity that exists only culturally.

Whilst Butler limits her analysis to the production of gender, in Lai's text other forms of identity are also drawn into this performative framework. Eden, a photographer, runs a shoot with Artemis and her friend Diane, another Chinese-Canadian. It is not only femininity that is being masqueraded in these photos, but also racial and cultural identity. At Eden's request, Artemis and Diane are dressed in antique Chinese garments, 'sitting on the floor, knees pulled up to their chins' (*Thousand*, 25), a scenario that recalls the colonialist gaze of ethnographic photography. Eden's appraisal to Artemis upon showing her the developed photos—'You look almost like the real thing' (*Thousand*, 78)—is met with the retort: 'I am the real thing. Except that the clothes don't belong to me.' (*Thousand*, 78) Mistaking the performance for the genuine article, Eden misses the real point—that the original identity being imitated is already a performance, a connection underscored by the fact that the costume is the same in both cases. Diane's comment to Artemis upon seeing the photos makes this deconstructive parody of identity still more explicit: 'I look like I'm in some kind of drag' (*Thousand*, 95).

As Eva Hoffman observes, 'animality can function as queer by making visible the hierarchies associated with identity groups and by making alternative forms of life legible that fall outside of binaries such as humanity and animality, man and woman, culture and nature'.⁶⁴ The fox's animations of the bodies of human women trouble several such binaries. She describes the process as follows:

The word, I believe, is *animate*, although I much prefer *inhabit*. In this act I cease to be mere animal. Nor am I a parasite. To inhabit a body is to create a mass out of darkness, to give weight and motion to that which otherwise would be cold. And I, too, become warm inside an envelope of human flesh, less nervous and hungry. (*Thousand*, 17, original italics)

⁶⁴ Eva Hoffmann, 'Queering the Interspecies Encounter: Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*', in *What Is Zoopoetics? Texts, Bodies, Entanglement*, ed. by Eva Hoffman and Kári Driscoll (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 149–65 (p. 157).

The word *animations* calls to mind Mel Chen's notion of a queer animacy, a term that they prefer to ones such as 'life' or 'liveness', because the former has a slippery agency, which might 'trouble and undo stubborn binary systems of difference, including dynamism/stasis, life/death, subject/object, speech/nonspeech, human/animal'.⁶⁵ 'In its most sensitive figurations,' Chen states, 'animacy has the capacity to rewrite conditions of intimacy, engendering different communalisms and revising biopolitical spheres, or, at least, how we might theorize them'.⁶⁶ The fox's re-animation of deceased human bodies clearly unsettles the line between life and death, and the binary human/animal. This 'envelope of human flesh', meanwhile, suggests a queer interspecies intimacy. We are presented with a mirror image of the fox's inhabitations in the narrator's description of Artemis dressing for the photoshoot, which is figured as a reanimation of the antique garment she is given to wear: 'She held it by the shoulders. In human shape it seemed all the more human.' (*Thousand*, 22) The fabric is 'cool', recalling the coldness of the bodies the fox inhabits, and 'as it engulfed her it felt all the more alive' (*Thousand*, 22). Human shaped and made of silk, stinking of mothballs, the dress bears traces of the imbricate human and nonhuman agencies that have animated it, all of which Artemis wears against her skin, another queerly intimate interspecies encounter. The fox, of course, rejects the word *animate*, preferring the word '*inhabit*'—perhaps a subtle sartorial pun? Either way, the characterisation of these bodies as a kind of clothing is developed: the fox's donning of them brings 'weight and motion' to what would otherwise be 'cold', and the fox, in turn, is warmed by them. And the connection between Artemis' photoshoot and the fox's inhabitations is also underscored structurally: as with the two cross-dressing experiences, these two chapters are consecutive.

Read in light of the text's explicit references to and representations of cross-dressing, the likening of the bodies the fox inhabits to clothing invites a reading of her inhabitations as another kind of drag act: she does not possess any real power of transformation, after all, only the ability to don a woman's body, to make it into a kind of costume. At the same time, the fox's characterisation of this process as an 'act' emphasises its performativity. As in Hoffman's analysis of Yoko Tawada's *Memoirs of a Polar Bear*, whose eponymous protagonist's use of language 'draw[s] attention to the process of performativity at work in constructing gendered, sexual, and racialized identities that intersect fundamentally with notions of animality',⁶⁷ Lai's

⁶⁵ Chen, p. 3.

⁶⁶ Chen, p. 3.

⁶⁷ Eva Hoffmann, p. 157.

fox dramatizes the performativity of identity, but here it is the stability of the human itself that is called into question. Ironically, the possibility of inhabiting a body not one's own rests on the same Cartesian separation of cogito and cadaver that I observed in Beauvoir's notion of estrangement, yet rather than re-enshrining humans' unique capacity for transcendence, the fox's drag performance becomes a deconstructive parody that calls attention to the performativity of the human itself: *an act in which one ceases to be mere animal* is an almost perfect paraphrase of the workings of the anthropological machine. Whilst this seems a very postmodern device, there is a parallel in one of the premodern texts Huntington considers. A man takes as a lover a fox who can transform into any woman he desires. When he bemoans the illusory nature of these encounters, the fox retorts that the romance he would seek elsewhere is no less an illusion, emphasising the performativity of normalised interhuman relationships, another way in which foxes were queering norms and perceptions, even prior to Lai's adaptation. As Huntington suggests, 'this story equates fox illusion with the general illusion of romance; it is neither better nor worse, but simply more transparent',⁶⁸ a piece of analysis strikingly similar to Butler's words on the deconstructive parody of drag.

The transparency of illusion, or of representation—a recurrent theme of this thesis—is something that Lai's novel explores in some depth. It is largely through the practice of photography that identity is queered within the novel by being shown to be performative and contingent. This queering stands in stark contrast to the way photography has historically been regarded, i.e. as a very *straight* medium. As Christoph Ribbat documents, the phrase 'straight photography' refers to a movement, originating in the US during the early twentieth century, which valorised photography as 'possessing a capacity for verisimilitude exceeding that of any other medium'.⁶⁹ Ribbat notes that the connotations of 'straight' as *heterosexual* or *heteronormative* are not merely incidental in this context: the culture of photography of this movement and period was male-dominated, and masculinist.⁷⁰ It was also imbued with an 'objectivist rhetoric' operating with 'fixed concepts of truth, accuracy, and artistic excellence'.⁷¹ No less a representation than any other medium, the difference is that straight photography works by obscuring its own contrivance, offering an ostensibly transparent window onto that which it represents. As Roland Barthes notes, the apparent verisimilitude

⁶⁸ Huntington, p. 100.

⁶⁹ Christoph Ribbat, 'Queer and Straight Photography', *Amerikastudien / American Studies*, 46.1 (2001), 27–39 (p. 29).

⁷⁰ Ribbat, p. 30.

⁷¹ Ribbat, pp. 31, 32.

of the medium pretends no distance from its referent.⁷² This straight photographic gaze is like Hall's third-person narrator, claiming objectivity, but shot through with partiality. Whether photographic, narratological, or scientific, the objectivist stance is no less constructing of that which it represents, as we saw in my earlier critique of Beauvoir. The fox scores this same point in her own humorous fashion: 'A thousand years is a long time for a fox to live,' she explains, 'especially now in the age of science, when it is common knowledge that canine life-spans average less than twenty European-style years' (*Thousand*, 88-9), a playful reminder that knowledge and representation always already shape the reality they purport to reveal.

Ribbat contrasts straight photography's emphasis on objectivity and verisimilitude with queer photography, whose practitioners 'deconstruct these concepts, destabilizing not only the world of camera work, but, while they are at it, identity, historiography, and epistemology as well'.⁷³ Eden's photographic practice is *queer* in this regard, using costume, makeup and lighting to expose the mutability of identity, and, in doing so, foregrounding the constructedness of the photographic image itself. Lai's text does present an example of seemingly straight photographic practice, however: to mark her thousandth year the fox buys herself a calendar featuring photos of foxes:

My gentle cousins caught in the act of their daily ablutions, here scratching a flea bite, there licking clean that unmentionable place beneath the tail. Or scavenging bear leavings. Or rolling over each other in play or aggression. They're a mite intimate, these photographs. If it were me, I'd find it intrusive—some long-lensed photography hack hiding in the grass ready to catch me stretching out of a good nap. But on the other hand, they're glamorous, and as we all know, glamour can go a long way in glossing over things we would otherwise find quite repulsive. (*Thousand*, 186-7)

As Rosemarie McGoldrick observes, when photographic practices are directed towards other animals, it is usually so as to project the human onto these nonhuman others: 'what are called wildlife documentaries [...] are all carefully scoped for human fictions with telephoto or macroscopic lens in the same repetitive tropes: animal action shots, animal romantic comedies, animal hospital dramas, animal penetration scenes and of course animal snuff movies'.⁷⁴ As in Grandville's engravings, the animals in these narratives are stand-ins for the human, and 'the animal metaphor permits broadcasting of documentary film we would often find ethically

⁷² Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*, trans. by Richard Howard (New York, NY: Hill and Wang, 1982), p. 5.

⁷³ Ribbat, p. 32.

⁷⁴ Rosemarie McGoldrick, 'Unscoping Animals', in *Rurality Re-Imagined: Villagers, Farmers, Wanderers and Wild Things* (Novato, CA: ORO Editions, 2018), pp. 256–67 (pp. 257–60).

transgressive, were it of our own kind'.⁷⁵ The photos in the fox calendar appear to offer an authentic snapshot of foxes in their natural habitats, engaged in activities that we might think of as more authentically fox-like than those of the fox spirit herself. However, though realist, to the fox these photos are nonetheless a glamorised 'glossing over', a characterisation that recalls the artist's paintbrush, perhaps, or the same cosmetic practices that Eden uses to manipulate the appearances of his models. To the fox, the transparency of these straight representations is its own illusion. In what reads as a further act of defiance against these straight representational practices, the fox herself has no reflection, and when she visits a photo kiosk all of the pictures come out blank (*Thousand*, 138-9).

Despite its emphasis on the cultural constructedness and performativity of identities, however, Lai's novel nevertheless adheres to an idea of authenticity that precedes or exceeds such representations. Lai's text is littered with examples of authentic identity showing through performance. Passages in which characters are disguised also reveal these characters' fears of discovery, or result in the actual disclosure of their 'real' identities. Although Artemis finds her drag persona fairly believable, she remains convinced that her slender wrists will give her away, suspects that the doorman realises she is a woman, and is warned by Eden not to smoke while in the bar because her small hands might disclose her identity (*Thousand*, 99-100). The fox appears as a background character several times in Artemis' narrative, her identity usually betrayed (at least to the reader) by the these seemingly human extras' small twitching noses. Artemis' rebuttal of Eden, in particular, stakes a claim for an authentic Chinese identity, further complicated by the fact she was adopted at birth, by White Canadian parents. The statement, 'I am the real thing', is itself a type of performance, of course, but the speech act gains felicity only to the extent that Artemis has an identity as such that precedes its illocution. Identity may be performative within Lai's novel, but performance is not synonymous with imitation, and 'I am the real thing' is not (only) an act of self-identification. This tension between performativity and authenticity does not amount to the queer becoming that Colebrook celebrates. As Deleuze and Guattari state, 'becoming-animal does not consist in playing animal or imitating an animal' because, in a sense, the becoming is the identity: hence, 'we fall into a false alternative if we say that you either imitate or you are'.⁷⁶ For Artemis, both halves of this dichotomy appear active, and not mutually exclusive: we imitate and/but we are, and identity is not annihilated, but reaffirmed.

⁷⁵ McGoldrick, p. 260.

⁷⁶ Deleuze and Guattari, p. 238.

One explanation for this seeming immutability of identity is that structures of oppression make identities more than individually performative, imposing them also from without, a point I will explore in detail in Chapter Four of this thesis.⁷⁷ Hall's story made a similar point: wife and fox are defined from without, made Other to the anthropocentric, masculinist subject. Butler's notion of gender performance accounts for this intersubjective dimension to identity: gender 'is not a noun, but neither is it a set of free-floating attributes' because 'the substantive effect of gender is performatively produced and compelled by the regulatory practices of gender coherence'.⁷⁸ Elsewhere, Butler states that 'performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate "act," but, rather, as the reiterative and citational practice by which discourse produces the effects that it names'.⁷⁹ Whereas in Hall's story, Sophia resists the reformativity of gender by escaping the signifying economy that produces its associated norms—i.e. which makes woman and animal into trope—Artemis assumes the identity imposed upon her; Lai's image of Artemis reluctantly but willingly donning a costume made by and for somebody else seems to be a doubly apt analogy, read in this light. Artemis' avowal of her authenticity is predicated upon a stability of identity much closer to Beauvoir's than to Colebrook's, yet it reverses Beauvoir's logic. Whereas Beauvoirian authenticity moves from the universal to the singular—there is one mode of being woman to which all women must aspire—Artemis' logic remains firmly grounded in the individual: anything I do is an authentic expression of my identity. Artemis therefore resists the normative regulation of identity performance identified by Butler, as when she rejects Eden's belief that authentic Chinese identity resides with the original performers of traditional Chinese dress. Artemis' behaviour does not conform to a normative trope of Chinese identity, not least because she was raised by white Canadians, but she claims this identity, nonetheless. In Lai's text, the resistance to this overdetermination is mounted from within, via Artemis' steadfast avowal of her authenticity, despite her nonconformism: a *queer authenticity*.

The fox is likewise a queerly authentic being. In the first chapter of Lai's novel, the fox explains that her behaviour marks her out amongst her fellow foxes: 'I come from an honest family of foxes. They were none too pleased about my forays into acts of transformation. When they found out about the scholars I visited on dark nights, haunting them in the forms of

⁷⁷ My focus on race in this final chapter is also my reason for bracketing this question in the current context, even though it is clearly Artemis' racial and/or cultural identity as Chinese that is at least partially at stake in her statement 'I am the real thing'.

⁷⁸ Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 33, original italics.

⁷⁹ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 2.

various women, they were appalled.’ (*Thousand*, 3) Their horror chimes with the shame felt by the husband in Hall’s story upon seeing his fox-wife kill and devour the live pigeon. Rather than merely retreating, however, the fellow foxes in Hall’s story first attempt to police this behaviour, censuring her failure to conform to cultural norms: ‘They said, “Don’t you know that your actions reflect on us all? If you keep making these visitations, other fox families will talk about us. They will criticize us for not having raised you properly.”’ (*Thousand*, 3) They suggest ‘it would be better if you chose a more respectable occupation, like fishing or stealing chickens’ (*Thousand*, 3). The normativity of performance that Butler identifies is extended to encompass species life, too. The fox, however, remains adamant as to her own authenticity: ‘It is other foxes who are strange, not me.’ (*Thousand*, 16) Recalling Beauvoir, what makes these other foxes strange, in the fox’s view, is their enslavement to species life, ‘their short lives and busy litters, [...] their petty rivalries and dreary surface-bound forays for ordinary meat. They go under the earth just to sleep, have only enough of an inkling of the vast possibilities that exist there to scare them’ (*Thousand*, 16). She suggests that ‘they do see themselves in me; that recognition is precisely what terrifies them, what causes them to scurry back to their mates and cubs, their animal carcasses and shallow dwellings as though to say, “See, here are the things that make us civilized, here are the things that make us *not like her*.”’ (*Thousand*, 16-17, original italics) In another comic reversal of the anthropological machine, normative foxness becomes civility, and civilisation becomes the collection of norms around which foxness is performed, and against which it is policed. Of course, these passages allegorise a human coming-out story, but this avoids being merely a metaphor whose tenor is the human; species life is recast as the imposition of its own—cultural—norm. It is telling that the normative foxness invoked by the fox spirit’s fellows is itself reduced to trope: fishing and stealing chickens. Once it becomes clear to them that the fox herself is unmoved by their attempts to regulate her actions, her fellow foxes beat the same hasty retreat as the husband in Hall’s story: ‘When it amuses me, I laugh. When it hurts me, I laugh. And because laughing is not something foxes generally do, they twitch their noses in disgust and hurry away.’ (*Thousand*, 17) Whilst these representations of foxness seem unrealistic, not to mention highly anthropomorphised, this is precisely the point: in the context of a novel that sees all identities as mutable and performative, but also self-authored, such nonconformism overturns normativity, proposing instead a queer authenticity figured as freedom from species life.

Conclusion

In both these literary works, foxes behave not enough like foxes are expected to behave, which is to say, they refuse to be reduced to mere tropes. In both texts, identities are shown to be the products of expectations that are imposed from without. In both, the anthropological machine's dichotomisation of human and animal is undermined: in Hall's story, Sophia experiences no schism between her animality and the humanity that inhabits it, whilst the fox in Lai's novel parodies the performativity by which the human pretends its own humanity. Whereas Hall's story depicts something like Colebrook's queer becoming, in which wife and fox escape the terms of gender and species, Lai's novel—for all its emphasis on performativity—seems far less eager to dispense with the notion of authenticity; unlike in Beauvoir's account, however, this is an authenticity that inheres in the individual, and has no problem with its own nonconformism to trope. In Hall's story, the fox is enslaved to its species; in Lai's novel, the fox is radically free from species life, which is recast as its own norm. Narrative perspective seems to be central to the differing effects these stories produce. Hall's third-person narrator provides the perfect microcosm of the masculinist and anthropocentric discourse that others woman and animal; by letting her fox trot off into the margins, kicking away the manmade world—and her third-person narrator along with it—Hall manages to skirt the dilemma of dealing with nonhuman animals' autonomy from culture, but such a manoeuvre, by definition, precludes any subsequent attempt to represent them. Lai's first-person narration, from the perspective of the fox herself, allows her to dramatize the resistance of the trope of foxness from within, or so at least is its conceit. Having your fox announce that she is a fox—normative fox behaviour be damned—might compromise believability, but here it does so for the sake of challenging the very norms and assumptions that shape what we allow ourselves to believe. A question has been left hanging throughout my analysis of both of these texts, particularly Lai's novel: to what extent are nonhuman animals performative of themselves? My next chapter will address this question—among others—analysing a contemporary performance by Trygve Wakenshaw alongside Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings on the being of humans and nonhuman animals: both, I argue, can be productively thought together *as mime*.

Chapter Three – Animal Style: Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Trygve Wakenshaw

“Miming differs from mimicry in this respect: it is not imitation but a way of grasping the real that is played out in our body. A normal human being is “played” by the reality that reverberates in him.”

Marcel Jousse, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*

“Uexküll is [...] attached to von Baer and the unfurling of an *Umwelt* as a melody that is singing itself. [...] When we invent a melody, the melody sings in us much more than we sing it.”

Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*

Steve Baker suggests that ‘in a postmodern age marked by “a deeply felt loss of faith in our ability to represent the real” perhaps ‘the animal is now most productively and imaginatively thought in art [...] as a thing actively to be performed, rather than passively represented’.¹ Olga Taxidou places this mistrust of passive representation still further back: since its modernist period, she argues, theatre practitioners have addressed themselves to ‘the apparent bankruptcy of the European project of the Enlightenment and its economies of representation’, by developing performance as ‘a non-humanist, non-anthropomorphic, non-mimetic art form’.² The aesthetic texts I have considered so far in this thesis give me cause to question Baker’s quoting of Hans Bertens in this context, and Taxidou’s similarly fatalistic assessment of artists’ quests for direct representation: as is clear from my analysis of J. A. Baker and Timothy Treadwell, some writers have by no means given up on their project to represent the (imagined) reality of animal experiences, even if my own analyses occasionally gave them short shrift; my readings of Larissa Lai’s and Sarah Hall’s texts, meanwhile, may have revealed a more distrustful attitude towards direct representation, but both found strategies for describing and/or narrating animalities, human and nonhuman, all the same. That said, performance as a medium does open up new avenues for thinking about animal subjects. To see how this might be the case, I turn to Trygve Wakenshaw’s *Nautilus* (2015).

Wakenshaw’s performance is a one-man act comprising a series of skits in which Wakenshaw performs a variety of animal characters (human and nonhuman). There is little overarching narrative, but certain jokes, themes and characters recur, chiefly, a dark plot in

¹ Steve Baker, ‘Sloughing the Human’, p. 79 (quoting from Hans Bertens, *The Idea of the Postmodern: A History* [London; New York, NY: Routledge, 1994], p. 11).

² Olga Taxidou, *Modernism and Performance: Jarry to Brecht* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 5.

which a selfish, ravenous human coerces a sheep, a cow and a chicken into giving up their wool, milk, eggs, and flesh. All of the characters are performed by Wakenshaw, who wears only a plain grey suit, uses virtually no props, and barely speaks during the hour-long show. In other words, *Nautilus* is a mime act. It is a commonplace to say that mime is a disparaged art form. It has certainly been overlooked by scholars interested in animals and performance.³ Those discussions of mime that have been conducted from within mainstream performance studies typically occur in monographs dedicated solely to this strand of theatre. Thomas Leabhart, for instance, has produced a thorough account of the history of the development of modern mime, from Jacques Copeau at the very beginning of the twentieth century to Jacques Lecoq, who was still teaching when Leabhart's book was published in 1989.⁴ Aleksandür Iliev's promisingly titled *Towards a Theory of Mime* (2014) assumes that mime is a form of non-verbal communication, and is interested in codifying what the language of this communication might be, largely so that it might be taught more effectively.⁵ Several works by Lucy Amsden consider the pedagogy of Philippe Gaulier, at whose Paris clowning school both she and Wakenshaw trained.⁶ *Theatre of Movement and Gesture* (2006), edited by David Bradby, compiles writings and interviews by Jacques Lecoq and Jean Perret. This is in part, like Leabhart's book, concerned with tracing the genealogy of mime, via its key practitioners and pedagogues.⁷ But Lecoq's contributions venture into what we might call a *philosophy* of mime, asking how mime might be suitable for exploring certain types of ideas. Lecoq's and Amsden's writings are indispensable to the arguments this chapter puts forward, but I use them to probe a question

³ Neither Una Chaudhuri's *The Stage Lives of Animals* (2017) or Lourdes Orozco's *Theatre and Animals* (2013), nor any of the contributors to Orozco and Jennifer Parker-Starbuck's *Performing Animality* (2015) or Chaudhuri and Holly Hughes' *Animal Acts* (2014), for instance, consider this strand of theatre. See Una Chaudhuri, *The Stage Lives of Animals: Zooēsis and Performance* (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2017); Lourdes Orozco, *Theatre and Animals* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); *Performing Animality*, ed. by Lourdes Orozco and Jennifer Parker-Starbuck (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015); *Animal Acts: Performing Species Today*, ed. by Una Chaudhuri and Holly Hughes, *Critical Performances* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2014).

⁴ Thomas Leabhart, *Modern and Post-Modern Mime*, Macmillan Modern Dramatists (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989).

⁵ Aleksandür Iliev, *Towards a Theory of Mime*, ed. by Michael M. Chemers, trans. by Milena Dabova (New York, NY; Oxford: Routledge, 2014).

⁶ Lucy Amsden, "The Work of a Clown Is to Make the Audience Burst out Laughing": Learning Clown at École Philippe Gaulier' (unpublished PhD, University of Glasgow, 2015); Lucy Amsden, "When They Laugh Your Clown Is Coming": Learning to Be Ridiculous in Philippe Gaulier's Pedagogy of Spectatorship', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 7.1 (2016), 4–16; Lucy Amsden, 'Monsieur Marcel and Monsieur Flop: Failure in Clown Training at Ecole Philippe Gaulier', *Theatre, Dance and Performance Training*, 8.2 (2017), 129–42.

⁷ Jacques Lecoq and Jean Perret, *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, ed. by David Bradby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006).

neither considers: in what ways might mime be particularly suited to thinking about animals and animality?

I have found one previous attempt to analyse how a mime show might reveal insights into human-animal relations: Martin Puchner's 2007 paper, 'Performing the Open' analyses Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words I*, a short mime show about a single male character marooned in a desert, who must use a series of tools, lowered onto the stage, in an attempt to reach a container of water. As Puchner notes, the mime act is a retelling of behaviourist experiments conducted by the German primatologist Wolfgang Köhler, recast with a human in place of the apes.⁸ In Beckett, the tools lowered onto the stage are real, the play was scripted by an author/director (Beckett) for an actor, who is a separate individual, and there is no direct interaction between performer and audience. Wakenshaw's performance is different on all three of these counts: his mimes engage with objects that do not actually exist (think of the classic mime gag of the invisible wall).⁹ He produces his shows himself, and often improvises. His works involve a high degree of audience participation. This absence of props, compositional process and audience interaction are all pivotal to the arguments I make in this chapter.

To theorise how Wakenshaw's mimes approach their animal subjects, I place his performance in dialogue with the philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Like Beauvoir, Merleau-Ponty is a thinker whose work has largely escaped the interest of animal studies researchers. His thought is so generative for the aims of this thesis, however, because he offers an entirely new way of figuring humanity, animality and the relationship between them; Merleau-Pontian phenomenology shifts the emphasis from consciousness, *qualia*, or subjectivity—Nagel's question of what it is like *for a bat* to be a bat—to embodiment, behaviour and *intersubjectivity*. Mime, meanwhile, offers a particularly bodily mode of thought: as Marcel Jousse states in the epigraph that begins this chapter, 'mime [...] is not imitation but a way of grasping the real that is played out in our body'.¹⁰

Given the unique signifiatory logic of performance, this chapter starts by considering how this mode approaches its subjects. Beginning with a consideration of *Sheep, Pig, Goat*

⁸ Martin Puchner, 'Performing the Open: Actors, Animals, Philosophers', *TDR: The Drama Review*, 51.1 (2007), 21–32 (pp. 30–31).

⁹ This absence is so important that I find it necessary to draw attention to it in my descriptions of Wakenshaw's performance. I do this by using italics to indicate when he is 'interacting' with non-existent objects.

¹⁰ Marcel Jousse, quoted in Jacques Lecoq, 'Imitation: From Mimicry to Miming', in *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, ed. by David Bradby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 1–5 (p. 4).

(2017), a 'creative research studio' by contemporary performance collective, Fevered Sleep, I contrast the use of 'real' animals in performance with performances of nonhuman animals. By shunning direct representation, performance manages to skirt the representational dilemma at the heart of this thesis, offering a peculiar, ostensive mode of signification, in which the performer—and performative sign—are of the same stuff as the signified. Wakenshaw's show goes a step further, largely sloughing language, thereby avoiding the anthropocentrism and anthropomorphism that can be imported when verbally representing the lives of nonhuman animals. Strangely, though, having dispensed with language and its entire signifiatory logic Wakenshaw's work does not dispense with animals as tropes. It seems, rather, to deliberately direct itself towards the clichéd, calling attention to the way animals function for human meaning-making. On the level of form, however, Wakenshaw's performance approaches animality itself, as figured by Merleau-Ponty—variable yet repetitious, autochthonous, autopoietic: in short, *live*. I show that the being of humans and other animals, for Merleau-Ponty, is not a question of interiority, but of *style*, an organism's attitude toward the world and manner of behaving in it. This is the level upon which Wakenshaw's mimes approach animals, transposing their styles onto his own body.

Turning to Merleau-Ponty's rereading of twentieth century biology and ethology, I draw a connection between the objectlessness of Wakenshaw's mimes and the objectlessness of instinct. Whereas for Heidegger, the animal is defined by its poverty in world, its incapacity to comprehend Being as such, for Merleau-Ponty no animal has any such access, including the human. All behaviour—from the instinctive to the cognitive—directs itself toward an 'oneiric universe' of representations. For Lecoq, meanwhile, mime makes the invisible visible, whilst for Jean Perret mime is a making real of the oneiric. I consider Merleau-Ponty's reading of Jakob von Uexküll alongside Amsden's writing on Gaulier's pedagogy to suggest that Wakenshaw's performance has its own *Umwelt*, a pared-back relation to the mime's environment and the fellow organisms with which he shares it. My analyses of Wakenshaw's *Nautilus* bear out claims to performance's uniquely ostensive mode, revealing sign and signified to be of the same stuff. And so, whilst Wakenshaw begins *miming animals*, the animals he mimes find themselves upstaged by a *shared animality*, which the performance of his mime reveals.

Finally, I think through Wakenshaw's compositional and performance style in light of Merleau-Ponty's concept of 'inter-animality', the term he gives to the dialectic by which organisms exist always already in relation with one another. Whilst such always-togetherness appears to connote the same easy transposition as the Heideggerian *Mitsein* of my first chapter,

I demonstrate that for Merleau-Ponty it is closer to its opposite: inter-animality entails no journey *into* another's subjecthood, nor is it predicated upon some taken-as-given insight. On the contrary, the moments in which inter-animality is most apparent are those in which our insights prove false, revealing unruly agencies that exceed our (mis)readings, moments when the Other intrudes into the self's own world. The final point of Wakenshaw's show engages the inter-animality of the performance space, manipulating theatrical convention to highlight Wakenshaw's own agency-writ-alterity, and expose his audiences' complicity in the events on stage.

Performing Animals: the signficatory logic of performance

Considering the inclusion of actual animals in performance, Lourdes Orozco argues that such practices 'transform theatre's relationship with representation' by showing nonhumans 'appearing as a real presence onstage'.¹¹ A real animal presence 'destabilises the binary [...] between "authentic reality" and "illusory representation"', meaning 'animals are brought onstage specifically to break the system of representation that the theatre is concerned with', thereby becoming 'both a sign and a device to expose performance's workings and meaning-making structures'.¹² The logic appears to be that the animal's 'realness' breaks the theatrical illusion, thereby estranging the operations of theatre, throwing its contrivances into sharp relief. According to such a logic, the use of real animal presences would entirely avoid the representational dilemma this thesis explores, pretending no knowledge of a particular animal as such, avoiding reducing an animal to trope, indeed, avoiding *representing* the animal at all.

This appears to have been the assumption behind *Sheep, Pig, Goat*, by contemporary performance collective Fevered Sleep. The project's website describes it as 'a creative research project that brings together dancers, singers, musicians, sheep, pigs, goats and other animals, to explore communication and empathy between species'.¹³ As this description suggests, the eponymous sheep, pigs and goats are real animals, brought into the performance space to act as an audience for the improvisational, freeform dance and music created by human performers. Also present at each show was a second, human audience, invited into the performance space to watch the interactions between the animal audience and the performers. Collected footage from the shows captures a bassoonist and violinist playing together, whilst

¹¹ Orozco, p. 3.

¹² Orozco, pp. 67–68, 73.

¹³ Fevered Sleep, 'Sheep Pig Goat' <<http://www.feveredsleep.co.uk/current/sheep-pig-goat/>> [accessed 24 September 2018].

a dancer, dressed in black, moves around the bare warehouse space. Three sheep stand in the corner, eating hay strewn on the ground. They look up at the dancer, intermittently, and one momentarily backs away. In another snippet, a double-bassist plays for two pigs. One lies on its side, largely motionless, but occasionally snorts and raises its head. The other pig explores a distant corner of the room. The dancer remains mostly still, at one point lowering her head to place her cheek on the ground, seemingly in an attempt to meet the prostrated pig's eyes. There is something very J. A. Baker-like to the movement of the male dancer in the next section, who attempts to match his movements to those of a goat. In another scene, a violinist appears to capture the attention of a pig, who approaches and stands watching her, occasionally raising her snout, seemingly in response to the melody.

Like many of the texts this thesis considers, the introduction to the project calls attention to the ubiquity of animal tropes within human culture: 'We tell ourselves all sorts of stories about animals. Animals fly through our mythology, our unconscious, our cultural history and our literature; they run through our folk tales; they crawl through our dreams.'¹⁴ But it promises more, seeking to uncover whether 'in the whirl of all these stories, [...] we ever see animals as they really are, or only as we want them to be'.¹⁵ The purpose of these shows, we are told, was to explore 'how well humans see animals as they really are—not as we tell ourselves they are'.¹⁶ This is followed by a list of ancillary performance-research questions: 'What do animals see, when they see us? What do they experience, what do they sense, what do they want, what are their desires, what do they have to say?'¹⁷ What will characterise the this-ness of these nonhuman Others is clearly figured as a question of phenomenology and subjectivity: sight, experience, sense, want, desire and speech. Performative interactions appear to comprise the tool with which *Fevered Sleep* hope to answer these questions, to *get at* the real animals behind the tropes. The hope, it seems, is not to let these animals be in their alterity, but to really get to know them.

And yet, the guiding thought behind this production—that there is something more 'real' about the animal in performance—appears to perpetuate a conventional dichotomy between nonhuman and human animal. It is unclear from Orozco's analysis why she perceives the estranging presence of a nonhuman on stage to be a special case. By assuming that it is, are *Fevered Sleep* and Orozco merely betraying a latent belief in humans' supposedly unique

¹⁴ *Fevered Sleep*, 'Sheep Pig Goat'.

¹⁵ *Fevered Sleep*, 'Sheep Pig Goat'.

¹⁶ *Fevered Sleep*, 'Sheep Pig Goat'.

¹⁷ *Fevered Sleep*, 'Sheep Pig Goat'.

performative capabilities? The assumption appears to be that the animal on stage is real because the animal does not dissemble. As Derrida foregrounds in his reading of Jacques Lacan, it is believed that the animal does not know how to cover its tracks.¹⁸ An animal may be able to *lie*, but it cannot *lie* about lying; it cannot *pretend* to be pretending. In short: the animal is real because it does not perform.

Whether wilful performers or not, however, these nonhuman presences cannot but be subsumed within the production's theatrical contrivance—*Sheep, Pig, Goat* shows its human audiences nonhuman animals that have been, literally, *staged*. As I argued in my previous chapter, Beauvoir's mantis is not the same mantis in a lab as it is when at liberty; expecting it to be so is no different than Heidegger expecting a bee with its abdomen removed to behave in the same way as one with its body intact. Likewise, why would we expect the behaviour of the animals in Fevered Sleep's production to remain the same when they find themselves transported from a farm to a location as foreign to them as a bare, windowless warehouse space in Peckham? The purpose of this question is not to suggest that the animals in a warehouse are any less 'real' or 'authentic' than these animals would be if located elsewhere, or that the warehouse space is any less 'artificial' than a farm, nor, indeed, for that matter, than a field; the point is, rather, to put the cat among the pigeons by questioning whether such encounters reveal a 'real' animal *as such*. In its eagerness to avoid one half of the dilemma this thesis explores—seemingly avoiding representing animals *at all*—*Sheep, Pig, Goat* blunders straight into its other half, assuming, like Beauvoir and Heidegger, that the identities of sheep, pigs and goats are given in advance, that they are confined to immanence, destined never *to become*, but only *to be*, meaning, to be the same, regardless of any change in their circumstances. Read in this light, the presence of these 'real' animals does not cast new light upon the artificially lit warehouse after all, but estranges the 'realness' of the animals themselves, in a way that seems to preclude entirely the insights that Fevered Sleep aspire to deliver.

In fact, there is no need to bring the real animals onstage if we want to avoid *passively* representing them. This is because performance, in and of itself, already offers its own unique signifiatory resources for *approaching* nonhumans. As my introduction's brief consideration of Steve Baker and Olga Taxidou suggests, it a popular belief that performance has a fundamentally different way of handling things than that offered by other artistic modes: it is active rather than passive, non-mimetic, non-anthropocentric. Umberto Eco espouses a

¹⁸ Derrida, p. 135.

similar view, illustrating the difference between performance and these other modes via an analysis of an example he takes from the semiotician Charles Sanders Peirce, of an alcoholic man who is put on stage by the Salvation Army to illustrate the perils of drink. The type of signification operating in such an act of performance is *ostension*, an act of exhibiting, or acting out, ‘consisting in de-realizing a given object in order to make it stand for an entire class’.¹⁹ Whilst Eco maintains that the alcoholic man is being employed as a sign, ‘there is something that distinguishes our drunkard from a word. [...] When speaking, we are conscious that something impalpable (*flatus vocis*) stands for something presumably palpable’.²⁰ ‘The drunk’, on the other hand ‘is a sign [...] that pretends not to be such’.²¹ Such an illusion is possible because the performative sign is one ‘whose constitutive stuff is the same as that of the representing object’.²² Whereas most communication requires the mediation of signs that have an at most iconic, perhaps an entirely arbitrary, relationship to their referents, the ostensive sign is of the same stuff as that to which it refers. Such is the significance of this relationship that the semiotician Ivo Osolobě argues that ostension is a direct form of communication, unreliant upon any sign at all.²³

Even within this performative logic, Wakenshaw’s work is a special case. Animals do not speak, which is to say that Western culture constructs the human, in part, by celebrating its ostensibly unique capacity for language. For Aristotle, the human is ζῶον λόγον ἔχον (*zoon logon echon*). In Giorgio Agamben’s reading of Alexandre Kojève, upon which the former largely derives his notion of the anthropological machine, ‘the definitive annihilation of man in the proper sense [...] must also entail the disappearance of human language, and its substitution by mimetic or sonic signals comparable to the language of bees’.²⁴ For Heidegger, animals lack language because they lack transcendence, effectively placing their incapacity even further beyond question.²⁵ For John Berger, the animal’s ‘lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man’.²⁶ Derrida

¹⁹ Umberto Eco, ‘Semiotics of Theatrical Performance’, *The Drama Review: TDR*, 21.1 (1977), 107–17 (p. 110).

²⁰ Eco, p. 111.

²¹ Eco, p. 111.

²² Eco, p. 111.

²³ Osolobě’s writings on this topic are not widely available in English, but for a detailed summary of his thinking on the subject, see Remo Gramigna, ‘On the Concept of “Ostension”’: A Survey of Contemporary Semiotics’, in *Concepts for Semiotics*, ed. by Claudio Julio Rodríguez Higuera and Tyler James Bennett, Tartu Semiotics Library, 16 (Tartu: University of Tartu Press, 2016), pp. 186–203 (pp. 193–99).

²⁴ Agamben, p. 10.

²⁵ See Buchanan, p. 103.

²⁶ Berger, p. 6.

recognises this exclusion from language even as he calls for its amelioration, hoping we might accede to a view 'that thinks the absence of the name and of the word otherwise, as something other than a privation'.²⁷ Humans' supposed richness in language and other animals' apparent lack thereof presents a dilemma for writers wishing to represent animal subjects. For Gillian Beer, linguistic representation comprises 'the central paradox for *literature* concerning itself with animals', because 'how is it possible to be true to animal experience, even if that were the wish, if your medium of description is written human language?'²⁸ For Beer, language entails at least some degree of anthropocentrism because, 'start[ing] out from our own conditions, it cannot avoid inclining towards the human and towards our systems of explanation'.²⁹ *Mime*, in the style practised by Wakenshaw, employs virtually no language, written or spoken. Such performances therefore seem to offer, on the one hand, a less anthropocentric and anthropomorphic mode, and, on the other, a greater promise of connection; if language use bolsters human exceptionalism, dispensing with it seems to offer one possible means of approaching nonhumans on their own terms.

It seems a peculiar choice, then, that having almost entirely forsaken verbal expression and representation's signifiatory logic, Wakenshaw's show remains embroiled in human meaning-making, peppered with intertextual allusions to an eclectic array of cultural sources. An example from *Nautilus* will serve to illustrate this, as well as giving a sense of his work and the way I 'quote' it. In an early skit, Wakenshaw impersonates a chicken. Bending forward at the waist, knees a little bent, he holds his hands loosely at his hips, elbows at his sides, and makes his arms *a pair of wings*. He goes cross-eyed, turning his head jerkily from side to side. He clucks. Then he begins to walk forwards, his head bobbing backwards and forwards in time with his steps. He stops suddenly, and turns his head to *watch a vehicle zoom past*, then *another, going the other way*. (We know these are *fast moving vehicles* because he makes a childlike *neeeyum* noise as *they pass by*.) Chicken-Wakenshaw is startled and jumps back, bwarking. He looks from side to side, then up slightly. He reaches up and mimes *pressing the button of a pedestrian crossing*. Several audience members laugh, having already recognised the joke.

Contrary to Eco's analysis of the performative mode, it seems that this skit is attempting to represent something other than the mime himself, and the class or classes of

²⁷ Derrida, p. 48.

²⁸ Gillian Beer, 'Animal Presences: Tussles with Anthropomorphism', *Comparative Critical Studies*, 2.3 (2005), 311–22 (p. 313), original italics.

²⁹ Beer, p. 313.

being to which he belongs. As this example illustrates, however, Wakenshaw's performances do not attempt to represent animals in themselves. The chicken-crosses-road skit is not about imitating a chicken at all, but performing a joke, a cultural script about an animal, which is not the animal itself. This is the sort of representation Chaudhuri cautions against, when she states that 'as pets, as performers, and as literary symbols, animals are forced to perform us—our fantasies and fears, our questions and quarrels, our hopes and horrors'.³⁰ And so, by 'refusing the animal its radical otherness by ceaselessly troping it and rendering it a metaphor for humanity, modernity erases the animal even as it makes it discursively ubiquitous'.³¹ As Mario Ortiz Robles notes, and as the introduction to this thesis already considered, this is a pitfall of any attempt at representation, which can only ever be refracted through a cultural lens; nonhuman animals exist for human meaning-making only ever as tropes.³²

Baker makes a related point when he notes that 'forms of what are most readily described as imitation seem central to art's exploration of the animal', but 'to be able to imitate an animal (or indeed to refuse to do so) already presupposes a knowledge of what that animal is'.³³ Performances that choose to imitate chance the same pitfalls as do representational texts: presupposing their referents. Because imitation will always be based on such presumed knowledge, it is art pieces that perform only bad, or token, gestures toward the animal which Baker finds most compelling: 'in being both outlandish and preposterously transparent', such representations 'make no claims to the "nature" of the imitated animal. These imitations generally act out instability rather than the fixity of the thing nominally imitated. They suggest playful exchanges between the human and the animal, or between one animal and another'.³⁴ For Steve Baker, an example *par excellence* of this underdetermined gesturing toward the more-than-human is Jordan Baseman's *Be Your Dog* (1997).³⁵ The artwork comprises the ears of a real German shepherd which have been taxidermized and fixed to a headband. When exhibited in a gallery in Austria, mounted on a wall at head height, gallery-goers would align themselves with the headgear, and be photographed 'appearing to "wear" the ears and to think themselves into this new state of being, just as the title suggests'.³⁶ The gallery-goers transformed the art

³⁰ Una Chaudhuri, 'Animal Geographies: Zooesis and the Space of Modern Drama', *Modern Drama*, 46.4 (2003), 646–62 (p. 648).

³¹ Chaudhuri, 'Animal Geographies', p. 648.

³² Ortiz Robles, pp. 18–19.

³³ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 78.

³⁴ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 78.

³⁵ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 71.

³⁶ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 71.

piece into something akin to a face-in-hole photography screen, through which one sticks one's head so as to be photographed as the character that is painted on the board. "Imitation" of an animal', Baker believes, 'can be just that easy and approximate. Baseman's *Be Your Dog* is a positive invitation to the viewer to take on dogness merely by imitating one aspect of the animal's appearance'.³⁷ In a similar vein, Baker also considers Lucy Gunning's *The Horse Impressionists* (1994). The film shows four women impersonating the movements and noises of horses, badly. Baker notes: 'Aware of the preposterousness of these poor imitations, their attempts constantly break down into bursts of laughter'.³⁸ It is because these imitations are bad that they wear their anthropocentrism on their unsloughable human faces, for all to see.

Wakenshaw might be troping animals but, as the chicken-crosses-road skit illustrates, he generally performs ubiquitous, highly recognisable tropes. To use the language of Roland Barthes, whilst Wakenshaw's impressions appear to engage animals at the denotative semiotic level (he acts like, and so makes his body a sign for, a chicken), these impressions are revealed to be always already coloured by connotative and mythic layers of meaning (this chicken is gormless, and forgets why it had crossed the road). He signals that he is a *lamb* by bleating and skipping around the stage, smiling innocently, before *shearing himself*, and *knitting his own fleece into a new jumper*. In a later skit, Cat-Wakenshaw *licks his paws*, then launches into an entirely meowed rendition of 'Memory' from the Andrew Lloyd Webber musical *Cats* (1981), only for this to be cut short when he *retches up a hairball*. My second chapter's texts implicitly engaged these superordinate semiotic levels, calling attention to embedded myths of womanhood and animality. However, Wakenshaw's act develops the mythic dimension of these animal signifiers *ad absurdum*. In doing so, he estranges the cultural assumptions underpinning the tropes he performs, e.g. that chickens are gormless, or that lambs are innocent and their fleeces fair game for the clothing industry. By being so clichéd, Wakenshaw's impressions refuse to pretend any straightforward equivalence of signifier to signified.

Life and Style: approaching the organism through mime

On one level, then, Wakenshaw's imitations appear to reflect Steve Baker's observation on the impossibility of representing the real. And yet, the kind of performance practised by Wakenshaw does hold a mirror up to Merleau-Ponty's ontology of life. This has to do with the

³⁷ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 79.

³⁸ Steve Baker, 'Sloughing the Human', p. 79.

peculiar activeness of live performance, compared with the passivity Baker associates with other modes. *Liveness* has become a hotly contested term within performance studies. Martin Barker interrogates the word via interviews with audiences at David Rabey's stage adaptation of J. G. Ballard's *Crash* (Aberystwyth, 2001). One interviewee, Amanda, states that, whereas 'you can buy a video and play it over and over and over again and you see the same thing again and again and you're seeing the same thing again', even 'if you've got the same actors with the same theatre and the same stage... every night it's gonna be different. Because nobody can, have the-the exact same breath, that they had the day before'.³⁹ Barker's own commentary problematizes Amanda's distinction between the live and recorded: 'Defenders of cinema might well of course query the consequential negative judgement, arguing that things are not so very different for them—the *circumstances of viewing* a film are never identical.'⁴⁰ Richard Schechner makes a similar argument, pointing out that whilst 'a film or a digitized performance art piece will be the same at each showing', still 'the context of every reception makes each instance different'.⁴¹ In such cases, 'every "thing" is exactly the same,' but 'each event in which the "thing" participates is different. In other words, the uniqueness of an event is not in its materiality but in its interactivity'.⁴² My previous chapter's consideration of what can be gleaned in the rereading of Sarah Hall's 'Mrs Fox' underscores Barker's and Schechner's connected points on the variability of reception even of seemingly static works. However, Schechner nevertheless reserves a special place for performance, positing that if the dynamism of a work's reception 'is so with regard to film and digitized events, how much more so in live performance, where both production and reception vary from instance to instance'.⁴³ This does not mean all performances are freeform. For Schechner, performances consist of 'restored behaviours', or 'twice-performed behaviours', in that they are 'actions people train to do, that they practise and rehearse'.⁴⁴ As Barker notes, even in performances that are peculiarly live, 'a committed company of players will surely be working towards minimizing random changes between performances. They will seek a plateau where everything in a production is controlled'.⁴⁵ Likewise, for Philip Auslander, it is repetition, not variation, that is the defining

³⁹ Martin Barker, 'Crash, Theatre Audiences, and the Idea of "Liveness"', *Studies in Theatre and Performance*, 23.1 (2003), 21–39 (p. 27).

⁴⁰ Barker, p. 27, original italics.

⁴¹ Richard Schechner, *Performance Studies: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 23.

⁴² Schechner, p. 23.

⁴³ Schechner, p. 23.

⁴⁴ Schechner, p. 22.

⁴⁵ Barker, p. 27.

feature of a production: ‘in the case of traditional theatre, any given performance of a particular production of a play has to be virtually identical to any other performance of that same production’, because, if it ‘deviates radically, it is arguably no longer a performance of that production’.⁴⁶

It is debatable how closely *Nautilus* adheres to what Auslander terms ‘traditional theatre’, but it certainly shares the qualities of being a production prepared in advance and performed in broadly the same way on successive occasions. I was in the audience for two renditions of *Nautilus* at Soho Theatre around 6 weeks apart, in early 2016. I have also studied a recording of the performance, done when the show debuted at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2015. Having seen the show at various points in its long run I can say that, across these three performances, the skits remained roughly the same in content, order and duration. But there were also some obvious changes (the reasons for which I speculate more upon below). One skit is absent from the Summerhouse recording but was present in the first live performance I saw, only to have been dropped again by the time of my second viewing: in it Wakenshaw stands for several seconds like a meerkat or perhaps a praying mantis before shouting, ‘Who?!’ to baffled silence from the audience.⁴⁷ Other sketches were inflated, as with Wakenshaw’s rendition of a game-hunter stalking a velociraptor. The game hunter *lines up a shot with a rifle*, balancing an elbow on an upraised knee, then a hip, then knee again, this time *resting against a wall*, slumping lower and lower until his rear elbow rests on the floor, before finally standing up and *taking the shot* with no elbow support whatever. On my first viewing of the production, this routine lasted less than half a minute, but was dragged out excruciatingly on the second occasion. My own experience of Wakenshaw’s specific act entirely supports these theorists’ conceptions of liveness: dynamic but controlled, varied yet repetitious. Compare this with Merleau-Ponty’s conception of *life*. Writing against previous, essentialist understandings of the organism, Merleau-Ponty states that it is not ‘a thing endowed with absolute properties, as fragments of Cartesian space. An organism is a fluctuation around norms’.⁴⁸

Unlike writing, live performance has no product beyond itself. This is acknowledged by Eco when he distinguishes the performative sign from an indirect representation; an

⁴⁶ Philip Auslander, *Liveness: Performance in a Mediatized Culture*, 2nd edn (London; New York, NY: Routledge, 2008), p. 63.

⁴⁷ Only when I returned to my notes after over a year did it occur to me this *might* be a reference to Robert Zemeckis’ film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* (1988). Perhaps Wakenshaw dropped the reference because it was not a recognisable enough (performance of the) trope.

⁴⁸ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Nature: Course Notes from the Collège de France*, ed. by Dominique Seglard, trans. by Robert Vallier (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2000), p. 183.

ostensive sign can pretend not to be such—arguably *is not such*—because rather than relying upon the mediation of words, it takes its own signification upon itself. Anne Ubersfeld makes a different, but related point: Ubersfeld argues that performance offers a unique case of signification because it makes itself its own referent: the text of the performance exists to produce its own performance, and so, as well as having a referent *out there*, performance is also a sign for itself.⁴⁹ There is no text of Wakenshaw’s show, at least none to which its audiences are privy. Performance is, or at least presents itself as being, autopoietic and autochthonous, the very same qualities that Merleau-Ponty associates with the organism. He states: ‘Living being is not a form; it is formed directly without the theme having to become an image’ (*Nature*, 183). And so ‘morphogenesis is neither a work of a copyist nor a force that goes on. The idea is a guide indissociable from the activity’ (*Nature*, 183). For these reasons, ‘the reality of the organism supposes a non-Parmenidean Being, a form that escapes from the dilemma of being and nonbeing’ (*Nature*, 183). Life is not the realisation of an essential but latent Being, for Merleau-Ponty, but is process and product simultaneously. We can compare this with the view of *autopoiesis* described by the biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, the coiners of the term: the thing that distinguishes living beings from other kinds of systems, they argue, ‘is that their organization is such that their only product is themselves, with no separation between producer and product. The being and doing of an autopoietic unity are inseparable, and this is their specific mode of organization’.⁵⁰ Both life and the kind of performance practised by Wakenshaw are characterised by fluctuation, which nevertheless exists as such only insofar as it is repetitious. Both have the quality of being formed directly, having no product beyond themselves. Although representational on the level of content, then, the form of Wakenshaw’s show bears out Baker’s and Taxidou’s claims to performance’s peculiar activeness and non-mimesis: and it is this dynamism and directness versus more passive and indirect modes that invites such comparisons between *liveness*—precisely in the nuanced and qualified theorisations of it I have summarised here—and *life* itself, in Merleau-Ponty’s ontology.

To say that Wakenshaw’s work is representational is not to say, however, that ostension is not significant, even if it initially appears to be only in the more colloquial sense

⁴⁹ Anne Ubersfeld, *Reading Theatre*, ed. by Paul Perron and Patrick Debbèche, trans. by Frank Collins (Toronto; Buffalo, NY; London: University of Toronto Press, 1999), pp. 18–20.

⁵⁰ Humberto R Maturana, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding*, Rev. ed. (Boston, MA; London: Shambhala, 1998), pp. 48–49.

of the word. Wakenshaw's performance explores what is *ostensible*, meaning what is visible, observable, on the surface. Unlike most of the artists this thesis considers, Wakenshaw's performance does not speculate on the (epistemologically inaccessible) interiorities of these other animals, Thomas Nagel's question of what it is like *for a bat* to be a bat. As Ron Broglio puts it, 'such depth, if radically other than our own, remains necessarily closed off to us'.⁵¹ For Broglio, this necessitates that artists—and theorists—limit themselves to what is observable, what is *on the surface* of nonhuman lives. The choice to focus only on the observable may call to mind the reductionist discourses of behaviourism, and its scepticism regarding the mental capacities of nonhuman animals—or, in its most zealous form, the denial of any nonhuman interiority, whatsoever. At the same time, however, whilst such discourse has clearly furthered a certain neo-Cartesianism in our understanding of nonhuman animals—reducing potentially thinking subjects to incognizant objects—the tendency to regard such a focus on ostensible, outward behaviour *as a reduction* is itself predicated upon a certain Cartesian privileging of consciousness, as a special kind of activity. Merleau-Ponty, by contrast, is relatively uninterested in consciousness as an explanation for, or type of, behaviour. The closest he comes to posing the question of animal subjectivity is towards the end of his second Paris lecture on the concept of 'Nature': 'Is there an animal consciousness,' he ponders, 'and if so, to what extent?' (*Nature*, 199) That this question went unpursued is neither surprising, nor a great loss; its emphasis on interiority is out of kilter with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology, in which 'consciousness' is understood as 'only one of the varied forms of behavior', one which 'must not be defined from within, from its own point of view, but such as we grasp it across the bodies of others' (*Nature*, 167).

If the this-ness of a certain animal is ever to be pinned down, for Merleau-Ponty, it will not be characterised only, or even primarily, by what occurs to it in consciousness. Most of what it means to be any animal, including the human, in Merleau-Ponty's analysis, takes place at a more bodily level, or, more accurately, takes place at a level upon which consciousness and behaviour, mind and body, are false dualities. The word that is important here is *style*. As previously quoted, 'the organism is not defined by its punctual existence; what exists beyond is a theme, a style' (*Nature*, 183). Likewise, whilst pondering the case of a starling seemingly hunting for non-existent flies (more on which below), Merleau-Ponty states that 'even if these acts are produced most of the time by reference to an object, they are something altogether

⁵¹ Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, p. xvii.

different from reference to an object, i.e. they are the manifestation of a certain style' (*Nature*, 192). Ted Toadvine associates *style* with what Merleau-Ponty calls a 'general attitude toward the world'.⁵² This attitude is neither merely perceptual, nor behavioural. It is of the body, but this should not be taken to mean that it is unconscious. Indeed, *style* operates somewhere between these poles, and so becomes a means of questioning their duality: elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty invokes *style* to explain how our bodies appear to know the action of typing at a keyboard, or to be capable of producing the phonemes required to sound out a word, seemingly without any conscious direction.⁵³ One of Merleau-Ponty's most striking revelations—one which runs directly counter to the anthropocentric privileging of complex cognition—is that so much of the business of behaviour occurs without consciousness ever appearing to be involved. This is the case not only for nonhumans, but humans, too—indeed, the latter is, overwhelmingly, Merleau-Ponty's subject of analysis. Style is neither human nor animal; it is *of an animality*, which all animate organisms share. Hence, the organism exists as 'a theme, a style, all these expressions seeking to express not a participation in a transcendental existence, but in a structure of the whole. The body belongs to a dynamic of behavior. Behavior is sunk into corporeality' (*Nature*, 183).

It is on this same level of style that mime operates. In the words of the prominent physical-theatre teacher, Jacques Lecoq: 'the imitation of the actor-mime demands first of all very precise observation of the gestures, attitudes and movements of mankind and of nature, which will then serve as language for the mime's own poetry in being transposed'.⁵⁴ For Étienne Decroux, what is emulated is, explicitly, a style: 'the mime presents manner, or style, through his choice of manner or style, just as the painter presents colour by means of colour'.⁵⁵ Wakenshaw's impressions are based upon close observation of animals' movements and gestures, which Wakenshaw transposes onto his own human frame, typically with comic results. In one skit, Wakenshaw lies prone on the stage, with his arms by his sides and his cheek resting on the floor. Wakenshaw has his face to the audience, wearing a blank stare, his

⁵² Ted Toadvine, 'Maurice Merleau-Ponty', in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. by Edward N. Zalta, Spring 2019 (Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2019) <<https://plato.stanford.edu/>> [accessed 12 March 2021]; Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Structure of Behavior*, trans. by Alden L. Fisher (Pittsburgh, PA: Duquesne University Press, 1983), p. 148.

⁵³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Donald A. Landes, *Phenomenology of Perception* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2012), pp. 145; 424–25.

⁵⁴ Jacques Lecoq, 'Mime, the Art of Movement', in *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, ed. by David Bradby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 67–93 (p. 69).

⁵⁵ Étienne Decroux, quoted in Jean Perret, 'Has Mime Become Separated from Theatre?', in *Theatre of Movement and Gesture*, ed. by David Bradby (New York, NY: Routledge, 2006), pp. 42–66 (p. 47).

mouth slightly open and downturned. Bending at the knees and hips, Wakenshaw draws his knees up towards his waist, sticking his rear in the air, so that only his face, shoulders and lower legs are in contact with the ground. Unfolding, Wakenshaw pushes his upper body forward, wiggling his torso and sliding his shoulders and face along the floor: he is being a *caterpillar*. He rolls onto his back and draws his legs up to his chest, sticking his feet up in the air. He has drawn his body into a *chrysalis*. After lying this way for several seconds, Wakenshaw *emerges*, rolling over onto his knees, curled tightly into a ball with his chest pressed against his legs. He sticks his arms out to the sides, *unfolding his wings*, which he *flaps gingerly, drying them*. Wakenshaw *grows a pair of antennae* (using his hands to show their growth, whilst making a cartoonish, high-pitched *brooop* sound). Climbing onto one knee, he *fans his wings, raising them above his head*. His expression becomes serene, perhaps a little proud. He pauses like this for a few seconds. Then, he jumps to his feet and begins *flapping his wings* (wildly flailing his arms) whilst *flying* (jumping haphazardly) around the stage. His *metamorphosis into a butterfly* is complete. Wakenshaw does not emulate the animal's appearance—and so his impressions are not mimetic—at no point does he really look anything like a caterpillar, a chrysalis or a butterfly, but he assumes just enough of their outward behaviour to gesture towards their *style*.

These adoptions of animals' styles are always conditional and incomplete. Of course, Wakenshaw does not become the animals he imitates. Indeed, the comedy of these routines derives from the incongruity of seeing them enacted by a creature whose morphology is so unlike that of the animal he is performing. Lecoq's characterisation of this as a transposition echoes Heidegger's consideration of the accessibility of nonhuman modes of being. Yet, for Lecoq, transposition seems to function in the opposite direction to Heidegger's sense of the word. Rather than a human transposing themselves into another experience, some attribute of that being is transposed *onto* the mime. Such a formulation does not assume that there is some essence of the butterfly into which one might gain insight, or some stable identity into which one might be transformed. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's philosophy requires us to rethink what prepositions might be relevant in such cases: there is no need for an imaginative transposition *into* this other mode of being, because, for Merleau-Ponty, the *into* is by-the-by; there may very well be something that it is like *for a butterfly* to be a butterfly, all of this occurring in the empirically inaccessible domain of subjective experience, but this is only a small part of the animal's story. This reading of Wakenshaw's work in light of Merleau-Pontian phenomenology bears out Ron Broglio's suggestion that 'the surface can be the site of

productive engagement with the world of animals',⁵⁶ though for other reasons than Broglio puts forward: the level of ostensible behaviour is not a site of last resort, a consolation for being unable to see *within* to the animal's true nature; nor is it a reduction, because style is not the outward expression of a hidden interiority—the organism *is its style*.

Objectlessness and *Umwelten*: collapsing the Cartesian dichotomy

Just because Merleau-Ponty largely dismisses consciousness as a field of inquiry does not mean he sees nonhuman animals as untranscendent, however. The question of how objects might exist for humans and nonhuman animals forms an integral part of existentialism's interrogations of animality: for Heidegger, the animal's poverty in world is figured as a lack of access to being as such; similarly, for Beauvoir, animals do not share the transcendental consciousness that allows humans to go beyond the given. Merleau-Ponty's rereadings of Jakob von Uexküll and Konrad Lorenz and the 'objectlessness' of instinct does away with this distinction entirely. The most relevant example from Uexküll that Merleau-Ponty considers is of a starling observed chasing a non-existent fly, in which the bird goes through the motions of hunting, even though there is no actual prey in the vicinity.⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty presents the example in his own words:

Perched on a statue, [the starling] observes the sky and suddenly it has the attitude characteristic of its species at the moment when the prey is in view. Its eyes and its head follow the prey which does not exist, then it takes off, makes the snapping gesture, and strikes the (non-existent) herbivore with its beak to kill it; it makes a movement of ingestion, then shakes its head as if it were satisfied. This instinct is not accomplished in view of an end, it is an activity for pleasure. [...] Thus a sort of reference to the non-actual, an oneiric life, is manifested in these instinctive activities in a pure state. (*Nature*, 192)

For Merleau-Ponty, the starling's non-actual hunting is an example of *objectlessness*, a term that he derives from his reading of Lorenz's account of instinct. Merleau-Ponty explains that, for Lorenz, "instinctive tendencies" are not actions directed toward a goal, not even toward a distant goal of which the animal is aware. Instinct is a primordial activity "without object," *objektlos*' (*Nature*, 190). The objectlessness of instinct is so significant for Merleau-Ponty because it overturns a mechanist account of life. Even those behaviours most integral to

⁵⁶ Broglio, *Surface Encounters*, p. xvii.

⁵⁷ Merleau-Ponty's indebtedness to Uexküll for this example is not acknowledged by the philosopher himself, nor is it identified by Brett Buchanan in his excellent chapter examining Uexküll's influence on Merleau-Ponty, but the two correspond too neatly for them to be coincidental. See Buchanan, pp. 115–49; Uexküll, p. 68.

survival, such as ‘the way in which the animal uses its body to drink’, or ‘for food and excretory functions’, ‘are all accompanied by a ceremony’ (*Nature*, 191). In other words, there is a certain superfluity or excess to these behaviours, meaning that even ‘in these instinctive tendencies that are very close to referring back to the functioning of the organism, we are already beyond the mechanist explication. [...] These activities do not have an object; they come to hook onto an object without being oriented toward this object’ (*Nature*, 191).⁵⁸ By pushing Lorenz’s notion of objectlessness, Merleau-Ponty forces a revaluation of instinct and, in the process, upturns a mechanist explanation of animal behaviour, and the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. If the starling can pursue non-existent flies, for instance, it follows that this behaviour does not direct itself towards objects in the world, e.g. the fly *as such*, even if there are flies actually present: ‘The instinct is an activity established from within but that possesses a blindness and does not know its object.’ (*Nature*, 192) If it is blind to an object in the world, then this behaviour must be directed toward something within the organism itself; in other words, it must depend upon some form of representation.

It will help to think through the implications of Merleau-Ponty’s vision of transcendence and representation if we revisit Heidegger’s honeybee in this light. As explained in my first chapter, Heidegger, in his 1929-30 Freiberg lectures, recounts an experiment that involved removing part of the abdomen of a bee before presenting it with some honey. Without ever being able to fill its abdomen, the bee drinks incessantly, seemingly unaware of the diminishment of the honey. Heidegger takes this as evidence that the bee is not aware of the honey as something that was present to begin with, i.e. it does not have access to the honey *as such* (*Fundamental*, 242-3). *Dasein*, with its world-building prowess, is able to look beyond or behind the honey to its true essence, to grasp its being *as such*. But the relationship between Heidegger’s animal and its surroundings is one of immanence: there is no break between behaviour and environment that might provide a space in which world-building may occur. Merleau-Ponty’s thinking would see this flipped. The human’s and bee’s relationship to the honey is of the same order, because neither has access to the honey *as such*. The bee’s behaviour never aims at the honey, but at an oneiric life, a representation. This ‘reference to the nonactual’

⁵⁸ Brian Massumi offers a similar consideration of Lorenz’s work, attending to the ethologist’s concept of the ‘supernormal’ and how this troubles the instinct/intentionality dichotomy, drawing a conclusion very similar to the position taken by Merleau-Ponty in his *Nature* lectures. However, Massumi appears to have been unfamiliar with Merleau-Ponty’s Paris course; in the chapter in which Massumi does the majority of his thinking about Lorenz, the French phenomenologist doesn’t get a mention. (See Brian Massumi, ‘The Supernormal Animal’, in *The Nonhuman Turn*, ed. by Richard Grusin [Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015], pp. 1–17).

is the break in immanence between behaviour and environment, which provides the leeway within which reflection might occur. For Merleau-Ponty, this crack opens at the oft-times pejorated level of instinct. Because it is objectless, instinct, for Merleau-Ponty, has the kernel of symbolic representation: Merleau-Ponty titles the chapter in which his consideration of instinct occurs, 'The Passage from Instinct to Symbolism' (*Nature*, 190), and argues that 'the development of instinct into symbolic function is inscribed in the way in which instinct is constituted because it is *objektlos*, and from this fact, it possesses an imaging function' (*Nature*, 197, original italics). Such a representation is not necessarily conscious; Merleau-Ponty's real point is that we do not need consciousness in order to have representation. Already, at the level of instinct, there is a reference to the nonactual.

Read in this light, the starling's performance becomes a sort of mime. Indeed, Merleau-Ponty's recountal of this example, with only the slightest of modification, could easily have been written about one of Wakenshaw's own skits. Like the starling, Wakenshaw's mimes are directed not towards concrete objects, but towards the non-actual. This is less an engagement with things that do not exist than a way of profiling them as if they do exist. As Jacque Lecoq says, 'the actor-mime uses talent to allow us to see what is invisible'.⁵⁹ Or, in the words of Jean Perret: 'The mime is there to create illusion. In his hands, dream becomes reality.'⁶⁰ Mime is a making ostensible of the oneiric. Read in light of Merleau-Ponty's consideration of instinct, it is also revealing of the oneiric in the real. The final skit of *Nautilus* draws attention to the mime's convention of objectlessness by breaking it. In this scene, Wakenshaw becomes a cowboy *entering a saloon*. (Wakenshaw's arms become the *saloon doors*, *opening* and *rattling shut* behind him.) He approaches *the bar*, where *he rests his arm*. He mimes asking for a drink. Wakenshaw steps through the non-actual bar to become the bartender. Bartender-Wakenshaw passes Cowboy-Wakenshaw *a drink*, which the latter *downs*. Not satisfied with *the drink* the bartender has given him, Cowboy-Wakenshaw *asks for another*, then *another*. When this has been done several times, Bartender-Wakenshaw produces from offstage a real can of Coca-Cola.⁶¹ Cowboy-Wakenshaw grabs it and takes a swig. He immediately spits the mouthful across the stage. His face becomes a mask of confusion. He slowly smacks his lips, pondering the taste in his mouth. He looks down to the can and his confusion is

⁵⁹ Lecoq, 'Mime, the Art of Movement', p. 69.

⁶⁰ Perret, p. 58.

⁶¹ In the Summerhall recording the bartender produces the real can straight away. In the Soho performances there are a few mimed drinks first.

replaced with abject horror. Nothing in Wakenshaw's oneiric life could prepare him for the existential crisis produced by this encounter with the real. Cowboy-Wakenshaw puts the coke can down on *the bar*; the instant he releases it, it falls to the ground. He repeats this action several times, with the same result. To adapt Merleau-Ponty, Wakenshaw's mime hooks onto an object it never expected to find.

If we follow Merleau-Ponty, however, the fact Wakenshaw can mime *drinking a can of coke*, or recoil from *a thoroughfare of speeding vehicles*, stems from the fact that his behaviours—the behaviours, in fact, of any animal—were never directed towards coke cans or vehicles, *as such*. For Merleau-Ponty, drinking a can of coke and *drinking a can of coke*, are of the same order: both are directed, not towards objects in the world, but towards the non-actual, towards representations. In keeping with Orozco's analysis of the concrete animal presence in performance, the inclusion of the 'real' coke can estranges the mime's contrivance, accentuating the objectlessness of his performance, but reading the coke can skit in light of Merleau-Ponty's writing on instinct in turn estranges the 'realness' of the can itself, and, along with it, the supposedly privileged access to objects that humans ostensibly enjoy—whether such access is figured as the property of conscious subjects or *Daseins*. This skit does not contain any performance of a nonhuman character, but by making conspicuous his interactions with this oneiric universe to which all behaviour is directed Wakenshaw performs *his animality*, profiling a manner of relating to the world that is common to all animate organisms, in Merleau-Pontian terms.

This oneiric universe is—in a word—the *Umwelt*. For Merleau-Ponty, Uexküll's *Umwelt* theory is so compelling for the same reason he enjoys Lorenz: it offers a means to collapse the Cartesian dualism of mind and body. Explicitly, Merleau-Ponty lauds the fashion in which 'Uexküll denounces the Cartesian dichotomy' (*Nature*, 168). In Merleau-Ponty's analysis, the *Umwelt* is not an interior world corresponding to an exterior. Instead it sits between these potential worlds, something like the aperture in a pinhole camera, 'an intermediary reality between the world such as it exists for an absolute observer and a purely subjective domain' (*Nature*, 167). For this reason, as with the representational function of instinct, the *Umwelt* is not synonymous with, nor does it presuppose, consciousness. It is 'the aspect of the world in itself to which the animal addresses itself, which exists for the behavior of the animal, but not necessarily for its consciousness' (*Nature*, 167). Behaviour possesses an *Umwelt*, insofar as it addresses itself not towards an environment *as such*, but towards a representation thereof.

And whilst the *Umwelt* does not presuppose consciousness, it does presuppose the production and interpretation of signs. In Uexküll's words, 'we who still hold that our sense organs serve our perceptions, and our motor organs our actions, see in animals as well not only the mechanical structure, but also the operator, who is built into their organs'.⁶² When we attend to the operations of the organism, 'we no longer regard animals as mere machines, but as subjects whose essential activity consists of perceiving and acting'.⁶³ Whereas the physiologist would see an animal's response to a stimulus as a merely mechanical process, explicable via a reflex arc, for Uexküll each stage of the process involves a subject, which perceives a sign and produces an effect. This is the case at least down to a cellular level.⁶⁴ A nerve that transmits an electrical current, for instance, relies on that current being received; a gland might sense an electrical signal and, in response, produce a hormone, which is detected by other receptor cells. At each stage there is a 'subject' or 'operator'. The fundamental difference this has is to recast each stage in the process as active, not as the interaction of passive components in a mechanistic system. Organisms, their organs, even their individual cells, have *Umwelten*. And so, as Merleau-Ponty observes, 'the notion of *Umwelt* is destined to join what we usually separate: the activity that creates the organs and the activity of behavior, lower as well as higher. From animal-machines to animal-consciousness, there is everywhere an unfurling of an *Umwelt*' (*Nature*, 173). Merleau-Ponty argues that 'this behavioral activity oriented toward an *Umwelt* begins well before the invention of consciousness' (*Nature*, 167). It occurs 'as soon as we have stimulations that act, not by simple physical presence, but insofar as an organism is disposed to receive them and treat them as signals' (*Nature*, 167).

Again, we see how Merleau-Ponty fundamentally reformulates transcendence, as figured by his existentialist contemporaries. Whereas for Heidegger, as we saw in my first chapter, human transcendence is dependent upon temporal thought and the ability to grasp being as-such, and whereas for Beauvoir, as we saw in the previous chapter, transcendence requires a *cogito* that can rage against its imprisonment within the machine, for Merleau-Ponty, transcendence is present from the very beginnings of behaviour: 'behaviour is detached from the order of the in-itself (*en soi*) and becomes the projection outside the organism of a *possibility* which is internal to it' (*Structure*, 125, original italics). And so, 'the world, inasmuch as it harbors living beings, ceases to be a material plenum consisting of juxtaposed parts; it opens

⁶² Uexküll, p. 6.

⁶³ Uexküll, p. 6.

⁶⁴ Uexküll, p. 8.

up at the place where behavior appears' (*Structure*, 125). These transcendent activities do not imply nor require a *cogito*: 'they do not allow the showing through of a consciousness, that is, a being whose whole essence is to know, but rather a certain manner of treating the world, of "being-in-the-world"' (*Structure*, 125-6). In other words, they are again the manifestation of the animal's *style*. Although Merleau-Ponty does not directly reference Uexküll at this moment, that he is thinking of him becomes clear a moment later, when he clarifies that 'the gestures of behaviour, the intentions which it traces in the space around the animal, are not directed to the true world or pure being, but to being-for-the-animal, that is, to a certain milieu characteristic of the species' (*Structure*, 125). The thing that allows behaviour to transcend the given is its directedness towards the *Umwelt*.

Elsewhere, Merleau-Ponty addresses the question of the *Umwelt* more explicitly, considering Uexküll's infamous example of a tick. The parasite sits on a tree, where it can remain for up to eighteen years. The tick possesses only three senses: for light, heat and scent. When the target host (a mammal) passes beneath the tree, the scent of the butyric acid produced by the mammal is detected by the tick. The tick falls onto the mammal and finds a dark place without hair, and with a ready flow of blood close to the skin. It bites and embeds itself in the mammal's body. In this way, 'the whole rich world around the tick shrinks and changes into a scanty framework consisting, in essence, of three receptor cues and three effector cues—her *Umwelt*'.⁶⁵ Merleau-Ponty considers Uexküll's example at length, asking, 'how is this agencied? [...] Here there is a series of chained, conjugated reflexes. If they are chained together, it is because "the physical world chokes in a tick's *Umwelt*".'⁶⁶ He further asks: 'In what does this activity consist such that it organizes the *Umwelt* in a narrow relation with the exterior agent who intervenes like a key in a lock?' (*Nature*, 174) The word 'chokes' should be understood here in the sense of *chokepoint*; the environment narrows to the aperture of the tick's *Umwelt*. The *Umwelt* is neither lock nor key, in the second analogy, but is the fitness of the key to the lock, their coming together. The *Umwelt* is emergent out of this interrelation.

In a word, the *Umwelt* is a *chiasm*, a relationship that emerges out of interaction, such as that which exists between a sentient being and sensory stimulus, in which each comes to exist only in its relationship with the other. The famous example Merleau-Ponty chooses to illustrate this is that of two hands touching each other, in which the roles of sensor and sensed,

⁶⁵ Uexküll, p. 12.

⁶⁶ *Nature*, 174, quoting from Uexküll's *Stroll* (Merleau-Ponty's own translation).

subject and object, become reversible. Neither half of the dialectic can claim any primacy in such a relationship. Merleau-Ponty explains that ‘when I touch my right hand with my left hand, the object “right hand” also has this strange property, itself, of sensing. [...] The two hands are never simultaneously both touched and touching’ (*Phenomenology*, 95). The phenomenology of this is not of ‘two sensations that I could feel together, as when we perceive two objects juxtaposed, but rather of an ambiguous organization where the two hands can alternate between the functions of “touching” and “touched”’ (*Phenomenology*, 95). It is not until *The Visible and the Invisible*, that Merleau-Ponty names such dialectical comings-together a *chiasm* and takes the double touch for an example: ‘My hand, while it is felt from within, is also accessible from without, itself tangible, for my other hand, for example’ (*Visible*, 131). The result is a ‘crisscrossing within it of the touching and the tangible’, by which ‘its own movements incorporate themselves into the universe they interrogate, are recorded on the same map as it; the two systems are applied upon one another, as the two halves of an orange’ (*Visible*, 131). As Brett Buchanan explains: both hands ‘are subject to the other’s object to the extent that subject-object becomes a meaningless distinction, at least as defined by their traditional parameters’.⁶⁷

All performances are, by definition, chiasmic, inhering in the relationship between a performer and an audience. As Helen Freshwater observes, virtually every definition of theatre requires the presence of at least one audience member.⁶⁸ For Schechner, to study a cultural artefact “as” performance’ means ‘to investigate [...] how it interacts with other objects or beings, and how it relates to other objects or beings’.⁶⁹ In short: ‘Performances exist only as actions, interactions, and relationships.’⁷⁰ Gaulier himself tacitly acknowledges the importance of this dialectical audience-performer relationship when he states, in one film on his school’s website: ‘I see someone... never I think, “Oh! He could be on the stage”... never. Even if he’s good to tell a story... You will have to see the person on the stage, in front of people, looking at the person.’⁷¹

Whilst every performance is a *chiasm*, however, Wakenshaw’s work is exceptional due to the manner in which this dialectical relationship is pared back. Amsden, who also trained

⁶⁷ Buchanan, p. 141.

⁶⁸ Helen Freshwater, *Theatre & Audience* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 1–2.

⁶⁹ Schechner, p. 24.

⁷⁰ Schechner, p. 24.

⁷¹ Philippe Gaulier, *Philosophy of Teaching* (Paris, 2010) <<http://www.ecolephilippegaulier.com/>> [accessed 17 January 2019].

at the Ecole Philippe Gaulier, has written on her experiences there, and argues that Gaulier's unique approach instils a particular sensitivity and responsiveness to audience. Amsden describes the typical format for Gaulier's courses, which comprise a combination of individual, improvised performances to the class, and turns taken in communal children's games, the most common being a variation of 'Simon Says', in which students take turns to instruct one another to perform activities of their choosing.⁷² In both formats, Gaulier sits watching his students, holding a large drum. As soon as Gaulier deems the attempt at humour to be 'not funny', he bangs the drum and immediately dismisses the student from the stage. Amsden recalls that the drumbeat and dismissal often came 'immediately after their attempt began'.⁷³ Amsden explains that Gaulier's drumbeat and the (often savage) feedback he then provides might be the pedagogical devices by which students come to learn their craft, but its purpose is not to teach the performers how to be funny, or even how to discover for themselves what is funny. Instead, 'the pedagogy [Amsden] witnessed in Gaulier's classroom makes particular use of peer feedback', so that the 'central skill being taught in the clown workshop is that of listening to the audience'.⁷⁴ Amsden states that 'from the outset of the workshop, the students provide an audience for one another, making clear the defining nature of laughter to the clown. The game structure of the workshop [...] provides many opportunities for students to listen to audience response'.⁷⁵ This particular attunement to audience feedback (especially laughter) constitutes what Amsden has termed a 'pedagogy of spectatorship', 'where learning takes place in the act of being watched and assessed by the reactions of a group of spectators. This pedagogy does not only take place in the classroom, but continues into the work environment'.⁷⁶

To put this into Uexküll's terminology, we can say that Gaulier-trained clowns are being conditioned to have their own *Umwelt*. Uexküll's own formulation of the *Umwelt* allows for such plasticity. In the final chapter of *Stroll*, Uexküll distinguishes between the respective *Umwelten* of different scientists. His illustration of 'The astronomer's *Umwelt*' shows a man sat at the top of an enormous tower, looking through a large telescope, with celestial bodies circling, their orbits through space indicated with white bars. The image represents the things to which the astronomer's senses are directed and attuned, and to which he attributes

⁷² Amsden, 'The Work of a Clown', p. 9.

⁷³ Amsden, 'The Work of a Clown', p. 9.

⁷⁴ Amsden, 'The Work of a Clown', p. 60.

⁷⁵ Amsden, 'The Work of a Clown', p. 74.

⁷⁶ Amsden, 'The Work of a Clown', p. 100.

functional significance: in short, the image shows the *objects* in the astronomer's *Umwelt*. Uexküll contrasts this with the *Umwelt* of the nuclear physicist, who is similarly surrounded by orbiting particles (electrons), but these are in a constant state of chaotic flux. Uexküll also gives the example of a scientist studying air waves, whose understanding of this process is on entirely different terms to those of the musician, even though they study the same phenomenon.⁷⁷ For Uexküll, an individual's *Umwelt* can be retuned to encompass different sensory stimuli (receptor cues) and respond with different behaviours (effector cues). To say that Gaulier-trained clowns have their own performative *Umwelten*, then, is to say that there are certain features of their environment to which they are attuned, and which they invest with functional significance. If the stage is open, the student can stand up and perform. If there is laughter from the audience, the student will continue and perhaps exaggerate what they were doing. If there is no laughter the student will try something else. If Gaulier doesn't beat his drum the student continues. As soon as Gaulier beats his drum the student stops immediately and leaves the stage. The simplicity of Gaulier's games pares back the performance to its essential elements, reducing the performers' surroundings to three meaningful receptor cues: the open stage, laughter, Gaulier's drum. The entirety of the workshop environment chokes in the clown's new *Umwelt*.

To say that performers like Wakenshaw have their own *Umwelt* is to recast the practice of composition. It no longer makes sense to say that Wakenshaw creates the pieces he performs, at least not fully. This notion of diffused agency can be applied to any text, especially if we follow Schechner's suggestion that anything can be studied as performance by attending to its interactivity. Wakenshaw's performance is, however, a site in which this interactivity is more immediate and more conspicuous. This brings me back to the example I gave earlier, of the game hunter stalking the velociraptor. As I noted, Hunter-Wakenshaw's aiming was brief, half a minute or so, on the first occasion I saw the show live; on the second, it was perhaps double the length. The key difference between the two was the audience's laughter, which, in a sense, drew out the performance, provided the sign for it to continue—likewise, the who-framed-Roger-Rabbit skit that was inserted, but then dropped, presumably because it did not land. Wakenshaw's programme notes to *Nautilus* state: 'The shows I make are rarely finished. New strokes of the brush are constantly being applied.'⁷⁸ There is a recognition here both of the dynamism of the performance and its dialectical quality; the passive construction reads as

⁷⁷ Uexküll, pp. 79–80.

⁷⁸ Trygve Wakenshaw, *Trygve Wakenshaw: Nautilus* (Programme Notes) (London: Soho Theatre, 2016).

an acknowledgement of the intersubjectivity of his compositions, devoid of any attribution of agency. Of course, Wakenshaw maintains an active role; he is not passively responding to audience laughter. But the point of Merleau-Ponty's reading of Uexküll is that no *Umwelt* is passive; at every level is an agent who receives a sign and responds.

Such a formulation of the organism as a composition of multi-layered *Umwelten*, each requiring a sender and interpreter, offers one possible counter to the dilemma that Beer (quoted earlier) identifies: 'how is it possible to be true to animal experience, even if that were the wish, if your medium of description is written human language?'⁷⁹ Humans' tropings of nonhuman animals may be a peculiar form of signification, but Merleau-Ponty's analysis of the *Umwelt* gives the lie to nonhumans' banishment from the realm of language.⁸⁰ Thinking through the implications of Merleau-Ponty's analyses, Louise Westling suggests that 'our consciousness is thus part of the profound biological continuity we share with other animals'.⁸¹ It is not only that Merleau-Ponty's analysis of Uexküll recasts the difference between nonhuman and human communication as a question of degree instead of kind; it makes communication, in a sense, the *definition* of the organism. Wakenshaw's self-conscious engagement with animals in their roles as tropes becomes no reinsertion of anthropocentrism when read in light of this philosophy, for which signification is the very stuff of life.

The *Umwelt* is not something that belongs to the organism. It inheres in the dialectical interaction of organism and environment. Like life itself, it is autochthonous, emergent from, and so having no existence outside of, this interaction. Uexküll's analogy, seized upon by Merleau-Ponty, is of 'the unfurling of an *Umwelt* as a melody that is singing itself' (*Nature*, 173). For Merleau-Ponty, 'this is a comparison full of meaning. When we invent a melody, the melody sings in us much more than we sing it [...]. The melody is incarnated and finds in the body a type of servant' (*Nature*, 173-4). Likewise, the performance does not belong to Wakenshaw, but inheres in his interactions with the audience. This brings me back, again, to the epigraph from Marcel Jousse, which began this chapter. 'Miming differs from mimicry',

⁷⁹ Beer, p. 313, original italics.

⁸⁰ Given Merleau-Ponty's endorsement and adaptation of Uexküll's *Umwelt* and its theorisation of all life processes as exchanges of signs, it is no surprise that the former, like the latter, has been highly influential in informing the field of biosemiotics. In addition to Westling's writing on this topic, see, for instance, Maurita Harney, 'Merleau-Ponty, Ecology, and Biosemiotics', in *Dwelling in the Landscapes of Thought*, ed. by Suzanne L. Cataldi and William S. Hamrick (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2007), pp. 133-46; Jesper Hoffmeyer, *Biosemiotics: An Examination Into the Signs of Life and the Life of Signs* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2009).

⁸¹ Louise Westling, *The Logos of the Living World: Merleau-Ponty, Animals, and Language* (New York, NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), p. 7.

Jousse explains, because ‘it is not imitation but a way of grasping the real that is played out in our body. A normal human being is “played” by the reality that reverberates in him’.⁸² As with Merleau-Ponty’s characterisation of the *Umwelt*, this reality inheres in the ‘interactions that play themselves out spontaneously within us. Human beings think with their whole bodies; they are made up of complexes of gestures and reality is in them, without them, despite them’.⁸³ I am struck by the similarity of the analogy drawn by Marcel Jousse and the musical metaphor that Merleau-Ponty seizes upon in Uexküll: a singer sung by the song she sings; a mime played by reality that reverberates in him.

It is a skit from one of Wakenshaw’s other shows, however, that best illustrates this interactivity, and, appropriately, does so via a musical motif. In it, Wakenshaw mimes a musician playing with a *loop pedal* and *volume mixer*. He produces, vocally, a series of sounds. First, the *thud—thud—thud* of a kick drum. He repeats the beat while pointing to a section of the audience. This is already midway through the show and the crowd know what is expected of them; it only takes a few seconds for most of them to join in. After *stamping his foot on the loop pedal*, Wakenshaw stops voicing the drum. The audience continues. Wakenshaw repeats the process with a *hi-hat* then a *shaker*. He now has the audience—split three ways—producing an entire drum loop. Wakenshaw sidles over to stage right and starts to *play with the controls on a volume mixer*. He gradually *turns the volume up*: the audience-drum-kit respond by getting louder. He *turns the audience-drum-kit* down. He plays with them like this for a minute or so, eventually *cranking the volume so high* that the *volume mixer explodes* (Wakenshaw makes noises like crackling electronics and hand gestures of *flying sparks*). The audience drum loop collapses into laughter and applause. Wakenshaw stands at the centre of the performance. He directs the audience to make the sounds of the drum-kit. But Wakenshaw’s conducting is also an abdication. By involving the audience to such an extent Wakenshaw abandons his control over the proceedings. Mime and the *Umwelt* are not things that arise from within the performer or organism. They emerge from the interaction of performer and audience, organism and environment. Performance does not belong to performer; to combine Merleau-Ponty and Marcel Jousse, the performance ‘is incarnated and finds in [Wakenshaw] a type of servant’, making him the receptacle of ‘interactions that play themselves out spontaneously within [him]’.

⁸² Marcel Jousse, quoted in Lecoq, ‘Imitation: From Mimicry to Miming’, p. 4.

⁸³ Marcel Jousse, quoted in Lecoq, ‘Imitation: From Mimicry to Miming’, p. 4.

Inter-animality and Alterity: apprehending the Other

As this last example illustrates, the *Umwelt*'s interrelation of organisms and environments includes the other organisms within that environment; in other words, if the organism is *chiasms* all the way down, it is also *chiasms* all the way across, to its relationships with its conspecifics, and with other species. Merleau-Ponty's term to describe this *chiastic* togetherness of lifeforms is 'inter-animality', the dialectic by which animals exist only in relation with one another: 'What exists are not separated animals, but an inter-animality.' (*Nature*, 189) A species is not 'a sum of individuals exterior to one another' because 'there are as many relations among individuals of one species as there are internal relations among every part of the body of each animal' (*Nature*, 189). Humans and other animals are not self-contained consciousnesses whose worlds exist for them alone. Rather, 'the animal is produced by the production of a milieu' (*Nature*, 173), which includes the other animals within it, who each construct, and are constructed by, their imbrication within this milieu. Whilst the kind of always-already togetherness implied in Merleau-Ponty's notion of inter-animality may superficially resemble Heideggerian *Mitsein*, it is not a transposition into the false depth of an Other's interiority; these relationships are perceptual—inter-animality constitutes a 'specular relation between animals' in which 'each is the mirror of the other' (189)—but perception, for Merleau-Ponty, does not mean consciousness, as we have seen. As Westling notes, this chiasm shifts the focus from a '*cogito*, the thinking consciousness of the perceiver', to 'the ecological interrelationships of beings that temporarily emerge in particular forms [...] and then merge back into its body again'.⁸⁴ Merleau-Ponty explicitly extends inter-animality to encompass relationships between organisms of different species, 'even those that are usually enemies, as the rat lives among vipers' (*Nature*, 189).

At the same time, however, Merleau-Ponty ultimately places a limit on the sorts of insights that might be possible between—or even within—species. The 'perceptual relation' of inter-animality, he argues, 'gives an ontological value back to the notion of species', because 'the species is what the animal has to be [...] in the sense of a slope on which all the animals of the same species are placed' (*Nature*, 189). This slope is the *Umwelt*, the sensorial relationship with an environment that organisms possess by dint of their species. Inter-animality occurs only between those species whose *Umwelten* abut and overlap. Even within species, inter-animality is dependent more upon alterity than it is upon understanding. Merleau-Ponty

⁸⁴ Westling, p. 34.

emphasises the contingency and fraughtness of intersubjective encounters, even those between conspecifics. Imagining an exchange with a familiar human acquaintance, Merleau-Ponty muses: ‘Here is this well-known countenance, this smile, these modulations of voice, whose style is as familiar to me as myself. Perhaps in many moments of my life the other is for me reduced to this spectacle.’ (*Visible*, 10). What stops the Other from being mere object, however, is its capacity to surprise us: ‘should the voice alter, should the unwonted appear in the score of the dialogue’, in these moments ‘there breaks forth the evidence that yonder also, minute by minute, life is being lived’ (*Visible*, 11). Again, the phenomenologist is at pains to avoid attributing interiority to this otherness: it appears to arrive from ‘somewhere behind those eyes, behind those gestures, or rather before them, or again about them, coming from I know not what double ground of space’ (*Visible*, 11). He situates the origin of this behaviour within the Other, only to correct himself: it comes from before, or about. The phrasing he settles upon—‘some double ground of space’—refuses to resolve the ambiguity.

This unpredictability is what reveals the Other to be a subject in its own right. In such moments, ‘another private world shows through, through the fabric of my own, and for a moment I live in it; I am no more than the respondent for the interpellation that is made to me’ (*Visible*, 11). No longer a hermetic *cogito*—revealed, rather, never to have been one—‘my private world has ceased to be mine only, it is now the instrument which another plays’ (*Visible*, 11). We can compare this with Jacque Lecoq’s imagining of a trip to the zoo:

The body leans forward, observes, makes a mimetic effort to enter into the being of the animal, to know it better, to follow it, unconsciously expecting from it something which resembles us and which will never be forthcoming. But if the animal spits a lump of grass in your face, with no warning, you feel upset, disoriented: you failed to read the notice which says: “Guanacos, spitting animal.”⁸⁵

Just as J. A. Baker captures the peregrine’s radical unknowability and independence from human activity by rendering so many passages in which the raptor does not appear, and like Sarah Hall’s fox, whose stubborn agency-writ-alterity is revealed when she bucks the husband’s expectations of her, the nonhuman ultimately defies the mime’s attempts to perform it, revealing its status as a subject in its own right. In such encounters there is no longer—if, indeed, there ever was—identification, transposition, empathy; there is instead surprise, disruption, the apprehension of alterity. For Merleau-Ponty, the surface of other lives is readable—this is how we must grasp the Other, if we are to attempt to at all—but the Other

⁸⁵ Lecoq and Perret, p. 3.

is never reducible to our previous readings. This breakdown of connection, paradoxically, is what allows for the intrusion of the Other into one's own world, and one's recognition of its being for-itself.

Wakenshaw accomplishes this effect by breaking the fourth wall. Midway through *Nautilus*, the repeat human villain of the piece meets Chicken-Wakenshaw in a bar. Villain-Wakenshaw plies Chicken-Wakenshaw with *drinks*, before attempting to seduce her. Chicken-Wakenshaw shakes her head, and mimes *putting on a ring*. A moment later Villain-Wakenshaw is walking Chicken-Wakenshaw *down the aisle*. Minister-Wakenshaw receives them, and welcomes the audience: 'Dearly beloved, we are gathered here today...' He proceeds with: 'If anyone knows any reason why these two may not be joined in holy matrimony...' In all three performances I have studied the audience remains silent. After a moment's pause, Wakenshaw surveys the audience: 'Really?!' he shout-whispers: 'It's a man, and a chicken!' Such direct addresses to the audience are one of Brecht's original methods for breaking the fourth wall, estranging or alienating the audience from the events on stage.⁸⁶ In such encounters 'the audience can no longer have the illusion of being the unseen spectator at an event which is really taking place'.⁸⁷ Tellingly, Brecht associates such ruptures with the subversion of any empathy between performer and audience: 'the technique which produces an A[lienation]-effect is the exact opposite of that which aims at empathy'.⁸⁸ Such breakings of the fourth wall are therefore, in part, devices for staging alterity, for reminding us that the Other is much more than the sum of our prior readings and expectations. When Wakenshaw addresses the audience in this way, we are confronted with his own unruly agency, directly challenged in our assumptions as spectators. At the same time, in keeping with Brecht's analysis, the passivity of our role as witnesses is also thrown into doubt. His calling out of his audience reveals our connection with Wakenshaw and with our fellow audience members. The interactivity of this encounter is not the exception within Wakenshaw's work, but very much the norm: the wedding scene merely calls attention to an inter-animality that pervades his entire performance style. On reflection, I come to see my own complicity in the show's events, many of which entail animal cruelty. As in the velociraptor skit, our laughter spurs the performance on, fuelling the events on stage. If I stop laughing, these events might cease, or at least change tack, but I continue, and Wakenshaw hams it up. Towards the show's end,

⁸⁶ Brecht, p. 136.

⁸⁷ Brecht, p. 92.

⁸⁸ Brecht, p. 136.

chicken-Wakenshaw *lays eggs and cracks them into a frying pan* for her ravenous new human husband. *One of the eggs contains a chick.* Chicken-Wakenshaw *holds it up*, announcing, 'It's a boy!' before *dumping it into a blender and blitzing it.* Wakenshaw breaks the fourth wall again, seemingly unable to resist stepping out of character: 'Well,' he reminds us, 'that's what you do!'

Conclusion

Wakenshaw's representations of animals may limit themselves to the reperformance of hackneyed tropes, making no claims to an understanding of the chicken *qua* chicken. Nevertheless, his performance does approach animality and animals *as such*, in Merleau-Ponty's conceptualisation. In the liveness of his performance, Wakenshaw comes very close to Merleau-Ponty's conception of life: repetitious yet varied, self-producing and with no product beyond itself. In his emulation of animals' *styles*, Wakenshaw finds a level upon which all animality operates, as a dynamic of behaviour that is sunk into corporeality and reflected in a general attitude toward the world. Read in light of Merleau-Ponty's ontology of the organism, these performances do not so much preclude as render uninteresting any attempt to access another subjectivity. In the objectlessness of his mimes, Wakenshaw profiles the oneiric at the heart of all behaviour, making conspicuous the break between an organism and its environment, which, for Merleau-Ponty, fatally undermines any mechanistic account of nonhuman life, or any pejoration of behaviour in favour of conscious experience. In a similar fashion, Wakenshaw's interactions with the audience dramatize the *Umwelt's* dialectical extensions outside itself, its emergence out of this interaction. Read in these ways, Wakenshaw's performances do indeed prove to be ostensive; sign and signified are of the same stuff, after all, and his performances *of animals* are upstaged—for me—by this performance *of his and our animality*. Reading these aesthetic and philosophical modes of thought together therefore offers a radical challenge to human exceptionalism. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy reincorporates the human within the animal world, drawing together all animal life within the sensible, as inter-animality. This togetherness is no easy transposition into another's experience, however, nor is it empathy. It is, rather, the breakdown of both; it is in those moments when connection appears most fraught, or seems to have failed, that we apprehend the agency writ-alterity of Others, human and nonhuman. Wakenshaw stages this inter-animality, and the alterity upon which it hinges, playfully subverting audience expectations to confront us with his unruly agency, and our own inter-animal imbrication in the performance. And perhaps it is worth sparing a final thought for Fevered Sleep's *Sheep, Pig, Goat*,

armed with this notion of an inter-animal alterity. Read in these terms, the production offers more insight than it would seem to at first glance, albeit in a way that runs directly counter to what the show's producers intended it to achieve. *Fevered Sleep* may have hoped to provide a means for the humans to get to know the eponymous animals, but the indifference of these nonhuman audience members offers us the clearest picture yet of nonhuman Others in their absolute autonomy from human designs; this is less a seeing animals as they really are, more a seeing animals in their sheer defiance of being known. These sheep, pigs and goats do not make good audience members. However, read in light of a philosophy that emphasises the ultimate unknowability of all Others, and which sees in this very unknowability the confirmation of agency, these eponymous animals' poor spectatorship is what marks them as subjects in their own rights. Such a connection between Wakenshaw's work and *Fevered Sleep*'s production gives the final lie to any claim to nonhumans' unique 'realness' in the performance space, revealing the extent to which all inter-animal interactions are predicated upon our expectations of the Other, and what the Other does to arrest them. Such an apprehension of alterity does not deny these Others' interiority, but simply leaves it to its own devices. The next (and final) chapter of this thesis examines what happens when such interiority is denied, not only to other animals, but to certain humans. Turning to works by two Martiniquan writers—Frantz Fanon and Patrick Chamoiseau—I examine the cultural coproduction of humanity, animality, and race, and the implications of this for thinking the connections and incommensurabilities of human and nonhuman modes of being.

Chapter Four – Overdetermined from Without: Frantz Fanon and Patrick Chamoiseau

“It has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man—meaning, of course, white man.”

Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

“His existence has had no more rhyme or reason. Simply the hypocritical aping of obedience.”

Patrick Chamoiseau, *The Old Slave and the Mastiff*

Originally published in French in 1997, the same year as Timothy Treadwell’s *Among Grizzlies*, Patrick Chamoiseau’s *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* (2018) shares much with this, and with the other works this thesis has considered. Like J. A. Baker’s and Treadwell’s texts, the novel is concerned with the contestability of the category of the human, yet here the questioning of individuals’ humanity—which was most evident in the critical commentary to Baker’s and Treadwell’s works—becomes central to the novel itself. As with Sarah Hall’s and Larissa Lai’s texts, Chamoiseau’s novel is interested in the ways in which nonhuman and human identities are culturally constructed, products of a dominant Western episteme that separates not only human from animal, but also dominantly situated humans from marginalised human Others. Like Trygve Wakenshaw’s *Nautilus*, Chamoiseau’s novel explores the dilemma that this cultural constructedness of identities poses to anyone attempting to represent a nonhuman, or, indeed, human, mode of being—how can we escape the fact that all representations are invariably tropes that may obscure as often as they reveal? As with all the texts in this thesis, Chamoiseau’s novel attempts to imagine another animal’s mode of experience (that of the eponymous mastiff) and imagines a transposition of a human (the eponymous old slave) into or toward this mode of being. In this text, however, this transposition is undertaken from a different starting point, namely from the perspective of a human always already marginalised within, even excluded from, (full) humanity, by dint of his race.

In the words of Claire Jean Kim, ‘race lumps and splits [...] placing all nonwhites into a borderlands between human and animal’, ‘an imaginative space where both liminal humans and the most human-like animals are located’.¹ On the other hand, ‘whites,’ who are ‘seen as

¹ Claire Jean Kim, *Dangerous Crossings: Race, Species and Nature in a Multicultural Age* (Cambridge; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 24–25.

quintessentially human, have never been located in this borderlands'.² My first and second chapter readings give me cause to question Kim's rather structuralist stance on this intersection of animality and human identity politics; white humans are sometimes maligned within or excluded from the bounds of the human, often due to, for instance, ill-health, or gender. However, race does occupy a unique, and uniquely troubling, position in the machinery of human exceptionalism—which is also to say that the figure of the animal occupies a uniquely troubling place in the machinery of white supremacy. Sylvia Wynter has shown how the Western 'descriptive statement of the human' overrepresents the white Euro-American man as the archetypal human.³ In other words, the 'anthropological machine' produces the human, not only by separating it from all other animals, but also from all nonwhite humans, whom it simultaneously constructs as sub- or inhuman.

Perceptions of the supposed similarity between the treatments of nonhuman animals and certain groups of nonwhite humans—chiefly, black slaves—have led some animal rights advocates to proffer a similarity between animalisation and racialisation. As Kim notes, the term 'abolitionism' has been co-opted from anti-slavery and civil rights discourse and applied in the context of human-animal relations. Conversely, the abolition of slavery and advancements in civil rights have often mobilised a rhetoric that normalises human exploitation of nonhuman animals. Such comparisons make gains only by obscuring differences and instrumentalising one group's suffering in favour of the other,⁴ and so, as Philip Armstrong observes, 'equations' such as these will inevitably 'fail to advance either postcolonial or animal studies very far'.⁵ Whilst, as Robert McKay argues, such moves are 'perhaps more evident in pro-animal campaigning than in "animal studies" per se, which [...] has generally tended to ignore race than trade on it',⁶ such an elision is its own problem. This chapter contributes to the growing body of scholarship seeking to redress this, considering how race and animality are culturally coproduced, whilst attempting to locate the limits of any parallels and affinities that might exist between them.

The anti-racism and animal 'liberation' campaigns that Kim singles out both rely upon an extensionist logic, in which it is argued that rights—or some other form of moral

² Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, p. 25.

³ Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation—An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review*, 3.3 (2003), 257–337.

⁴ See Claire Jean Kim, 'Abolition', in *Critical Terms for Animal Studies*, ed. by Lori Gruen (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2018), pp. 15–31.

⁵ Philip Armstrong, 'The Postcolonial Animal', *Society & Animals*, 10.4 (2002), 413–19 (p. 414).

⁶ Robert McKay, *Animal Form: Five Anthropofugal Fictions*, Forthcoming.

consideration—ought to be extended to nonhuman or to human Others on the basis of their perceived similarity to (one definition of) the human. As Lindgren Johnson notes, whilst such an approach seems to promise a way to extend our moral community, it also serves to reinforce the very stance against which it professes to speak—the privileging of the human—by assuming that the only capacities that have any value are those that are recognisably like the capacities that humans supposedly possess, including ‘traditional markers of humanity such as classical agency and autonomy’.⁷ And so, ‘despite its radical challenge to human hegemony, [...] much of rights discourse is fully grounded in humanism’s construction of “the human,” which remains the rubric for consideration’, meaning that such a model would see nonhumans ‘brought under the aegis of legal protection and rights by way, ironically, of a more fundamentally entrenched humanism’.⁸ Rights for nonwhite humans have often been fought for, and secured, according to this same extensionist logic. As Frantz Fanon notes, historical gains of blacks have largely been achieved by asserting their similarity to whites: ‘After much reluctance, the scientists had conceded that the Negro was a human being; *in vivo* and *in vitro* the Negro had been proved analogous to the white man: the same morphology, the same history.’⁹ Fanon also alludes to ‘the strivings of contemporary Negroes [...] to prove the existence of a black civilization to the white world’.¹⁰ Whether directed towards human or animal rights, extensionism obeys the same logic, offering moral consideration only insofar as those in question are perceived to resemble the Western descriptive statement of the human.

As Wynter and other cultural theorists have established, whilst this descriptive statement functions by presenting itself as supracultural and universal, in fact it represents only one genre of the human among many (albeit an especially pervasive and pernicious one). Recent scholarship questions the desirability of belonging to this Western descriptive statement, instead bringing to the fore and examining other modes of thinking the human. Joshua Bennett’s *Being Property Once Myself* (2020), for instance, examines how ‘African American authors have, from the very beginning, envisioned and enacted alternative ways of being human and thinking human personhood’.¹¹ Similarly, Alexander Weheliye’s *Habeas Viscus* (2014) explores ‘what different modalities of the human might come to light if we do

⁷ Johnson, p. 8.

⁸ Johnson, p. 8.

⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. by Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008), p. 90, original italics.

¹⁰ Fanon, p. 22.

¹¹ Joshua Bennett, *Being Property Once Myself* (Cambridge, MA; London: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2020), p. 13.

not take the liberal humanist figure of Man as the master-subject but focus on how humanity has been imagined and lived by those subjects excluded from this domain?"¹² Lindgren Johnson's *Race Matters, Animal Matters* (2014) goes as far as to question the rubric of *posthumanist* philosophies, pointing out that the 'post' prefix implies that such philosophies are, 'by definition, a move, ethically and historically, beyond humanism, one that occurs *after* humanism'.¹³ This stance 'emerges out of privilege and assumes an exploration to be launched, yet again, from a detached purview—from a humanity that, for practical purposes, is quite secure within the human', even if posthumanist thinkers have chosen to uncouple their philosophies from this very category. For Johnson, the outsider position in which black writers have been placed can provide new perspectives on the categories of human and animal, distinct from the ways these have been constructed in the Western canon of thought. Johnson examines 'this "space before" through what [she] call[s] *fugitive* humanism',¹⁴ considering 'how African America has often rehabilitated degraded "animality," both animal and human, in the midst of atrocity' and 'the ways that such a black recuperation of animality—and often animals themselves—makes radical and ethical use of dehumanization'.¹⁵ As these scholars have realised—and as already spelled out in the introduction to this thesis—it is worth examining alternatives to this descriptive statement of the human so as to break the hermeneutic circle of this dominant discourse, revealing new ways of thinking humanity and animality, and the relationship between these constructs.

This chapter locates an alternative to this dominant Western genre of the human in the philosophy of another Martiniquan writer: Frantz Fanon. Animals are something of an absent presence within Fanon's writings: as this chapter demonstrates, his work makes very little reference even to some supposedly singular, homogeneous 'animal' or animality. What is more, those few mentions of nonhumans that do occur in Fanon's writing suggest he is content merely to beg the question of nonhumans' reduction to biology and immanence. However, Fanon's inquiry into *human* existence speaks to questions of the animal, however unintentionally. For Fanon, the human is defined not by its supposed capacity for reason, by its biology, morphology, or by the myriad other criteria by which humans have been separated from and elevated above nonhuman animals within the Western canon of thought. Instead,

¹² Alexander G. Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham, NC; London: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 4.

¹³ Johnson, p. 17, original italics.

¹⁴ Johnson, p. 17, original italics.

¹⁵ Johnson, p. 15.

Fanon centres an alternative concept, 'sociogeny', which proffers a new, non-biocentric definition of the human, based on its capacity for second-order self-representation. McKay considers the concept of sociogeny as picked up by Wynter, interpreting this as a reinscription of human exceptionalism.¹⁶ In this chapter I argue that whilst sociogeny is exceptionalist, it is not inherently anthropocentric. By rejecting rationalist, biocentric definitions, Fanon allows us to rethink human–animal relations non-hierarchically.

At the same time, my principle focus is different from the previous considerations of race and animality that this chapter has so far introduced: in line with the broader aims of this thesis, I am also interested in how Fanon's new genre of the human might offer new possibilities for imagining human and nonhuman experiences, considering the connections between them, whilst remaining apprehensive of nonhuman alterity. To consider how Fanon's writings might facilitate such an undertaking, I put them to work in reading Chamoiseau's novel. Chamoiseau, through his descriptions of Plantation life, in particular his characterisation of the old slave, the Master and the mastiff, calls attention to the way in which identities are discursively coproduced, and culturally situated: it is through the denial of the slave and mastiff's being for themselves—their subjection to an against-their-will construction of identities *as slave* and *as monster*—that Chamoiseau's novel first imagines a limited connection between their experiences. Yet Chamoiseau's novel simultaneously insists that these experiences are incommensurable. When the old slave escapes, this is not simply from the Plantation, but also from the ontological position that is forced upon him *as slave*. Because coproduced, each of these categories (slave, monster, man) depends on the others for its definition; once one begins to unravel, the others follow suit, and the colonialist ontology of the Plantation—which relies upon the stable reproduction of these categories—breaks down.

Following his escape from the non-humanising logic of chattel slavery, Chamoiseau's old slave asserts his being *as human*, but as a new genre thereof, one which is defined partly via his newfound self-awareness of his embodied animality. In this way, Chamoiseau's novel enacts something like Anat Pick's 'creaturely ethics'. As Pick states, such an ethics does not 'rest on capacities that nonhuman animals may (or may not) possess, on the basis of which they would be "granted" or "owed" particular rights', and thereby seek to justify '*extending* rights to deserving animals, based on our sense of what it means to be a moral subject or

¹⁶ McKay.

patient'.¹⁷ Instead, 'creatureliness *contracts* humanity to recuperate its animality'.¹⁸ It is through the old slave's coming to awareness of his animality that Chamoiseau imagines him transposed into the mastiff's mode of being. However, the slave's awareness depends, paradoxically, on what Fanon would consider to be his uniquely human sociogenic self-conception. Chamoiseau's novel offers us a model for *going-with* nonhuman animals, whilst recognising incommensurability, and alterity. The mastiff, meanwhile, is freed from its construction *as monster*, and is permitted its own being for itself *as dog*.

From Reason to Race: the human as Man

In his analysis of the work of Carl Linnaeus, Giorgio Agamben notes the struggle the taxonomist encountered in explaining scientifically how humans differ from anthropoid apes.¹⁹ Linnaeus' *Systema Naturae* offered only the maxim *nosce te ipsum*, 'know yourself', leading Agamben to conclude that 'man' is a being that 'must recognize itself as human to be human'.²⁰ *Homo sapiens* is therefore not 'a clearly defined species' but merely 'a machine or device for producing the recognition of the human'.²¹ As the introduction to this chapter has already expounded, this anthropogenic self-recognition is produced not only in opposition to other animals (as Agamben notes), but also via the exclusion of nonwhite Others. As Fanon himself remarks, with characteristic abruptness: 'It has been said that the Negro is the link between monkey and man—meaning, of course, white man.' (*Black*, 18)

To understand the new genre of the human that Fanon's philosophy presents, we need to fully understand this definition of the human that he is writing against. As Sylvia Wynter explains, the invention of the dominant Western definition of the human, i.e. 'Man', occurred in two phases, the first beginning with the European Renaissance and extending through to the eighteenth century, accompanying the development of the physical sciences, and the second taking place from the eighteenth century to the present, with the burgeoning biological sciences.²² Both phases involved a 'de-supernaturalizing of our modes of being human',²³ in

¹⁷ Pick, p. 80.

¹⁸ Pick, p. 80, original italics.

¹⁹ Agamben, p. 23.

²⁰ Agamben, p. 26.

²¹ Agamben, p. 26.

²² Wynter, p. 264.

²³ Wynter, pp. 263–64.

which the Western ‘descriptive statement’ of the human came to be understood, not as a divinely created ‘true Christian self’, but as the secular subject of the state.²⁴

Both phases are in turn only understandable if read in the broader context of European colonialism. Wynter explains that for the several centuries preceding the Renaissance, the Christian paradigm of Europe conceptualised the differences between Christians and non-Christians on religious grounds.²⁵ As Ramón Grosfoguel notes, for European Christians, the human world was separated into true believers, i.e. Christians (of the correct creed), Jews, Muslims, non-believers, heretics, infidels, etc.²⁶ Importantly, religion itself was a mutable criterion, because a non-Christian could, in principle at least, convert to Christianity, and so—in principle—could be admitted to this Christian in-group.²⁷ Animals, of course, were entirely separate from this human realm, being incapable of having any religion, a point I return to later, when considering Chamoiseau’s novel. As Wynter notes, according to this same paradigm, humans and the Earth were divinely created, and the Earth was believed to be made of a separate substance from the heavens; under such a model, the universe was believed to be fundamentally unknowable to humans, as it was the product of a divine, omniscient creator who could intervene, by means of miracles, to interfere with natural laws. Therefore, any attempt by humans to understand the world could never make any claim to objective truth.²⁸

In short: this paradigm saw humans as (potentially) the same as one another, but saw humans as essentially separate from nature, including other animals; under this paradigm, objective scientific rationalism was impossible.

As Grosfoguel explains, this (potential) homogeneity of what would come to be called the human was first thrown into doubt under European’s colonialist expansion into the Americas. Grosfoguel recounts that Columbus, upon landing in the Americas, characterised the Native Americans as ‘people without sect’.²⁹ Grosfoguel cautions, however, that we should not read this in the way we might be tempted to today, to mean *atheist people*, because. ‘in the Christian imaginary of the late 15th century [...] all humans have religion’.³⁰ This means that

²⁴ Wynter, p. 265.

²⁵ Wynter, p. 266.

²⁶ Ramón Grosfoguel, ‘Epistemic Racism/Sexism, Westernized Universities and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century’, *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge*, 11.1 (2013), 73–90 (p. 78).

²⁷ Grosfoguel, pp. 78–79.

²⁸ Wynter, pp. 279–80.

²⁹ Grosfoguel, p. 81.

³⁰ Grosfoguel, p. 81.

whilst Europeans' non-Christian Others might have worshiped 'the "wrong God" or "wrong Gods," [...] the humanity of the other [...] was not yet put in question'.³¹ Columbus' supposed discovery of a people with *no* religion was so pivotal because 'not having religion in the Christian imaginary of the time was equivalent to not having a soul, that is, being expelled from the realm of the human'.³² The religious racism of the time followed the logic: '1) if you do not have religion, you do not have a God; 2) if you do not have a God, then you do not have a soul; and 3) if you do not have a soul, you are not human but animal-like'.³³ And, whilst this logic was forged in the Americas in European colonialists' subjugation of Native Americans, this discourse had a 'boomerang effect', whereby the same logic came to be applied to Jewish people and Muslims in Europe.³⁴ Racism ceased to be (only) about sect but instead became a question as to the very humanity of the people concerned. Not having the right religion became tantamount to having no religion, ergo having no soul, and so being nonhuman.³⁵ The true-Christian versus non-Christian paradigm mutated into a Christian/non-human dichotomy.

Wynter identifies two developments in Western science and philosophy that began to upend this religious paradigm. The first of these was the Copernican Revolution in the mid-sixteenth century. Heliocentrism was so revolutionary, Wynter explains, because if the Earth also moved around the sun, then it followed that the Earth was homogeneous with the other heavenly bodies, so was likely to be made of the same substance—the Earth no longer had a special place or status, and became explainable according to universal natural laws.³⁶ The Copernican revolution therefore paved the way for the development of Renaissance humanism, and the concurrent rise of empirical science.³⁷ The second pivotal moment came with the thought of René Descartes, in the seventeenth century. Following this relegation of the human to a place amongst the so-called 'lower' orders—i.e. as no longer a special part of God's creation—Renaissance humanism simply found, via Descartes' philosophy, a new means to reinscribe the same old orders of being. It would be *reason* that would plug the hole left by divine truth; indeed, the idea of reason became analogous with God, as it provided a new criterion by which to uphold Man's transcendence of nature.³⁸ Grosfoguel likewise places

³¹ Grosfoguel, p. 81.

³² Grosfoguel, p. 81.

³³ Grosfoguel, p. 81.

³⁴ Grosfoguel, pp. 81–82.

³⁵ Grosfoguel, pp. 81–82.

³⁶ Wynter, pp. 279–80.

³⁷ Wynter, pp. 279–80.

³⁸ Wynter, pp. 286–87.

Descartes front and centre in Western humanism's secular reinvention of the transcendental human, whose valorisation of the individual thinking subject is exemplified in the first-person singular voice of the philosopher's infamous construction: *Cogito, ergo sum*. Grosfoguel elaborates: 'For Descartes, the "I" can produce a knowledge that is truth beyond time and space, universal in the sense that it is unconditioned by any particularity'.³⁹ In this sense, the 'I' of the thinking subject is a reinsertion of some transcendental essence, allowing Descartes to 'claim that the mind is similar to the Christian God, floating in heaven, undetermined by anything terrestrial and that it can produce knowledge equivalent to a God-Eye view'.⁴⁰

Under its new 'descriptive statement' of the human, Renaissance humanism still regarded humans as different from the rest of nature. However, Man was no longer essentially *separate* from nature as such, because now the world was believed empirically knowable. It was the invention of the *cogito* as an order of experience unique in its capacity for achieving objective knowledge—Grosfoguel's 'God-Eye view'—that would pave the way for scientific rationalism. Yet Grosfoguel also alludes to an irony in Descartes' thinking, in that the 'I' professes to be individual, but also to speak to/for the universal, because the *cogito* is built upon the erasure of any situatedness on the part of the thinker. This is, of course, another facet of the same point made by Judith Butler, which I expounded in Chapter Two, namely that the Western epistemological subject is predicated upon its overgeneralisation as the *universal subject*. Man's ostensibly unique consciousness, whilst on the one hand making him the only being capable of transcending nature, was, on the other hand, what promised the possibility of objective knowledge, allowing for the emergence of an empiricist paradigm—a dichotomising logic in which scientific *objectivity* was thought possible only on the back of a more deeply entrenched and reified notion of *subjectivity*, which functions by obscuring its own situatedness in a given culture, place and time.

This marked a turning point in Western humans' relationships with their Others, both human and nonhuman, because the definition of the human (as Man), which was in truth merely one way of defining the human, now came to be regarded by its proponents as the only possible way to be properly human. Though the Cartesian dualism initially explicitly separated thinking Man from animal 'automata', also drawn into this ontological framework were the new human Others being encountered by Europeans during the latter's colonialist expansion. As Wynter explains, once Reason became the criterion for separating Man from

³⁹ Grosfoguel, p. 75.

⁴⁰ Grosfoguel, pp. 75–76.

nature, Western colonialists began conceptualising these human Others according to a *rational–sub-rational–irrational* paradigm:

With this redescription, the medieval world's idea of order as based upon degrees of spiritual perfection/imperfection, an idea of order centered on the Church, was now to be replaced by a new one based upon degrees of rational perfection/imperfection. And this was to be the new "idea of order" on whose basis the coloniality of being, enacted by the dynamics of the relation between Man—overrepresented as the generic, ostensibly supracultural human—and its subjugated Human Others (i.e., Indians and Negroes), together with [...] the continuum of new categories of humans (i.e., mestizos and mulattos to which their human/subhuman value difference gave rise), was to be brought into existence as the foundational basis of modernity.⁴¹

Because only Man possesses reason, this formulation (re)separates Man from all 'lower' orders of being, including nonhuman animals, and supposedly sub- or non-human (because sub- or irrational) human Others.

In short: this definition of the human as Man includes a positing of a world that is objectively knowable, but only by the 'right' sort of subject: the white man of European descent; under this paradigm, the capacity to construct objective knowledge (via reason) became the criterion by which Man was regarded as entirely, essentially separate from other animals, *and* from certain human Others.

The development of empirical sciences (natural and biological) was co-constituting with a new Western notion of the human, which took this newly conceptualised subjectivity as the backbone of its definition. This would lead, over the next two centuries, to the second phase of the invention of man, which Wynter locates with the burgeoning biological sciences. Ironically, scientific rationalism, the origins of which were inseparable from the invention of Man—supposedly unique—transcendent consciousness, would lead, with Darwin, to the (re)incorporation of the human with the natural world, and the (re)imagining of humans as contiguous with, if still supposedly superior to, all other life. However, although rationalism led to Darwinian Evolutionism, which seems to reincorporate humans with the rest of nature, such rationalism can only ever function by presenting its knowledges as objective and universal, and this in turn can only happen if the thinking human subject is elevated to its position of holding a 'God-Eye view'. In other words, the very concept of objective knowledge remains inextricable from its origins in Descartes' mind-body dualism. That this definition of the human as Man relies on such a Cartesian separation of mind and body is a point to which

⁴¹ Wynter, pp. 287–88.

I will return when reading Chamoiseau's novel, with its attempt to unsettle the hegemony of this humanism, and its essential distinction between human and nonhuman animals.

This newly biologized definition of the human served/serves to legitimate the continued subjugation of nonwhite human Others, via the—ostensibly biological—concept of *race*, which continues to construct nonwhites as non- or not-fully human. Wynter explains:

In the wake of the West's second wave of imperial expansion, *pari passu* with its reinvention of Man in now purely biologized terms, it was to be the peoples of Black African descent who would be constructed as the ultimate referent of the "racially inferior" Human Other, with the range of other colonized dark-skinned peoples, all classified as "natives," now being assimilated to its category—all of these as the ostensible embodiment of the non-evolved backward Others—if to varying degrees and, as such, the negation of the generic "normal humanness," ostensibly expressed by and embodied in the peoples of the West.⁴²

Just as reason had replaced religion as a way for Renaissance humanists to continue to divide their preconceived orders of being, following the second phase of the invention of Man, race became 'the non-supernatural but no less extrahuman ground (in the reoccupied place of the traditional ancestors/gods, God, ground) of the answer that the secularizing West would not give to the Heideggerian question as to the who, and the what we are'.⁴³ In other words, the ontological groundswell of Darwinism would dispel the supposed essentiality of the differences between whites and nonwhites, humans and nonhuman animals, recasting all life as contiguous. However, though these differences would come to be understood as matters of degree rather than essence, the same inter- and intra-species hierarchisations remained, now re-enshrined in ostensibly biologized terms. At the same time as the Chain of Being was redrawn as a continuum (albeit still teleological), certain groups of humans were placed nearer to the 'animal' end of the human–animal scale.

This animalisation of certain human groups has been concomitant with the invention of the modern Western concept of the human. For this reason, it does not make sense to interpret racialisation as a process of *dehumanisation*. As Kim observes, 'the conventional wisdom is that powerful groups have used animalization to "dehumanize" less powerful groups, demoting them from category A (humans) into category B (animals)'.⁴⁴ However, such an argument 'assumes an a priori state in which racialized groups were accepted as fully

⁴² Wynter, p. 266.

⁴³ Wynter, p. 265.

⁴⁴ Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, p. 24.

human', when in fact 'racialized groups were never seen as fully human to begin with, so they did not have this status to lose. They were always already animal or animal-like'.⁴⁵ As my discussion of Wynter, Grosfoguel and others shows, this state of acceptance never existed, because the development of the modern concept of the human depends upon nonwhite Others being always already excluded. This racializing logic is not *dehumanising*, but simultaneously *humanising* and *non-humanising*.

As I have just noted, this modern biocentric descriptive statement of the human did not so much challenge the previous separation of Man from his human and nonhuman Others as it did map onto and reframe it. As this thesis' case-studies in existentialist thought clearly illustrate, the belief that humans have the capacity to transcend the given, whilst nonhumans remained confined to immanence, certainly survived the scientific phase of the invention of Man. Likewise, the superficially superseded mind-body dualism remains one of the central mechanisms by which nonwhites are racialised as sub- or non-human. This aspect of racialisation is apparent in Fanon's analysis of the frequent metonymic reduction of blacks to their genitalia and/or their reproductive potential. 'In relation to the Negro,' Fanon states, 'everything takes place on the genital level. [...] They have tremendous sexual powers. [...] They copulate at all times and in all places. They are really genital. They have so many children that they cannot even count them' (*Black*, 121). This is one avenue by which Fanon distinguishes the construction of 'the Negro' from anti-Semitism's construction of 'the Jew', for instance, whom 'no anti-Semite [...] would ever conceive of the idea of castrating' (*Black*, 125). 'The Jew is attacked in his religious identity,' Fanon notes, 'but it is in his corporeality that the Negro is attacked' (*Black*, 125-6). Fanon goes as far as to state that 'the Negro symbolizes the biological' (*Black*, 128). That this reduction of black humans to their corporeality remains the case even in our contemporary era is clear from Kim's analysis of descriptions of black versus white athletes in contemporary U.S. sports coverage.⁴⁶ At the same time, Fanon appears quite happy to beg the question of nonhuman animals' reduction to mere biology: elsewhere he remarks that 'to suffer from a phobia of Negroes is to be afraid of the biological. For the Negro is only biological. The Negroes are animals' (*Black*, 127).

Like reason, the ostensible capacity to create history and build civilisation remain mechanisms by which Man is believed to transcend nature, and stand above both nonhuman animals, and nonwhite human Others. As Kim observes, whites 'transcend the body and

⁴⁵ Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, p. 24.

⁴⁶ Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, p. 264.

nature, [...] they have civilization and a history. Animals and animal-like humans, on the other hand, are untranscendent, tethered to the body and nature, incapable of civilisation and progress, and lacking history'.⁴⁷ For Fanon, too, Blackness is constructed partly as the paucity of civilisation and history. When meeting 'a Russian or a German', Fanon states that he 'can hardly forget that he has a language of his own, a country [...]. When one comes to the case of the Negro, nothing of the kind. He has no culture, no civilization, no "long historical past"' (*Black*, 21). Blacks' strivings for acceptance by whites has often focused on proving that nonwhites have had civilization, as this is understood in the Western paradigm, a vying 'to prove the existence of a black civilization to the white world at all costs' (*Black*, 22). Again we see the phenomenon Wynter identifies whereby Man is overrepresented as if it were the human: here, a specifically Western model of 'civilisation' is taken to be universal. As Fanon notes, however this notion of civilisation is a culturally specific construct, one which has its origins in the same Enlightenment values that Wynter associates with the first phase of the invention of man:

Now the scapegoat for white society—which is based on myths of progress, civilization, liberalism, enlightenment, refinement—will be precisely the force that opposes the expansion and the triumph of these myths. This brutal opposing force is supplied by the Negro. (*Black*, 150)

Because overrepresented as supracultural and universal, this imperialistically expanding worldview failed/fails to recognise alternative modes of being (human) in the world, instead dismissing them as not- or not-fully human.

And so, the definition of the human (as Man), though culturally specific (having its origins in dominant Western cultures), proffers itself as supracultural and universal, as the only real mode of being human. This dominant Western paradigm regards all life as contiguous, but always already hierarchizes life as more or less human, and striates the human species according to the ostensibly biological criterion of *race*, either excluding nonwhites from the ranks of the human entirely, or else placing them towards the 'animal' end of this human-animal scale. Hence Fanon's abrupt analysis that 'the Negro is the link between monkey and man—meaning, of course, white man' (*Black*, 18). Within this Western descriptive statement of the human, evolution has superficially replaced both reason and religion as the epistemic framework through which to construct this continuum of supposed differences. However, in practice, this paradigm continues to separate whites from nonwhites and

⁴⁷ Kim, *Dangerous Crossings*, p. 25.

nonhuman animals, to a greater or lesser extent, by dint of the former's ostensible possession—and these Others' ostensible lack—of the capacity to transcend nature via the Enlightenment ideals of reason, history and civilisation; in this way, *humanity*, *race*, and *animality* are culturally coproduced.

More contemporary racializing discourse may typically be couched in biologised language—Fanon himself, for instance, repeatedly uses the word 'biological'—but this reduction to biology, and the accompanying belief that the body is something to be transcended, still rest upon a Cartesian mind-body dualism. Indeed, as my earlier consideration of Wynter and Grosfoguel makes clear, our Western episteme is predicated upon the subject-object split that rationality enacts. Fanon goes further, characterising this episteme as fundamentally acquisitive: 'The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone. He finds himself predestined master of this world. He enslaves it. An acquisitive relation is established between the world and him.' (*Black*, 97) As Man is established as the true subject, the world is constructed as an object to be owned, even enslaved.

Sociogeny and the Phenomenology of Blackness: Fanon's new humanism

For Fanon, the phenomenology of contemporaries such as Maurice Merleau-Ponty appears to offer an alternative to this dichotomy, rejecting the Cartesian mind-body dualism, and emphasising instead the embodiedness of subjectivity. Fanon summarises that under such a model,

Consciousness of the body is solely a negative activity. It is a third-person consciousness. [...] A slow composition of my *self* as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema. It does not impose itself on me; it is, rather, a definitive structuring of the self and of the world—definitive because it creates a real dialectic between my body and the world. (*Black*, 83, original italics)

Unlike Cartesianism, this consciousness is not transcendent, nor does it occupy a privileged 'interior' perspective. It is not a first-person, but a 'third-person consciousness', inhering in the dialectic between self and world. This challenges the possibility of transcendental rationality, undermining the basis of the Western figure of the human. Given the inherently racist logic of this descriptive statement, it is easy to see why such phenomenologies' underminings of the human would be alluring to critical race theorists, not to mention literary ecologists, animal studies scholars, ecological philosophers, and proponents of myriad other disciplines who wish to stress humans' animality, and imbrication within the natural world.

For Fanon, however, the human cannot be so easily reincorporated. His recognition of his own constructedness as black exposes the naivety of such a colour-blind philosophy. Racialisation disturbs the supposedly primary experience of the body, such that 'in the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema' (*Black*, 83). Fanon elaborates:

Below the corporeal schema I had sketched a historico-racial schema. The elements that I used had been provided for me [...] by the other, the white man, who had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories. I thought that what I had in hand was to construct a physiological self, to balance space, to localize sensations, and here I was called on for more. (*Black*, 84)

Fanon's metaphors are revealing: this historico-racial schema is 'sketched' and 'woven', underscoring its cultural construction. In short, this schema is *sociogenic*. Fanon recalls that he internalised this objectification:

I was responsible at the same time for my body, for my race, for my ancestors. I subjected myself to an objective examination, I discovered my blackness, my ethnic characteristics; and I was battered down by tom-toms, cannibalism, intellectual deficiency, fetishism, racial defects, slave-ships, and above all else, above all: "Sho' good eatin'." (*Black*, 84-5)

Explicitly, he says: 'I took myself far off from my own presence, far indeed, and made myself an object' (*Black*, 85). Fanon finds himself unable to escape this racialized identity: 'I am given no choice. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance.' (*Black*, 87)

Although the sequence in which Fanon narrates his self-discovery appears to suggest that the historico-racial schema is something that comes to be laid only later upon the body, such a linear reading misses the point. Fanon recalls being 'responsible *at the same time* for [his] body, for [his] race, for [his] ancestors'. The historico-racial schema is coincident with the corporeal; the former *also subtends* the latter: it is sketched 'below the corporeal schema', laying the foundation upon which all attempts to understand his being will be based. Finding that it is built upon such shaky foundations, Fanon recalls that 'the corporeal schema crumbled, its place taken by a racial epidermal schema' (*Black*, 84). However, it is not that this racial epidermal schema replaces the corporeal schema; rather, the discovery of the former negates the very possibility of the latter. That phenomenologists such as Merleau-Ponty could believe in the existence of a pre-sociogenic corporeal schema, in which, for instance, one might reach for a pack of cigarettes on a desk, before any meaning-making has taken place, is itself a result

of the same process that Wynter identifies, whereby men of Merleau-Ponty's ilk are overrepresented as the default, or quintessential, mode of the human.⁴⁸ Merleau-Ponty does not experience his body as always already sociogenically determined, but it is, nonetheless. In other words, such a phenomenology, in Fanon's view, is not so much colour-blind as it is predicated upon the invisibilisation of whiteness.⁴⁹ This insight by Fanon prefigures the criticism that Alexander Weheliye levels against racially uninformed posthumanisms derived from the works of Giorgio Agamben and Michel Foucault, whose theories of bare life and biopolitics both misconstrue 'how profoundly race and racism shape the modern idea of the human,' relying instead upon a naïve belief in 'an indivisible biological substance anterior to racialization'.⁵⁰ If Merleau-Ponty's most startling revelation was that meaning is always already in the body, via the *Umwelt*, then Fanon's is surely this: that all bodies are always already embedded in meaning.

Kim recognises this sociogenic element to racialisation in her consideration of the experiences of black slaves. Analysing Marjorie Spiegel's *The Dreaded Comparison: Human and Animal Slavery* (1988), Kim reads against the grain of Spiegel's juxtaposed images of slave punishments and animal exploitation, reminding us that 'slaves were put in scold's bridles, spike collars, and pillories not as a routine part of extracting their labor but specifically as punishment for daring to defy the master or overseer's authority'.⁵¹ These punishments were meant to entail not only 'physical immobilization,' but 'public humiliation, the shaming and debasement of the slave, as well as the instillation of terror in the hearts of other slaves who observed the punishment'.⁵² Insofar as the subjection of animals and of black slaves to these treatments may have been materially the same, sociogeny, the ability to reflect on this treatment, brings something qualitatively different to the experience of subjugation. Kim elaborates:

These images of slave punishment, in other words, even as they highlight the similarities in technologies of control between racial slavery and animal exploitation, also highlight the slaves' distinctively human forms of transgression, their distinctively human vulnerabilities to certain types of

⁴⁸ This is the example Fanon uses, and which he almost certainly takes from Merleau-Ponty, whose Paris Lectures he attended. (Fanon, p. 83.)

⁴⁹ I am indebted to Komarine Romdenh-Romluc for these insights on the colour-blindness of Fanon's phenomenologist contemporaries. For more on this, see her book *Fanon - Arguments of the Philosophers* (Abingdon; New York, NY: Routledge, Forthcoming).

⁵⁰ Weheliye, p. 4.

⁵¹ Kim, 'Abolition', p. 17.

⁵² Kim, 'Abolition', pp. 17-18.

psychic as well as physical sanction, and their distinctively human potential for challenging their conditions and participating in their own liberation.⁵³

Nonhuman animals may be likewise embedded in meaning, their existences sociogenically shaped by culture, myth, representation—blackness and animality are both ‘overdetermined from without’, to extend Fanon’s phrase—but what it is to experience these constructions will always be incommensurable because part of the condition of blackness, for Fanon, is to be able *to experience oneself as constructed as black*. Whilst the form of double-consciousness in which sociogeny reveals itself to Fanon is unique to the experience of blackness, it also reveals the sociogenic world that Fanon places at the heart of all human experience.

Sociogeny and the Nonhuman: exceptionalism without anthropocentrism

If we follow Fanon in recognising humans’ participation in this sociogenic world, we confront the limits of any parallel between racialisation and animalisation. We must also rethink claims to inter-species empathy. For Laura Marks, it is no coincidence that nonhuman Others are the ones with which humans often feel most empathetic. ‘Dogs’, for instance, who are ‘so conveniently mute’, ‘are much more conducive to projected fellow-feeling than are humans who speak an alien language, practice strange customs, and, well, eat dogs’.⁵⁴ A human can feel-with a nonhuman animal because it *does not share* that human’s sociogenic world, and so cannot challenge the veracity of any ‘projected fellow-feeling’. Unlike such appeals, sociogeny requires that we apprehend alterity, and accept the value of nonhuman Others on a basis besides their perceived similarity to the human. Sociogeny also acknowledges the unbalanced power dynamics that determine modes of inter- and intra-species relationships. As Dinesh Wadiwel observes, some theories obscure asymmetries inherent in such encounters, allowing Donna Haraway, for instance, to profess a mutual relationship with her canine agility training partner, Cayenne, whilst retaining unilateral control of the dog’s conditions and wellbeing.⁵⁵ Sociogeny, by contrast, names something that late-stage capitalism, (neo)colonialism, and the Anthropocene have already writ large: some humans have unparalleled power to determine the lives of Others, human and nonhuman.

Because it asks us to recognise incommensurability, sociogeny also helps us to apprehend the abyssal differences that Jacques Derrida identifies, not only between nonhuman

⁵³ Kim, ‘Abolition’, p. 18.

⁵⁴ Marks, p. 31.

⁵⁵ Dinesh Wadiwel, *The War Against Animals* (Boston, MA: BRILL, 2015), pp. 207–9; 212–13.

and human animals, but between all forms of sentient life. McKay has examined Wynter's elaboration of sociogeny, arguing that it proffers 'a particularly ironic reiteration of the hard and fast distinction' between humans and nonhuman animals.⁵⁶ Focussing on Wynter's claim that 'humans have been pre-adapted, primarily through the co-evolution of language and the brain, to be [...] a self-representing species',⁵⁷ McKay observes that 'once even biological evolution has been diagnosed as a mechanism to occlude sociogenic social discrimination [...], the same cannot but hold for any claim to human exceptionalism authorised by evolutionary biology'.⁵⁸ McKay's appraisal of the irony is, if anything, understated; Wynter's uncharacteristic biocentrism undermines the pains both she and Fanon have taken to distance themselves from this paradigm. Fanon takes vehement issue with contemporaneous advances in biology, attempts, as he sees it, 'to make man [...] put an end to the narcissism on which he relies in order to imagine that he is different from the other "animals"' (*Black*, 12). 'Having reflected on that,' Fanon states, 'I grasp my narcissism with both hands and I turn my back on the degradation of those who would make man a mere mechanism' (*Black*, 12). What Fanon appears to be rejecting here is the flattening of human experience under the guise of a reductive biocentrism. Such biocentrism threatens to impoverish not only the human, but all life, riding roughshod over alterity and Derrida's 'heterogeneous multiplicity of the living'.⁵⁹

The biggest irony in Fanon's thinking on the human and nonhuman, however, is this: the only way Fanon can find to escape this reduction is *narcissism*, a—perhaps delusional—self-recognition. As in Linnaeus, there is no criterion for defining the human aside from its ability to *know itself*. Fanon's thought would seem to make an unlikely bedfellow for Linnaeus—one of the forebears of scientific racism.⁶⁰ However, we should remember that *racialisation* is precisely the new consideration that Fanon brings to bear upon the human. Whereas *Homo sapiens* is a device for producing its own recognition, Fanon's humanism also contains the opposite: an awareness of the contestability of the very category, borne from the recognition of one's exclusion from it. The paradoxical conclusion, then, is that the human also becomes that animal that can recognise its own *non-humanisation*—a social construct defined by its awareness of its own social constructedness. In this sense, *sociogeny* is clearly

⁵⁶ McKay.

⁵⁷ Wynter, p. 326.

⁵⁸ McKay.

⁵⁹ Derrida, p. 31.

⁶⁰ Michael L. Blakey, 'Scientific Racism and the Biological Concept of Race', *Literature and Psychology*, 45.1/2 (1999), 29–43 (pp. 30–32).

exceptionalist but it is not inherently anthropocentric; Fanon never goes as far as to state that nonhuman animals are ‘mere mechanisms’. He offers instead a mirror image of the approach that animal studies, in McKay’s estimation, has taken toward race: ignoring animality, rather than trading on it. And whereas the easy apposition Fanon repeatedly constructs between ‘biological’ and ‘animals’ betrays a willingness to beg—or at least bracket—the question of nonhuman animals’ reduction to mere biology, Fanon’s scare quotes in the second-last quotation—in which man narcissistically imagines he is ‘different from the other “animals”’—are perhaps the closest Fanon comes to acknowledging the constructedness of this very category, with all the false homogenisation it performs. This chapter now turns to a literary work that goes further, examining the cultural coproduction of race, animality, and the human (as Man), and exploring what new (human) animalities might become possible when these poles go awry.

Coproduced but Incommensurable: Patrick Chamoiseau

Patrick Chamoiseau’s *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* is set on a plantation in Martinique, during the period of chattel slavery. It tells the story of an old man kept as a slave there. His name is never given; throughout the text he is known variously as ‘the old man slave’ or ‘the slave old man’, and, later, simply ‘the old man’. At the opening of the text, the old man flees the plantation where he has been enslaved, whereupon he is pursued by the mastiff, which the Master keeps for the dual purpose of deterring and chasing runaway slaves. The text is mostly concerned with narrating this pursuit. Through its descriptions of Plantation life, his account of the old slave’s escape, and his representation of the slaves, the Master, and the mastiff, Chamoiseau’s text calls attention to the discursive coproduction of humanity, animality, and race.

Chamoiseau’s descriptions of plantation life and the epistemology of slavery closely mirror the construction of blackness as set out by Fanon, Wynter, and the other thinkers this chapter has so far considered: they are denied transcendence, presented variously as automata, as flesh, and as ahistorical. The old slave is imbued with the qualities of the inanimate objects that surround him:

In the gleam of the boilers, his skin takes on the texture of the cast-iron buckets or rusty pipes, and at times even the coppery yellow of the crystalizing sugar.

His sweat dots him with the varnish of old windmill beams and gives off an odor of heated rock and mulling syrup.⁶¹

Such descriptions blend the old slave with the machinery of the Plantation, reducing his body to something not even organic, but material: cast iron, rusty pipes, crystalizing sugar, varnish, heated rock, mulling syrup, his being for-himself reduced to the in-itself of an inanimate object.

The old slave, when occupying the ontological position forced upon him, is invisible, merely part of the machinery of the plantation: ‘Sometimes, even, the Master’s attentive gaze does not distinguish him from the mass of machines; they seem to keep going on their own.’ (*Old Slave*, 18) The descriptions of the old slave often reduce him to a mere automaton, simply going through the motions of his forced labour with no suggestion of any interiority to his experience: ‘No words, no promises. Compact and infinitely fluid in the gestures of labor that alone engross him in a faceless, locked-in life.’ (*Old Slave*, 19) Elsewhere, we are told that he ‘deals with the sugar cooking, a delicate operation he performs without seeming to deploy any expertise’ (*Old Slave*, 18). His identity, and his life’s meaning, are reduced to this instrumentalised activity:

At the bottom of this slop, his existence has had no more rhyme or reason. Simply the hypocritical aping of obedience, the postures of servility, the cadence of plantings and cane cuttings, the *raide* marvel of the sugar born in the vats, the carting of sacks to the store ships in town. (*Old Slave*, 17, original italics)

There is an ambiguity in this description, with the narrator’s words poised between a denial of the old slave’s intentionality—he exhibits only the ‘postures’ of servility, without the capacity *to be* servile—and a suggestion that his whole behaviour is directed toward obscuring his true intentions. The pun on ‘aping’ suggests the old slave is merely imitating these motions, as higher order primates have been said to do. These ambiguities resonate with Bennett’s analysis of *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), in which the author suggests his affinity with a horse, likewise exploited for its labor, a connection that Bennett characterises as ‘the shared experience of opacity mistaken for emptiness’.⁶² The word ‘hypocritical’ is the only solid clue we are given, at this stage, that such behaviourist readings may bely a hidden depth.

Elsewhere, the slaves are presented as flesh. The narrator tells us that ‘it wasn’t people the slavers began selling to the *béké* planters, but slow processions of undone flesh, slathered

⁶¹ Patrick Chamoiseau, *The Old Slave and The Mastiff*, trans. by Linda Coverdale (London: Dialogue Books, 2019), p. 18.

⁶² Bennett, p. 2.

with oil and vinegar' (*Old Slave*, 16-17, original italics). As they take part in the plantation's evening dances, the slaves are again characterised by their corporeality: 'Everyone spends their nights bringing their flesh to life, waking up their bones' (*Old Slave*, 18). And the slaves are also figured to be without history. We are told that the old slave is 'bound to the Plantation like the air and the earth and the sugar, more ancient than the most ancient of the trees, and of no conceivable age' (*Old Slave*, 19). This passage could be read as essentialising; Chamoiseau appears to be saying that the old slave belongs, in essence, to the plantation. However, such essentialising is not in keeping with the logic of the wider text, and its foregrounding of the ways in which identities are constructed. Remember that the old slave is referred to, not by name, but only *as slave*, an identity co-constructed with the Plantation itself. He is 'bound to the Plantation' because his identity *as slave* did not exist prior to his kidnap and transportation there.

Two further examples capture the slaves' reduction to flesh and the denial of their temporality. Chamoiseau's narrator tells us that 'in their flesh, their spirit, subsists only a *calalou-gumbo* of rotting remembrance and stagnant time, untouched by any clock' (*Old Slave*, 16, original italics), and later, speaking of the old slave, that 'his genealogy [...] is limited to the navel sunk in his belly, which *zioute*-eyeballs the world like an empty coconut hole, quite cold and with no age-old dreams. The slave old man is depthless like his navel' (*Old Slave*, 17-18, original italics). The old slave himself has no notion of his own past: 'He no longer knew if he was born on the Plantation or had known that crossing in the hold' (*Old Slave*, 33). Despite or perhaps because of his great age, the old slave is without history, either written or remembered. He is of an 'incalculable age, which even the ancientest ledgers of the Plantation could not guarantee. The most wizened elders cannot remember the day of his birth, and no one still alive tasted the feasts at his baptism' (*Old Slave*, 14, original italics). As Bennett notes, 'a slave's past cannot be recalled because there is no socially recognized, generally honored means by which to recall it—no system to record one's emergence into the world, one's entry into the proper chronology, and cosmology, of the human'.⁶³ If we recall Grosfoguel's emphasis on the importance of religion to the European genre of the human, we are provided with a further angle to interpret this passage. Baptism is the ceremony through which somebody is ushered into the 'right religion' of the Christian faith, and so into Western humanity itself, yet nobody can remember the old slave's baptism, nor even if he had one at all.

⁶³ Bennett, p. 2.

Although the slaves in Chamoiseau's text are portrayed as nonhuman, this does not equate to their being presented as animal or animal-like. The narrator says of the old slave:

Definitive, he takes on the opaque substance of that mass of men who are no longer men, who are not beasts, who are not, either, like that oceanic maw all around the country. They are a confusion of ravaged beings, indistinct in something formless (*Old Slave*, 20).

Chamoiseau explicitly states that the slaves are no longer human, yet they are also not animal. The characterisation of the old slave as 'definitive' further underscores the constructedness of his subjecthood: he is 'overdetermined from without', *defined* now solely through his identity *as slave*, an identity which supersedes any other; the slaves do not belong to humanity ('no longer men'), animality ('not beasts') nor nature ('not, either, like that oceanic maw'). This is in keeping with Johnson's analysis of the logic of racial slavery, which, she states, was not predicated on any premise as simple as European's believing that black Africans were nonhuman *animals*. Johnson considers the ontology of racial slavery partly via an analysis of Moses Roper's *A Narrative of the Adventures and Escape of Moses Roper from American Slavery* (1838). In one scene of punishment, Roper recalls how a machine usually used to compact cotton—by having two horses turn a large screw press—was converted into an instrument of torture by placing a slave in the place of one of the horses. As Johnson observes, whilst this seems to be about animalising the slave (forcing them to occupy the position of the horse) the machine simultaneously denies this transformation. In fact, the efficacy of the punishment requires that the slave's body *not be* a horse's body. It 'depends on and underscores the difference of the human body while attempting to animalize that same body'.⁶⁴ And so, 'the slave's position demonstrates his taxonomical liminality under the ideology of scientific racism and slavery; not able to "fit" as either human or animal, the slave dangles from the machine, the "meaning" of his body unclear'.⁶⁵

Given this slippery epistemological position of the black slave, Claire Jean Kim proposes that it is necessary to incorporate another dimension in order to map the ontology of slavery, suggesting we conceptualise it 'as essentially triadic, with the key terms being *human*, *slave*, and *animal*'.⁶⁶ Whilst 'the *human*, the primary term, is produced through the *simultaneous abjection of slaveness/blackness and animality* [...] at the same time, *slave* and *animal* are also defined

⁶⁴ Johnson, p. 40.

⁶⁵ Johnson p. 40.

⁶⁶ Kim, 'Abolition', p. 29, original italics.

in relation to each other, completing the triangular dynamic'.⁶⁷ In fact, given the Cartesianism operating here, perhaps a further pole is necessary: the automaton. In Chamoiseau's text, slaves are constructed as automata, barred from rationality and history, and reduced to their bodies. At the same time, nonhuman animals are likewise constructed: *both* are abjected via the denial of their capacity for transcendence.

Chamoiseau epitomises the Western definition of the human through the figure of the plantation owner, tellingly referred to throughout only as 'the Master'. In contrast to the slaves, the Master is characterised by his ostensible ability to transcend his physical being, and nature in general. For Fanon, this supposed capacity inheres in the white man's episteme, which he presents as fundamentally acquisitive, as we have seen: 'The white man wants the world; he wants it for himself alone.' Simultaneously as this episteme establishes the white man as the only true subject, it constructs the world as an object to be variously owned, mastered and enslaved. The Master of the plantation in Chamoiseau's text is an accomplished horse rider, who 'makes his inspections astride a chestnut Arabian horse' (*Old Slave*, 15). As Bénédicte Boisseron observes, horses 'are important racial markers highlighting the fluctuating nature of the categories of race, humanness, and animality'.⁶⁸ Boisseron considers the scene in Quentin Tarantino's *Django Unchained* (2012) in which Django enters a town riding a horse: 'The town freezes at the sight of a black man openly using a horse not for labor on the plantation but for his free mobility.'⁶⁹ The reaction of the other characters stems from the fact that 'the act of riding a horse has always been a symbol of freedom determined by race in America'.⁷⁰ I would say that Boisseron does not go as far as she might with this relationship: horsemanship—as metonymic representation of Man's mastery over nature—is a defining feature of the human, as constructed in Western thought. The irony in Chamoiseau's text is that the old slave 'had taught him [the Master] the training of horses' (*Old Slave*, 99), while his own status as slave precludes him from being able to ride.

Likewise, the Master is defined by his abilities to build civilisation, and to create history. 'He had planted *pétum*, indigo, and then *cannamelle*', the narrator tells us: 'He had modified ships to carry *nègres*. He had sold them. He had bought them. He had given them the best of his race. He had raised the highest walls of stone, dispensaries of marble and gothic

⁶⁷ Kim, 'Abolition', p. 29, original italics.

⁶⁸ Bénédicte Boisseron, *Afro-Dog: Blackness and The Animal Question* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018), p. 53.

⁶⁹ Boisseron, p. 52.

⁷⁰ Boisseron, p. 53.

vaults where grandeurs slumber.’ (*Old Slave*, 98). The Master has established ‘white cities’, ‘planned ports’, ‘cleared the smoking lands, tamed the rivers vomited by the volcano, pushed back the snakes [...]. He had made Great Houses of shadowy light and clay, raised mills, set up sugar works’ (*Old Slave*, 98). As Man, the Master is historical. The list of his exploits comprises his existence as a historical being, able to transcend time. We are told that ‘he had handled—it was written down—the conquering tall-sailed ships. He had popped off bombards against Carib rages’ (*Old Slave*, 97). Unlike the old slave, whose history cannot be found in any of the Plantation’s ledgers, the Master’s is explicitly, literally ‘written down’. Again, Alexander Kojève’s reading of Hegel proves poignant in this context: as we may recall from my third chapter, Kojève’s rereading of the master-slave dialectic forms the basis of his account of anthropogenesis, the coming to self-consciousness of the human. This rereading in turn informs Agamben’s formulation of the anthropological machine. The Master has realised his full humanity, his identity *as Man*, via his *mastery* and *enslavement* of his fellow humans, nature, and nonhuman animals.

The eponymous mastiff, at least in the guise in which we first encounter it, is likewise a product of this same dialectic. Indeed, as Bennett observes, dogs are ‘an example par excellence of *being-for-the-master* from the very first’.⁷¹ By far the most common designator used to refer to the mastiff is ‘monster’—*monstre*, in Chamoiseau’s original French. In English and French, the word derives from the Latin *monstrum* meaning ‘a warning or portent’. Tom Tyler, drawing on the writing of Augustine, argues that, partly due to this etymology, monsters are often interpreted as *signs*.⁷² Like Wakenshaw’s imitations of obvious animal tropes in the previous chapter, by calling the mastiff a monster, Chamoiseau calls attention to the fact its identity is always already discursive, that it exists always already as trope. ‘Monster’ may be its most common designator, but its signifiers are plural; it is at times called the ‘mastiff’, at others ‘animal’, ‘dog’ or ‘beast’. This indeterminacy is also evident in the conflicting ways the mastiff is perceived by the novel’s other characters:

No one knew the precise color of its coat [...]. No doubt it changed *aléliron*: constantly and everywhere. The ship’s cargo manifest recorded it as white with a black blaze between the eyes. The sailor who handed the dog its water and salted hide [...] described a black coat with a white patch on the muzzle. On the Plantation, they saw it black, gleaming like lunar blue, with a few white spots that maybe moved around. But [...] the slaves it had caught had sometimes seen

⁷¹ Bennett, p. 141, original italics.

⁷² Tom Tyler, ‘Deviants, Donestre, and Debauchees: Here Be Monsters’, *Culture, Theory and Critique*, 49.2 (2008), 113–31 (p. 120).

it red, or blue-green, or perhaps possessed by the vibrant orange tints of a living heart of fire. (*Old Slave*, 31, original italics)

Here, and elsewhere, the mastiff is reduced to its appearance and its corporeality, in the same way as the slaves. And, again like the slaves, the mastiff's identity is instrumentalised. When it first arrives on the Plantation, we are told: 'Folks wondered what this monster could be for.' (*Old Slave*, 36) They get their answer when a young slave attempts to escape: 'The mastiff, off by the sugar works, had begun to growl. Not bark, but growl something astringent and acid and irresolvably evil, which revealed to everyone how the monster would be used.' (*Old Slave*, 37) Like the old slave, the mastiff's identity *as monster* is synonymous with its instrumentalization to the Master's ends.

Tyler explains that monsters are often beings of hybrid identity, typically blurring human and animal attributes.⁷³ The mastiff is a monster in this sense, too, occupying a position at once removed from, yet unsettlingly close to, the human. We are told that, 'like a slab of sulfur, its muscles bulged like lava bubbles; the pitiless face, unbaptized; the gaze, unseeing' (*Old Slave*, 35). The mastiff is again reduced to its body, yet here Chamoiseau's unusual description of the mastiff as 'unbaptized' connects the dog with the old slave, the status of whose baptism was also called into question. Like the husband's all-too-eager protestations of his 'unquestionable' love for his wife in my Chapter Two reading of Sarah Hall, the negative construction opens up a possibility we might never have considered, inviting the mastiff somehow into the domain of the human, as if this ceremony *could be performed*, and its humanity thereby secured. Whereas the old slave and his fellows are constructed as nonhuman, the mastiff occupies this liminal position as *monster*, somewhere between human and animal. This part-humanisation of the mastiff is no positive characterisation, however: whilst being abjected as a mere mechanism may preclude any subjectivity for-itself, this uncomfortable proximity to the human precludes any possibility of the mastiff's alterity.

It is this construction and reconstruction of identities that allows for the first moment of transposition that Chamoiseau's text imagines. Fanon himself explicitly holds open the possibility of such moments of insight, at least between humans. We can read this in his criticism of contemporaneous psychoanalyst Octave Mannoni, most famous for his 1956 work, *Prospero and Caliban*, which offers a psychoanalytically informed analysis of the relationship between colonialists and colonised peoples. Mannoni's approach fails to achieve any insight into the condition of the colonised, Fanon argues, because he tries to maintain objectivity:

⁷³ Tyler, 'Deviants, Donestre, and Debauchees', pp. 115–16.

I sincerely believe that a subjective experience can be understood by others; and it would give me no pleasure to announce that the black problem is my problem and mine alone and that it is up to me to study it. But it does seem to me that M. Mannoni has not tried to feel himself into the despair of the man of color confronting the white man. Physically and affectively. I have not wished to be objective. Besides, that would be dishonest: It is not possible for me to be objective. (*Black*, 63-4)

At the same time, Fanon tackles head on the problem of accessing another's mode of experience, a question at the heart of this thesis. In the language of my first chapter, Mannoni's project represents a failure of *Mitgang*: he does not even try to feel his way into this other mode of being. Yet, tantalisingly, Fanon offers a bare-faced defence of the possibility of feeling oneself into another's experience, 'physically and affectively'. As with J. A. Baker's more convincing transpositions in my first chapter, Fanon associates this transposition with a loss of objectivity, figuring it as a journey further into the self, via a common feeling.

That the common feeling Fanon suggests might bridge Mannoni's and his subjects' respective positions—despair—is an affect associated with an erosion of subjecthood, is particularly appropriate for my reading of Chamoiseau's text. The respective identities of slave and mastiff, the narrator tells us, are partly the product of the horrors of the sea-crossing to Martinique:

It [the mastiff] as well had voyaged on a ship for weeks in a kind of horror. It as well had experienced that void of a voyage via slave ship. The black flesh, crammed into the hold, enveloped that sail-winged hell with a halo the monster's rage perceived and the sharks pursued across the ocean. As had all those who came in to the islands, the mastiff had endured the constant rolling of the sea, its unfathomable echoes, its engulfment of time, its irreparable dismantling of intimate spaces, the slow drifting away of the memories it engendered. A sea that penetrated flesh to harry and thwart its soul, or decomposes it, replacing it with the petty rhythm of nauseating survivals, small deaths, bitter routines, the martyrdom of carcasses that must cope with disorienting uncertainties. (*Old Slave*, 29-30)

The effect of this experience is a misshaping or unshaping of any identity the mastiff may have possessed: the crossing is marked by the 'irreparable dismantling of intimate spaces', and the 'drifting away of memories', the decomposition of the soul and its replacement with 'the petty rhythm of nauseating survivals' and 'disorienting uncertainties'. Chamoiseau directly connects the identity of the mastiff as 'monster' with this destruction of its previous identity: 'The mastiff was a monster because it had known that absolute collapse.' (*Old Slave*, 30) The mastiff's identity is not so much constructed as it is deconstructed, or stripped away.

Chamoiseau draws a parallel between the (de)constructedness of the mastiff's identity and that of the old slave. The dog's undoing into the monster is analogous with the old slave's into *slave*:

The old man slave does not remember the ship, but in a way he is still down in its hold. His head has become home to that vast misery. He has the taste of the sea on his lips. Even in the light of day he hears the dramatic snouts of sharks against the hull. He also remembers the sails, the crosstrees, the lines—as if he had been one of the crew, all mixed up with visions of the Before-land, and even more than visions: women, beings, things, beauties, uglinesses that quiver within him, are him, and mingle with the open chaos. (*Old Slave*, 44)

The slave still retains some memory of the 'Before-land', but these are 'all mixed up' with his memories of the sea-crossing, these recollections together comprising his identity—they 'are him'—but providing no stable sense of self, only an 'open chaos'. His subjection to this epistemic colonialization—the stripping away of his sense of self—is recalled in the narrator's insistence that, while he has no memory of the ship, 'he is still down in its hold', 'his head' now 'home to that vast misery'.

The inclusion of these two formally similar, episodic passages recounting the old slave's and the mastiff's transportation to Martinique invites a comparison between their experiences. A moment later, the text makes this connection explicit: 'Confronted by inner anarchy, [the old slave] finds himself drifting toward the animal. He has no need to look at it: the mastiff lives inside him.' (*Old Slave*, 44) At the same time, however, there is a limit to this transposition. Chamoiseau's repetition in the passage recounting the mastiff's experience of the sea-crossing—'as well had', 'as well had', 'as had all those'—emphasises their shared conditions, without what would be, at best, a very fraught suggestion that the effects upon the mastiff and upon the human victims of the atrocities of the Middle Passage are equivalent. In fact, Chamoiseau explicitly states that they are not identical. In the passage immediately following the account of the old slave's transportation, we are told:

The mastiff is like that, but it commands a mass of instincts that delude the dog into seeing sense there, a meaning now tied to the taste of the bloody flesh the Master feeds the beast as the meaning of existence. The dog is the Master's rudderless soul. It is the slave's suffering double. (*Old Slave*, 44)

The mastiff may be subjected to a construction of itself *as monster*, but it does not *experience* this constructedness. Instead, its 'mass of instincts' 'delude the dog into seeing sense there'. The construction 'suffering double', underscores that it is through a shared abjection—the erasure of their being for-themselves—that any common ground exists between them. Like the old

slave, whose identity *as slave* is 'bound to the Plantation' because it did not exist prior to his being brought there, the mastiff, in its identity *as monster*, belongs to the Master—it is 'the Master's rudderless soul'—the one who, more than any other, is responsible for its construction. Elsewhere, Chamoiseau states: 'The dog's gaze resembled that of the sailors. And worse: the wraiths who rose from the hold (weighed down less by their chains than by their shattered souls [...]) had that same gaze.' (*Old Slave*, 30) The mastiff's gaze may 'resemble' that of the transported slaves, but sociogeny brings something different to the experience of the slaves, who internalise their constructedness as such. The mastiff, it is suggested, has no more hope of understanding the slave's experience, as the slave does of understanding the 'mass of instincts that delude the dog into seeing sense there'. Whilst the mastiff may not experience its constructedness *as monster*, however, this invocation of instinct is no reduction of mastiff to mechanism: it 'commands' these instincts; that it can be deluded into seeing sense shows it has an interiority, which is meaningful (perhaps only) to itself.

This connection despite—or, indeed, *via*—an incapacity chimes with Derrida's analysis of Jeremy Bentham's famous question as to the possibility of animal suffering. Such an inquiry is so pivotal, Derrida argues, because it is tantamount to asking: 'Can they *not be able*?'⁷⁴ 'Being able to suffer is no longer a power', Derrida argues; instead 'it is a possibility without a power, a possibility of the impossible'.⁷⁵ Such a formulation therefore offers 'the most radical means of thinking the finitude that we share with animals, the mortality that belongs to the very finitude of life, to the experience of compassion, to the possibility of sharing [...] the anguish of this vulnerability'.⁷⁶ Pick is surely channelling this moment in Derrida, when she proposes a 'creaturely ethics' that 'does not seek out qualities or capacities that warrant inclusion in the moral community but rather suggests that *all* existents by virtue of their perishable material being are morally significant'.⁷⁷ Yet, in the case of Chamoiseau's slave and mastiff, the connection stems not from a shared precarity or suffering—the experiences of slaves and mastiff are incommensurable, Chamoiseau insists—but from shared *abjection*. What old slave and mastiff have in common is their subjection to a construction of an identity *as such*—*as slave*, *as monster*—which curtails, or even replaces, their being-for-themselves.

⁷⁴ Derrida, p. 28, original italics.

⁷⁵ Derrida, p. 28.

⁷⁶ Derrida, p. 28.

⁷⁷ Pick, p. 79, original italics.

Slipping Sideways: the slave's escape and Chamoiseau's new human (animal)

The slave's escape from the plantation marks the beginning of his escape from the ontological position forced upon him *as slave*. At first the old slave's escape is only evident in the disruption it causes:

The only sign [...] is that, one morning, on awakening, he does not answer the call. No one yelled out his name, of course, but his hand is missing in certain places where no problem usually occurs. A mule no one can calm down. Then a boiler that *macaye*, acts-up, when no poking around can find the cause. Then a sugar overheat that exhales toward the Great House the novel smell of singed caramel. Other annoying events leave everyone at a perplexing loss. (*Old Slave*, 21, original italics)

The reader may initially intuit a prosaic explanation for these seemingly supernatural occurrences: the old slave would usually have calmed the wayward mule, his expertise would have ensured the smooth running of the temperamental boiler, and prevented the burning of the sugar. Without him on hand, things are not running as they typically would. However, things then take a far less explicable turn:

Rats trotted in broad daylight all-round the cabins. *Bêtes-longues* [snakes] flowing from the cane-brakes, their fangs spurting with anxiety toward the sky. *Mantou*-mangrove-crabs erupting from muddy dormancy to hang in clusters from the branches of orange trees. And green breadfruits falling unseasonably out of reason, denting the ground without cracking open. And *gangan*-mangrove-cuckoos, squawking boisterously over dead springs that suddenly start sobbing. (*Old Slave*, 21, original italics)

Following the old slave's escape, these nonhuman animals and plants begin to behave strangely, or, rather, to behave as they would when not driven from the Plantation or tamed.

The slave's escape recalls Fanon's account of the impact of his own epistemic resistance to the white world, right down to the analogy both choose. Fanon recalls perceiving that he had 'robbed the white man of "a certain world," forever after lost to him and his. [...] The white man had the anguished feeling that I was escaping from him and that I was taking something with me' (*Black*, 97). For Chamoiseau, on the other hand, the mastiff is the one directly responsible for this upheaval: 'The Master abruptly realizes that for a long time already, the mastiff has been howling, and that this howling, all by itself, *défolmante*—is dis-in-te-grating—the substance of his world.' (*Old Slave*, 23, original italics) This attribution is later repeated: It is the 'ancient howl of the mastiff' that 'begins to undo the domain, provoking the eleventy-thousand strange little hitches already described, and faced with which the science

of slavery gave way' (*Old Slave*, 48). By making the mastiff the agent of the Master's unworlding, Chamoiseau emphasises the coproduction of these identities: slave, monster, and Master. Because coproduced, these rely on one another for their fixity; once one pole shifts, the others are sent wandering, and the colonialist ontology of the Plantation breaks down. We are told that 'nothing has changed but everything is slipping sideways: a kind of chemical decomposition, impalpable but major' (*Old Slave*, 22). The old slave's 'décharge' is presented merely as the catalyst in this chain reaction. The Master becomes aware of the escape only through its effect upon the mastiff. This epistemological unsettling creates space for nonhuman animals to do as they are wont to do, resisting subjugation to human ends. That their behaviours appear supernatural only means that they defy the Master's instrumentalising, rationalist episteme.

This throws the Master's very identity as Man into doubt. His hegemony over the natural world ceases:

The Master has suspended his inspection tour: his Arabian horse rears with each step over invisible swarmings. Trying to understand what is happening, the Master must dismount and tramp through cane fields, then around the buildings of the Plantation. [...] His wickedness has so organized the world around him that the current derangement strands him in a highly indignant stupor. (*Old Slave*, 22)

The snakes, which the list of the Master's exploits recalled him vanquishing, are suddenly everywhere; the horse that he had mastered now resists his direction, forcing him to dismount, bringing him down to the same level as everything he previously rode and ruled over. The Master is forced to dismount again when the mastiff leads him in pursuit of the old slave: the mastiff 'pulls the Master beneath the greenish shadows; he must soon dismount and follow on foot. The chestnut horse stays behind alone' (*Old Slave*, 66). Later, we are told that 'alone among those trees [...] the heroism of the personal chronicle he kept no longer carried much weight' (*Old Slave*, 97). His 'personal chronicle'—in short, his historicity, his ability to transcend time—no longer sustains him. 'He was proud of himself', we are told, 'but that pride, in certain hours, came apart like the finery of a mountebank' (*Old Slave*, 97). Much like the fox in my chapter two analysis of Larissa Lai's novel, whose dressing-up games I read as a parody of the anthropological machine—the act in which one ceases to be mere animal—this regalia of the Master's identity as Man—his transcendence, his dominance of nature, his historicity, his rationalist episteme—is revealed to be no more than the costume of a charlatan.

Whilst the old slave has had his humanity denied, his escape from this non-humanising logic of slavery does not lead to his becoming human according to the Western descriptive statement. Instead, Chamoiseau's old slave offers us a new vision of the human, one that again recalls Fanon. Deep into the first night of the chase, the old slave collapses from exhaustion. We are told:

He was forced to listen to himself in unknown zones, to isolate the sound of his heart, more powerful than ever. He perceived the giddy whirl of his blood that he had slowed down all his life. He experienced, as if torn, the sensation of every bit of his body, every unknown organ, every forgotten function. He apprehended the circulating sun that united and drove them. His run had propelled his flesh to its ultimate limit and his formerly separate organs, reacting en masse, passing beyond all distress, kept going, leaving him panting with innocence in a hazy awareness of himself he had never known before. (*Old Slave*, 57-8, original italics)

There is a reduction to the body here, but not in the objectifying sense. Instead, the old slave becomes acutely aware of his body's physiological mechanisms. Recall Fanon's characterisation of a phenomenology of the body as 'a third-person consciousness'. Chamoiseau's use of third-person narration exemplifies this, listening to the old slave's body seemingly from the inside and outside simultaneously. Through this newfound awareness, and the feeling of 'plenitude' (*Old Slave*, 58) it engenders, the old slave realises his imbrication in the world. He suddenly finds himself able to sense his surroundings: 'His perception encompassed the darkness around him. He recovered the feeling of displacing himself, changing position; he avoided the trees with calm authority, and moved through the undergrowth with ease and a fine air about him.' (*Old Slave*, 58). In short: 'He apprehended his surroundings differently.' (*Old Slave*, 58)

For Chamoiseau, this attunement to one's corporeality and phenomenological embeddedness in the world opens up the possibility for imagining oneself transposed into another's experience. Following the old slave's fall into, and escape from, a cold, water-filled sinkhole, the narrator states:

He laughed like this. *Comme pipiri chantant*: like the gray kingbird singing *pipiri!* at daybreak. [...] He laughed like that, and the energy of his laughter pounded his body. He was surprised to feel nothing of the tumult that had possessed him. Calming down, his heart had followed the tranquil breeze, flowing-river-strong, yet peaceful. His muscles, unstiffened, had paused in the soft comfort of shelter. An evangelical feeling never known before. (*Old Slave*, 84, original italics)

The narrative remains closely attentive to the old slave's somatic sensations, his laughter, his heartbeat and the tension in his muscles. There is a description of his emotional state, but the emphasis is on how this is felt in his body: the pounding of his laughter, his calming heartrate, his surprise at the absence of his previous tumult. The first two sentences offer a very J. A. Baker-esque comparison of the old slave to the 'gray kingbird'. The old slave does not become the bird, but laughs 'like the gray kingbird singing *pipiri!* at daybreak', a construction almost identical in its structure to Deleuze and Guattari's 'the animal-stalks-at-five-o'clock'. As in Baker's most convincing transpositions, the old slave's going-with the kingbird remains provisional and conditional, tactfully underdetermined.

It is through this newfound awareness of his corporeality that the old slave's transposition into the mastiff is most fully realised:

He listened, [...] desperate, then finally heard. *Thumps*. Muffled thumps. Bitunk. Bitunk. Bitunk. The pounding of the monster's paws pursuing him. They almost matched the rhythm of his heart. Then he accelerated to make those rhythms one, so that he might use this sound sent to run him down as a guide for keeping his distance. (*Old Slave*, 59, original italics)

The passage recalls J. A. Baker's imagining of his sinking into the skin and blood and bones of the hawk. As with Baker's imagined transformations of himself into the peregrine, the connection Chamoiseau is drawing here is predicated upon the slave and the mastiff's respective bodies. We find another very J. A. Baker comparison, as the old slave pauses to listen for the pursuing mastiff: 'Ears pricked up. Nose-holes open. Trying to distinguish the rustle of the wild-beast body against raspy lower branches.' (*Old Slave*, 101) The body described remains that of the old slave, but the vocabulary is decentring, language we would expect to be used to describe a nonhuman animal, such as the mastiff itself.

This perspective is not that of a transcendental *cogito*. Indeed, for the majority of Chamoiseau's novel there is no 'I' in the narration at all. But this changes, two thirds of the way through, with a sudden shift to first-person:

I opened my eyes wide to see better, and the world was born without any veil of modesty. A vegetal whole in imperious evening dew. I... the leaves were many, green in infinite ways, as well as ochre, yellow, maroon, crinkled, dazzling, indulging themselves in sacred disorder. I... The vines sought out the ground to mix themselves up some more, try rooting, sprouting buds. (*Old Slave*, 84)

This is not, however, a Cartesian 'I', claiming a 'God-eye view'. The awakening of this interior voice is sparked by the old slave's coming to awareness of his body. And the first thing it does is announce its one-ness with the world. This is no naïve phenomenological awareness,

however. No sooner is this consciousness stimulated than it is sociogenically mediated: the old man contemplates the trees around him, feeling their growth, before recalling their names and their medicinal and practical uses (*Old Slave*, 85-6). Following this, the old slave relates:

My body was discovering the appetite of roots, the gluttonous solitude of earthworms. My hands excavated clutches of black soil I rubbed on my body. A swarming escorted me: snails, wood lice, and hawkmoth caterpillars, ants and millipedes... I was eating earth. [...] The earth endowed me with a feeling of puissance well beyond life and death. And the earth initiated me into constancies I recognized as august and everlasting. (*Old Slave*, 86-7)

The old slave's new perception of this world exceeds what is sensible, encompassing the infinity of its green, the creeping of its vines, 'the appetite of roots', and 'gluttonous solitude of earthworms'. The old slave eats dirt, taking the earth into himself, and feeling himself 'initiated' into the earth. This is the reverse of Fanon's experience: not a corporeal schema crumbling under sociogenic racialisation, but an escape from overdetermination via a reclamation of corporeality. Such a formulation enacts something like Pick's creaturely ethics, insofar as it 'contracts humanity to recuperate its animality', and Johnson's 'fugitive humanism', with its 'black recuperation of animality', and its 'radical and ethical use of dehumanization'.⁷⁸ The paradox, however, is that such self-authoring depends on what Fanon would consider the uniquely human capacity for sociogenic self-representation: the old slave's ability to reject any separation of human and world, to recognise himself as a human who is always already animal.

The climax of the novel offers us an encounter between the mastiff and 'old man' (nec-slave), the latter now grievously wounded from a fall. Here, Chamoiseau again emphasises the physicality of the old slave's body:

I believe I still feel a pang, or even a shiver of fear when the monster comes closer to me. But all that is only a reflex of flesh. Insane muscle memories. Fixed feeling in my bones. My bones. What will they say about me? [...] I will end up as a few lost bones in the depths of these Great Woods. I see them already, those bones, architecture of my mind, substance of my births and deaths. (*Old Slave*, 127)

Again, there is an affective or cognitive component to the slave's experience: a pang or shiver of fear. However, the slave quickly dismisses this as an artefact of his embodiment itself—'a reflex of the flesh'—with the unusual collocation, 'insane muscle memory', further drawing together the cognitive and corporeal. Far from separating the mind and body, Chamoiseau's old slave calls his skeleton the 'architecture of my mind'. The metaphor leaves ambiguous any

⁷⁸ Pick, p. 80, original italics; Johnson, p. 15.

causation—the bones might be of his mind’s design or might be its scaffolding—whilst stressing their inextricable entanglement. The old slave imagines his having history, for the first time, asking, ‘What will they say about me?’, whilst figuring his bones to be the nucleus around which this history might be formed. Indeed, for the purposes of Chamoiseau’s novel this proves to be true: the epilogue reveals the third-person narrator to be the fictionalised ‘Word Scratcher’, a creole storyteller turned author. The entire account of the slave’s escape, he claims, is his imagining of a history of a man whose bones were found in the Great Woods.

Coming face to face with the old slave, the mastiff is finally freed from its construction as monster, and it is here that the novel most closely approaches the question of the mastiff’s own subjectivity. The narrator tells us:

The monster drew still closer. It perceived things that its mind could not envisage. It soon dismissed its own memories. It put aside the mass of instincts where its behaviors were dozing. It gave itself over to what it was receiving. It looked on in the way one watches, from the height of a chasm, the dusk of a star, or the great-work of its birth. It was not too sure. The monster went even closer to the being and, without much knowing why, with all the conviction available to it, began to lick. The monster did not lick blood, or flesh, or the sweat of flesh. It garnered little taste. It was licking. That was the only gesture he was given.
(*Old Slave*, 128)

This mastiff is no automaton; it has its own ‘mind’ and ‘memories’. But Chamoiseau stops short of attempting to represent these, and of thereby subsuming the alterity of the mastiff’s mode of being by making it comprehensible from a human perspective. The passage resonates with Bennett’s reading of Carl Philips’ ‘White Dog’, in which ‘the dog’s very distance from the whims and inner workings of the human’ is what ‘marks [its] position’, as it exhibits an agency that ‘refuses to live as a reflection of a man’s inner world’.⁷⁹ As with the fox in my chapter two reading of Sarah Hall’s short-story, the mastiff possesses a subjectivity that is also an alterity, one that is independent of—indeed, which explicitly rejects—human designs. The phrase ‘mass of instincts’ is a repeat from the earlier passage, in which Chamoiseau describes why the dog’s experience of the Middle Passage differs from that of the slaves: ‘The mastiff’, we were told, ‘commands a mass of instincts that delude the dog into seeing sense there, a meaning now tied to the taste of the bloody flesh the Master feeds the beast as the meaning of existence’ (*Old Slave*, 44). Yet here we are told that the mastiff ‘put aside’ the meaning imposed upon it, refusing to regard the old slave as ‘flesh’. The encounter recalls Emmanuel Levinas’ anecdote regarding Bobby, the dog who hung around the prisoner of war camp where Levinas was

⁷⁹ Bennett, pp. 147–48.

interred, the one gaze in which he feels that he and his fellow prisoners were still regarded as men. Yet it also offers precisely the reformulation of a Levinasian ethics of alterity that Derrida suggests is needed if we are to take seriously the implications of nonhuman otherness. Confronting the ‘profound anthropocentrism and humanism’ he finds in Levinas, Derrida posits that ‘a thinker of the other, of the infinitely other who looks at me, should, on the contrary, privilege the question and the request of the animal’.⁸⁰ One should do so, ‘not in order to put it in front of that of man, but in order to think that of man, [...] from the perspective of an animal [...] that calls within us outside of us, from the most far away’.⁸¹ The mastiff surveys the slave from the farthest reaches and liminal spaces: ‘the height of a chasm, the dusk of a star, or the great-work of its birth’. The ‘chasm’ in particular recalls the abyss that Derrida seeks to emphasise between all forms of sentient life. Despite—or perhaps because of—this abyssal alterity, there is a mutual confirmation of each actor’s subjecthood, here. Unlike Bobby, the mastiff offers no simple unilateral confirmation of the old slave’s humanity; it recognises him as a fellow ‘being’, and, in the same moment, is finally freed to respond in its own manner, *as dog*. To underscore the mastiff’s escape from its monstrosity, its newfound being-for-itself, its designators switch, as it emerges from the wood and encounters the Master for the final time: ‘The dog reappeared. The Master did not even start with pleasure. The animal came toward him and the Master did not know him. [...] The mastiff had changed. [...] The Master wept for the monster he had lost.’ (*Old Slave*, 129)

Conclusion

Fanon begs or brackets the constructedness of animality in his consideration of the experience of Blackness, yet his work speaks to both questions, nonetheless; sociogeny offers a means to think interspecies differences in exceptionalist but non-anthropocentric terms, attending to the abyssal differences Derrida perceives between all forms of sentient life. It stresses the incommensurability of human and nonhuman worlds, without hierarchising them. Sociogeny therefore offers a means to make space for alterity. Chamoiseau goes further, considering how *race* and *animality* are discursively coproduced, if ultimately incommensurable. Following his escape from the non-humanising logic of slavery, the old slave realises his humanity, but in a new genre, one which—even more so than Fanon’s—is attuned to humans’ embodied animality, and worldly imbrication. Chamoiseau’s novel therefore enacts something like Pick’s

⁸⁰ Derrida, p. 113.

⁸¹ Derrida, p. 113.

'creaturely ethics', which '*contracts* humanity to recuperate its animality',⁸² and Johnson's 'fugitive humanism', with its 'black recuperation of animality', and its 'radical and ethical use of dehumanization'.⁸³ At the same time, however, Chamoiseau's text does not flatten alterity or heterogeneity. Paradoxically, the old slave's newfound creatureliness depends upon what Fanon would regard as humans' unique sociogenic self-conception. Even as sociogeny limits any such contraction of the human, the capacity to reflect upon and reshape one's conception of the world and place therein is what makes any recuperation of humans' animality possible in the first place. As Chamoiseau's text suggests, even such a partial contraction might make space for nonhuman animals as beings for-themselves.

⁸² Pick, p. 80, original italics.

⁸³ Johnson, p. 15.

Conclusion – Looking Round our Corner

“We cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be.”

Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*

This thesis has addressed a conflict I identified in certain works of contemporary literature, film and performance, between the desire to imagine nonhuman experiences, and to simultaneously apprehend their alterity, their radical otherness. The epigraph from Nietzsche that began this thesis (and which I have reprised here) is typical of what most thinkers in the Western philosophical tradition have had to say on this question, indicating a territory they have long-since ceded. Their stance is at least more charitable than most of the answers that science has offered to the problem of other minds over the past century or so, often unwilling to credit nonhumans with the possibility of any cognitive interiority whatsoever. Nagel, as considered in this thesis' introduction, may be correct that such attempts to imagine nonhuman experiences are an impossible task; we may simply never *know* what they are actually like. But if such an undertaking is a fool's errand, borne of hopeless curiosity, this thesis has at least exposed a number of curious fools willing to engage in it, not least myself. At the same time, the works I have considered—in particular those in which I have found the richest imaginings—have tried to represent these modes of being without straightening the corner of which Nietzsche speaks, refusing to see in nonhuman animals a mere mirror of the human, attempting, instead, to cast their minds beyond their own case and imagine perspectives that are radically Other.

Chapter One read J. A. Baker's *The Peregrine* (1967), Timothy Treadwell's *Among Grizzlies* (1997) and Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* (2005) alongside Heidegger's writings on the nonhuman. Whereas most previous attention paid to Heidegger from within animal studies has focused on his claim that the human is 'worldbuilding', the animal 'poor in world', and the stone 'worldless', I focused primarily on a less examined moment in his 1929-30 Freiberg lecture course. Borrowing two concepts that have previously been read as interchangeable—*Mitsein* (Being-with) and *Mitgang* (Going-with)—I drove a wedge between them: *Mitsein*, I argued, should be read as the essential capacity to be transposed into an Other's experience; *Mitgang*, by contrast, describes the 'purely provisional and conditional' attempts at transposition of a human into a nonhuman mode of experience. *Mitsein* is essentialist, relying

on Others having stable identities into which we might cast ourselves; *Mitgang*, however, requires no such ontological fixity, and even troubles Heidegger's broader, essentialist philosophy. My readings of Baker's and Treadwell's texts—and the previous commentary surrounding them—put paid to Heidegger's claim of a frictionless human community, and, along with it, his essentialist distinction between nonhuman and human animals. Whilst *Mitsein*'s strong claims to transposition leave no room for otherness, *Mitgang* suggests that imaginative glimpses into alternative modes of being may be possible, but remains cautiously understated in its claims to knowledge of the Other. Baker and Treadwell both employ literary strategies to describe their own transpositions and transformations into the animals of their respective obsessions. Baker, however, shares Heidegger's conflicting desires to imagine the otherness of a nonhuman animal, whilst also attempting to let that otherness be. For Treadwell, meanwhile, the bears become the surrogate for what he could not find in the human world. In short, Baker finds *Mitgang* with peregrines, Treadwell seeks *Mitsein* with bears.

Chapter Two examined Sarah Hall's short story 'Mrs Fox' (2013), and Larissa Lai's *When Fox is a Thousand* (1995), reading these via Simone de Beauvoir and Judith Butler. I read Beauvoir's attempts to account for the dizzying heterogeneity of life as a prefiguring of Derridean limitrophe, and found in her concept of *freedom from species life* a means to unsettle species hierarchies. This unsettling is explicitly denied by Beauvoir, who argues that animals constitute 'given species', whereas woman—like all humans—is *transcendent* and destined to *become*. For Beauvoir, this results in woman's *estrangement* from herself; she is most enslaved to the species of almost any animal, but also resists this subjugation most vehemently, a formulation that hinges on a latent Cartesianism. One of Beauvoir's own inadvertently limitrophic examples further undermines her exceptionalism: the praying mantis. Beauvoirian estrangement finds a fabulous release in Hall's story when a strange event befalls a seemingly contented heterosexual marriage: a wife transforms into a fox. Or so it seemed on first reading. Analysing Hall's story, attending in particular to its choice of narrative perspective, I argued that Hall's third-person narration satirises a hegemonic epistemology that produces woman and animal as Others to a Subject that is in turn universalised as human and male. Beauvoir's problematic association of womanhood with an animality to which she is simultaneously allied and estranged, I argued, is itself a product of this signifying economy that marginalises both women and nonhumans. Hall suggests that Sophia may have been the fox all along; certainly she experienced no pathological schism between an "anthropophorous" animality

and the humanity which takes bodily form in it'.¹ Lai's novel, meanwhile, places the performativity of identities in tension with a stability of subjecthood far closer to Beauvoir's than Butler's account thereof, but refigures Beauvoir's problematic normativity by presenting gendered, racialised and speciated identities as self-authored proclamations of a queered *authenticity*, figured, in part, as a radical freedom from species life.

Chapter Three turned to a work of performance, *Nautilus* (2015) by contemporary mime artist Trygve Wakenshaw, reading this alongside Maurice Merleau-Ponty's writings on phenomenology and the organism. Wakenshaw's mimes, I argued, pretend no knowledge of animals as such, engaging instead society's tropings of nonhumans. At the same time, however, by dispensing not only with language, but with language's entire signficatory logic, mime approaches its nonhuman subjects on a level at which human and animal, mind and body, signifier and signified become false dualities. If we follow Merleau-Ponty, there is no need to probe the interiority of nonhuman modes of being, because the 'into' is by the by; the experiences of all animals are characterised, not by consciousness, but by their *style*, a concept that exists between the mind and the body, and so become a means of questioning any dichotomisation of these terms. Style is the level on which Wakenshaw approaches his animal subjects, human and nonhuman, transposing them onto his own frame. Turning to Merleau-Ponty's rereading of Lorenz, I drew a connection between the objectlessness of mime and the objectlessness of instinct, a connection that reads against the anthropocentric privileging of consciousness; all behaviour directs itself, not towards the thing itself, but towards an oneiric universe of representations that the performance of the mime reveals. Drawing on Lucy Amsden's writings on clowning pedagogy, I argued that Wakenshaw's performance dramatizes Uexküll's *Umwelt*, a theory that Merleau-Ponty himself delights in for its potential to upset the Cartesian dualism. This performative *Umwelt*, I argued, comprises both the stage *and the audience*, a Merleau-Pontian 'inter-animality', predicated on our apprehension of the Other's alterity.

Chapter Four examined Patrick Chamoiseau's *The Old Slave and the Mastiff* (2019), placing this in dialogue with Frantz Fanon's writing on race. Beginning with Sylvia Wynter and Ramón Grosfoguel, I examined how the Western 'descriptive statement of the human' establishes the white man of European descent as the quintessential human and relegates all nonwhites to the status of sub- or inhuman. Initially predicated on Man's capacity for reason,

¹ Agamben, p. 12.

this form of racialisation came to be re-enshrined in biologised terms as *race*. For Fanon, the human is defined not by biology or reason, or any of the myriad criteria by which the human has been constructed in the Western canon of thought. Instead, Fanon foregrounds an alternative concept: sociogeny, the capacity for second-order self-representation. Fanon begs—or at least brackets—the question of animalisation in his consideration of sociogenic racialisation, but I found in his concept of *sociogeny* a means to think species difference in exceptionalist but non-hierarchical terms. Chamoiseau’s novel goes further, exploring how race, the human and animality are discursively coproduced, processes that Chamoiseau parallels whilst stressing their incommensurability. The mastiff and the old slave are both ‘overdetermined from without’, to adapt Fanon’s phrase, imprisoned within their instrumentalised identities, *as monster* and *as slave*. Because coproduced, the ontological poles of *slave*, *monster*, and *Master* rely on one another for their fixity; once one shifts, the others are sent wandering, and the colonialist ontology of the Plantation breaks down, and the Master’s identity as Man unravels. Following his escape, the old slave realises his humanity in a new contracted, creaturely genre, but one that depends, paradoxically, upon what Fanon would see as his uniquely human sociogenic self-conception. The mastiff, meanwhile, escapes its overdetermination and realises its own being-for-itself *as dog*—the for-itself-ness of which is achieved via Chamoiseau’s refusal to render it intelligible.

Theorising this aesthetic innovation required a new approach to reading such literatures. Existentialism has proven incredibly generative in this regard, ironically so, given that its practitioners, on the whole, have been among the most philosophically sceptical as to the possibilities for animal worlds and subjectivities. This is because existentialism’s notion of the bounded individual subject lends itself to theorising aesthetic attempts to represent nonhuman animals as subjects *for-themselves*. Given existentialism’s uncharitable readings of the nonhuman, it has been necessary to do more than borrow its tools: I have also repurposed them—*ameliorated* and *reformed* them—discovered their usefulness for the present work, whilst updating them where necessary to meet the challenges posed by these contemporary literatures. Except for Merleau-Ponty, these philosophers tend to produce a human exceptionalism that is then left more or less uninterrogated. Whilst Merleau-Ponty delights in phenomenological insights that upset dualisms, including the dichotomy of nonhuman versus human animals, Heidegger and Beauvoir, in particular, see the human’s lot as transcendence—figured either as access to being as such, or as the potential for becoming and freedom, even in the face of a near-complete enslavement to species life—whilst relegating

nonhuman animals to immanence, the incapacity to exceed the given. We have seen this exceptionalism unravel on its own terms. The loose threads arise at moments when these thinkers switch their focus from making grandiose statements about a homogenised ‘the animal’ or an ‘animality’ writ-large, instead considering nonhuman animals as individuals. Heidegger’s example of the honeybee with its abdomen removed—a key basis of his claim to the animal’s world-poverty—violates the philosopher’s own insistence on understanding organisms in their totality, and fitness to their environments. Beauvoir’s mantis, meanwhile, by predateding its mate only in captivity, proves itself to be governed by the very same materiality that dictates woman’s capacity to exceed the given. The normativity of Beauvoir’s notion of ‘Woman’ meanwhile, betrays the same tendency to collapse individual into type, resulting in a vision of becoming that begins to look a lot like immanence, not open-ended at all, but directed towards an identity that was always already predetermined. Fanon’s narcissistic humanism, meanwhile, results in an irresolvable paradox. Like Linnaeus, Fanon has no criterion for defining the human other than its capacity to *know itself*. Upon closer inspection, however, Fanon’s unique genre of anthropogenic self-recognition contains the seeds of its apparent opposite—an acknowledgement of the mutability of the category of the human, born out of the recognition of one’s exclusion from it—and the human becomes that animal that can recognise its own non-humanisation, a social construction defined by its ability to experience its constructedness as such.

My readings of these philosophers’ works have not *only* been resistant, however. This theoretical material has only been so generative because there was enough in it to borrow from and adapt. Heideggerian *Mitgang*, for instance, offers a way to theorise the kinds of insights that humans seek into the experiences of nonhuman animals, and their fellow humans. Beauvoirian *freedom from species life* offers a way to think nonhuman and human modes of being in a new way, un beholden to anthropocentric notions such as cognitive complexity. This is so, even if Beauvoir failed to recognise—or explicitly rejected—the concept’s implications. Merleau-Pontian phenomenology presents myriad challenges to human exceptionalism, undermining dichotomies, such as between mind and body, behaviour and consciousness, and human and animal. Fanonian sociogeny allows us to theorise humans’ participation in meaning-making, and the incommensurability of human and nonhuman modes of being that this implies, without hierarchising their experiences. There is an expanse of material within existentialist philosophy that might be useful to thinking through questions of the animal—albeit with some modifications—a rich seam of ideas that this thesis has only begun to mine. I would hope that the new insights and concepts gleaned from my rereadings of these

philosophers' works might inform future animal studies research. I also hope that my discovery of these overlooked ideas will prompt a revisitation of this moment in continental thought, and a reassessment of its usefulness within animal studies, a discipline that had, until now, thrown the existentialist baby out with the humanist bathwater.

As for the aesthetic works this thesis has considered, despite their distance from one another in time, and their differences in genre, form and mode, there are certain strategies that more or less link them when it comes to representing animal subjects without undermining their alterity. One of the simplest is to emphasise the limits of any such undertaking. The attempts to imagine nonhuman modes of being that I have found most compelling are those that recognise—as Heidegger did—the necessarily provisional and conditional nature of such transpositions. In Chapter One, J. A. Baker's comparisons of himself to the eponymous raptor are always indirect, making use of carefully crafted literary language to suggest insights into other modes of being, which simultaneously emphasise the limits of such imaginings. Baker sees himself, in his specific motion of riding downhill on a bicycle, as a little like the peregrine as it swoops on its prey; he momentarily imagines his own hearing to be as acute for him as an owl's is for the owl; he sees these connections as inhering in common affects, postures and activities. These tactfully underdetermined comparisons stood in stark contrast to Treadwell's 'I am Grizzly', a declaration that rivalled even Heidegger in the boldness of its ontological claim. Sarah Hall's 'Mrs Fox' took a position simultaneously more pessimistic and optimistic: the fox is unknowable to us, but so, too, is the wife, because our dominant masculinist and anthropocentric signifying economy lacks the resources to give a language to either subjecthood, constructing both as mere Others to a male, human Self. Chamoiseau stresses the incommensurability of human and canid modes of being in the world, even as he connects the old slave's and mastiff's experiences of their transportation to Martinique. In the case of Wakenshaw's *Nautilus*, its approach to the nonhuman was so tenuous as to be undetectable on its own terms; it was only by triangulating his performance with Merleau-Ponty's writings on the organism that I was able to discern the connections between liveness and life, between the objectless of mime and of instinct, and between the *Umwelt* and the chiasm of Wakenshaw's clowning practice.

Another strategy several of these texts have adopted is to never even pretend they are showing us the animals themselves, instead foregrounding their own representativeness. Some have done this by telling us they are showing us a trope. Wakenshaw's impressions of nonhuman animals partially skirt the representational dilemma this thesis considers precisely because they are hackneyed and clichéd, directing themselves not towards animals

themselves, but towards existing cultural scripts regarding the animals concerned. As such, they pretend no special insight into these other modes of being. Chamoiseau, likewise, emphasises the discursivity of the mastiff's identity; it is defined only by its identity *as monster*, which is synonymous with its instrumentalization to the Master's ends. In the preceding pages, by contrast, I have typically given short shrift to those texts that appear to conceal their own participation in this discursive world. Semiotically speaking, a documentary film is no less a representation than is literature, a point which my reading of Werner Herzog's *Grizzly Man* made clear: Treadwell's footage is itself interpretive, selective in its focus, not least in his near-complete banishment of Huguenard from his shots; this is to say nothing of Herzog's semantic engineering in producing the film and providing its voiceover. Yet these seemingly transparent modes wear their representative function lightly, purporting to offer an impartial window onto that which they represent. As I established in my reading of Larissa Lai, the photographic symbol pretends an immediate proximity to a signified, its seeming clarity ironically obscuring its own semiology. The same is true of Fevered Sleep's *Sheep, Pig, Goat*, motivated by a desire to show human audience members authentic animals so that they might really get to know them, but unable to do so without subsuming them within the discursive space of the performance. A ventriloquised interior monologue for a horse in perfect English may be no more a representation than one of J. A. Baker's literary metaphors; if anything, Baker's form is the more contrived. But if our knowledge of nonhuman Others depends always already upon representations thereof, better these be rendered, not with the clarity of plain English or telephoto lens, but through a glass, darkly.

All of these texts have connected the nonhuman with the human, at least in part, by undermining the foundations of the latter, destabilising the set of assumptions by which it constructs itself. Lai's novel, on first glance, appears merely to straighten Nietzsche's corner, representing the fox as uncannily human. However, the anthropomorphism of the fox wound up saying more about the anthropomorphism *of the human*. In her inhabitations of dead human women, I read a deconstructive parody of the anthropological machine, the process by which the human ceases to be mere animal. Hall, meanwhile, by implying Sophia was always the fox, that she never experienced a schism between her humanity and anthropophorous animality, rejects this same logic of anthropogenesis. J. A. Baker's and Treadwell's deep-seated misanthropy undermines Heidegger's claims to a frictionless human community, and, along with it, part of his essentialist basis for distinguishing *Dasein* from the animal's poverty in world. The objectlessness of Wakenshaw's mimes and the *Umwelt* of his performance,

considered in light of Merleau-Ponty's rereading of twentieth century biology and ethology, dramatize a level common to all behaviour, undermining the privileging of complex cognition by which the human has been elevated above other animals. Chamoiseau, meanwhile, recognises the contestability of the human, examining how the category is produced, not only by constructing the animal, but via the concomitant non-humanisation of nonwhites.

These texts do more than merely stress the unknowability of these other perspectives; they have developed innovative aesthetic strategies to attempt to represent them in their otherness. Often, these representations of alterity itself are accomplished by showing nonhumans behaving in ways that these works' human participants did not expect. The bears in Treadwell's story may not be the anthropomorphised human family Treadwell views them as, but neither are they the man-eating carnivores of myth. Baker's inclusion of so many scenes in which the eponymous raptor fails to appear reads against the trope of the nature documentary whereby animals are commodified, made to seem always available for human viewing pleasure. The fox in Sarah Hall has no interest in meeting the husband's needs for kinship or intimacy; it resists a stereotype of wildness, but also shirks the role of domestic pet; it has a slippery agency that continually thwarts the husband's and narrator's expectations of fox behaviour. The sheep, pigs and goats in *Fevered Sleep's* production do not make good audience members. However, read in light of a philosophy that emphasises the ultimate unknowability of all Others, and which sees in this very unknowability the confirmation of agency, these eponymous animals' poor spectatorship is what marks them as subjects in their own rights. The mastiff in Chamoiseau's novel defies expectations with a gesture of compassion for the eponymous old slave, whom it has been trained to pursue and attack. Chamoiseau thereby attributes subjecthood to the mastiff, even as he refuses to render its experiences comprehensible from a human perspective. What characterises all of these strategies is a certain excess of agency, in which unruly animals exceed human expectations and tropes. These texts thereby challenge anthropocentric reductions of animals to ciphers in stories about humans, or instrumentalised objects in service to human ends. They operate via a kind of interstitial representation, the sense of a real animal peering through the cracks that open in our human attempts to portray them, as if, when we looked away, the animal had slipped off the page, and peed on the rug.

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